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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i>
<i>BBCS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>NChron</i>	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>RS</i>	Rolls Series
<i>SBVS</i>	<i>Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research</i>

PREFACE

I am delighted to be able to introduce the thirteenth number of the annual volume, *Quaestio Insularis*, the journal of the annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (CCASNC). The postgraduate community of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, established the important Colloquium, the edited proceedings of which *Quaestio* represents, over a decade ago, and successive generations of students have maintained the very high quality of both the event and its proceedings volume. The 2012 conference at which the papers published here were read was extremely successful. The papers published here, including Barbara Crawford's fine paper on the Norse earldoms, illustrate the wide range of subject matter on show at the conference and of interest to the Department; it is particularly pleasing to see such a wide range of institutions represented among the contributors. *Quaestio* 13 and all back numbers can be ordered directly from the Department's website (www.asnc.cam.ac.uk).

Professor Paul Russell
Head of the Department of ASNC
University of Cambridge

COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The 2012 Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 'Junctions and Crossroads', held in Room G/R 06-7 of the English Faculty on Saturday 25 February was a successful and engaging event. A truly international group of delegates made it an extremely well-attended Colloquium. Stimulating discussions arose from a welcoming, interdisciplinary atmosphere, and the day flowed smoothly thanks to our enthusiastic team of helpers: Carlotta Barbieri, Caitlin Ellis, Linda Intelmann, Anna Larsson, Rebecca Merkelbach, Anna Millward and Page Sinclair.

Session I (Chair: Robert Gallagher)

Patrick Meusel, 'Cynewulf at the Crossroads: the Influence of Old English Homiletic Prose and Christian-Latin Verse Style in *Christ B*'

Erika Sigurdson, '*Máldagarbækur* and Administrative Literacy in Late Medieval Iceland'

Session II (Chair: Alice Hicklin)

Christopher Finn, 'The Practicalities of Sea-Travel and Communication in the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Centuries'

Dominic Gibbs, 'Pre-Christian Traces in the Laws of King Aethelberht?'

Plenary Speaker (Chair: Jo Shortt Butler)

Dr Barbara E. Crawford, OBE, 'The Norse Earldoms of Orkney and Caithness: Joint Earldoms and Divided Loyalties'

Session III (Chairs: Razvan Stanciu and Sarah Waidler)

Lindy Brady, 'Spatial Ambiguity in *Guthlac A*'

Marie-Luise Theuerkauf, 'Dragon Slayers and Lion Friends: Intertextual Considerations in *Tochmarc Emire*'

Simon Patterson, 'The Distinction between Prophecy and Wisdom in the *Íslendingasögur*'

Session IV (Chair: Silva Nurmio)

Jonathan Paletta, 'Borough Foundation and Ethnic Identity in English Towns after 1066'

Eystein Thanisch, 'Flann Mainistrech's *Götterdämmerung* as a Junction within *Lebor Gabála Érenn*'

Georgia Henley, 'Rhetoric, Translation and Historiography: the Literary Qualities of *Brut y Tynysogyon*'

The members of the colloquium committee for 2011–12 were: Jo Shortt Butler, Rob Gallagher, Alice Hicklin, Silva Nurmio, Razvan Stanciu and Sarah Waidler.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quaestio Insularis 13 was edited by Jo Shortt Butler, Robert Gallagher, Alice Hicklin, Silva Nurmio, Razvan Stanciu and Sarah Waidler. The editors also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Paul Russell, Simon Patterson, Lisa Gold, Charlotte Watkinson, Jayne Riley, Ed Carlsson Browne and our peer reviewers. Editorial design is by Alistair Vining and the *Quaestio Insularis* logo was drawn by Katharine Scarfe Beckett. The production of this volume and the successful running of the conference have been made possible through the generosity of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and the support of the Faculty of English.

The Norse Earldoms of Orkney and Caithness: Joint Earldoms and Divided Loyalties

Dr Barbara E. Crawford, OBE
University of St Andrews

My contribution to the Colloquium theme of 'Junctions and Crossroads' is a consideration of the Norse earldoms of Orkney and Caithness, which were indeed at a maritime junction between the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, and also at a political junction of the Norse and the Scottish worlds, and eventually the Norwegian and Scottish kingdoms.¹

The political history of the medieval earldoms of Orkney and Caithness is quite significant in the context of the wider European feudal picture. These were two earldoms which were part of two different national and political entities. The individual earls' contact with and political relationship to the kingdoms of Norway and Scotland has been the subject of the author's research agenda for many years.² The question as to how the two earldoms related to each other needs to be considered more fully, with a closer focus on the relationship of the two halves of this combined lordship, the off-shore insular part (Orkney) and the territorial part in the north of the Scottish mainland (Caithness). It is the very duality of this political unit which is so significant. There is the duality of medieval/feudal honour and title and the duality of loyalty to two national kingdoms and territorial overlords, the duality of relating to the histories of two

¹ This preliminary section is based on Chapter 1 of B. E. Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms. Orkney and Caithness from 870–1470 AD. Joint Earldoms and Divided Loyalties* (Edinburgh, 2013).

² Initially in B. E. Crawford, *The Earls of Orkney-Caithness and their Relations with Norway and Scotland 1158–1470* (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of St Andrews, 1971).

very different north European societies and cultures. This duality emanated from the circumstances by which the earldoms were united in one individual's possession for most of the period under discussion but remained separate units throughout their existence.³ They were two independent feudal honours, two earldoms subject to two different overlords, two separate entities and yet two halves of a whole unit of lordship, united by water. This is a distinctive political phenomenon difficult to match elsewhere in medieval Europe which is worthy of consideration and which has had very little consideration.⁴

WATERWAYS AND LORDSHIP POWER CENTRES

Starting off with the all-important matter of maritime geography we have two groups of islands, Orkney and Shetland, located between Norway and the British Isles, and very marginal to these two territorial masses. However, the southern group, the Orkney Islands, are only a short distance from the north mainland of Scotland, although separated from it by the turbulent waters of the Pentland Firth. This waterway and the waters separating Orkney from the more northerly Shetland Isles were no barrier to colonists from Britain who settled these islands in prehistoric times. In the late Iron Age they were part of the kingdom of the Picts which covered the northern part of what is now called Scotland, and the name 'Orkney' dates from that period and is derived from the Celtic language which they, presumably, spoke. The name Shetland is Norse and different from its pre-Scandinavian name which was *Innsi Catt* ('The Isles of

³ Another duality, a 'cultural duality', is relevant. This is more usually associated with the medieval west of Scotland where the blending of Gaelic and Scots culture is becoming more fully recognized. In the northern earldoms there was blending of Norse and Scots cultures.

⁴ The author is more careful now to refer to this political unit as the 'joint' earldoms of Orkney and Caithness, rather than the 'dual' earldom. Because they remained separate earldoms the concept of a 'dual' earldom is misleading.

Cats'); this is the same totemic term as lies behind the origin of the first element of the Norse name Caithness (ON *Katanes*) for the extreme north-east portion of the Scottish mainland. The province of Cait included the whole of Caithness and Sutherland.⁵ Links had therefore already been established between the north Scottish mainland and the off-shore islands long before the Norse arrived. When the vikings dominated the northern waters, the sea passage around the north of the British Isles was an important maritime feature which they needed to control. This was a crucial sea route for maintaining communication between different parts of the northern world. In order to control and police it, the two provinces of the Orkney Islands (where the tribe of the Orc lived) and the north Scottish mainland (the land of the Cataibh) had to be in the hands of the same warlords and viking pirates—and eventually their political successors. This factor made the Orkney–Caithness connection quite important; if a Norse earl had ruled the islands and a Scottish earl had ruled Caithness, control of the waterway would have been disputed. It is the importance of this waterway which led to the two earldoms becoming established and continuing to co-exist for five hundred years. It helps to explain why the earldoms never separated and were never divided between different members of the earldom kindred.

Although the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland had formed part of the Pictish world in the first centuries of our era, the Celtic culture established in these islands was, if not obliterated by the Scandinavian influx in the eighth and ninth centuries, very much dominated by the new arrivals from the east. All traces of the Celtic language were erased and the vikings became the dominant component in both Orkney and Shetland.⁶ So the Northern Isles

⁵ W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland: Being the Rhind Lectures on Archaeology (Expanded) Delivered in 1916* (Edinburgh, 1926), p. 30; the Gaelic name for Sutherland is *Cataibh*, from *i Cataibh* ('among the Cats').

⁶ This continues to be a matter of dispute between historians and archaeologists, however. See, for example, B. Smith, 'The Picts and the Martyrs,

were divorced from the culture of Scotland for some centuries. This was not so certainly the case in Caithness on the north Scottish mainland, where the indigenous population survived to some degree and increasingly so further south, down the north Scottish mainland through Sutherland.⁷ The place-names are evidence of a very dominant Norse settlement in the north-eastern part (the 'Ness' of Caithness), but this toponymic evidence becomes more evidently intermingled with Celtic nomenclature further south-east and westwards towards the coast.⁸ The culture of Caithness most probably became a hybrid mix of Norse and Celtic—and that of Sutherland even more Celtic—as the Middle Ages progressed. Naturally, southern Scottish culture became an increasingly important element in the Norse settlements of the north Scottish mainland, particularly as the kings of Scots came to regard this territory as part of their realm and were able, by the late twelfth century, to lead expeditions right into the heart of the Caithness earldom. The territorial part of the earls' domain was inevitably going to become integrated into the medieval Scottish kingdom. This process stopped at the Pentland Firth, however, and the islands of Orkney and Shetland remained a part of the maritime world of the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean until, and even beyond, the date when the islands were pledged to Scotland in 1468–9.

In the viking world power and expansion were based on control of the seaways, and the location of the islands in the Atlantic made them obvious targets for the warriors with ships who were able to cross open seas with ease. Western Norway faces out to sea and is

or Did the Vikings Kill the Native Population of Orkney and Shetland?', *Northern Stud.* 36 (2001), 7–32 and J. Bäcklund, 'War or Peace? The Relations between the Picts and the Norse in Orkney', *Northern Stud.* 36 (2001), 33–48.

⁷ So called because it was the 'southern land' (ON *Sudrland*) to the Norse communities in Caithness and Orkney.

⁸ See place-name map in B. E. Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, Scotland in the Early Middle Ages 2 (Leicester, 1987), fig. 25.

divorced from the interior of the country by mountain ranges which can only be crossed easily in summer. However the coastal communities have a sea route up and down the coast, sheltered by chains of islands from the rougher waters. This is the 'north way' (the meaning of the name 'Norway'), leading to the northern hunting grounds and also leading round the southern province of Jæren into the Skaggerak and Viken and south-eastern Norway. It was only a stage further to cross the North Sea to Shetland and Orkney and the radius of maritime contacts from Bergen in western Norway includes Shetland within the same diameter as Trondheim or the southern tip of Norway. The radius of maritime contacts from Stavanger includes Orkney as well as western Denmark (see Figure 1). Once the viking ship had crossed the stretch of open water between Norway and Shetland (which can be done in twenty-four hours with a good wind), then it could sail within sight of land all the way south-west to Ireland and the Irish Sea. Shetland was a strategic base for moving further north and west to the Faeroes and Iceland and the Orkney Isles were a nodal point in the maritime route-ways around the British Isles. Situated as they are at the very north of Scotland they provide a base for access down the western and eastern coasts to the whole of Britain, so that control of these islands was crucial for navies which had plans to raid or conquer Scotland and England. They provided a power base for ambitious conquerors and plentiful resources for supply of provisions.

The Orkneys were a group of islands which had many favourable features for settlement and the exercise of political power. The Mainland of Orkney (the biggest central island) is surrounded by the north isles such as Rousay, Sanday and Westray and the south isles of Burray and South Ronaldsay, all within easy sailing distance of the main power centres on Mainland.⁹

⁹ The main island in the Orkneys is called Mainland and it is spelled with a capital 'M' to distinguish it from the Scottish mainland spelled with a lower case 'm'.

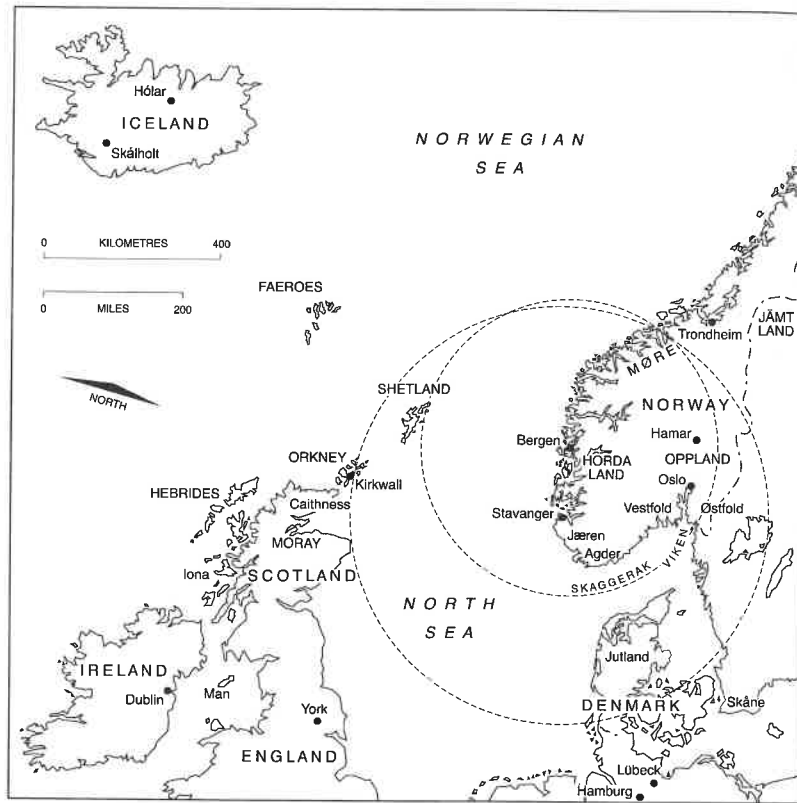


Figure 1: Map of Norway and Scotland, showing how the radius of maritime contact from Bergen in western Norway includes Shetland within the same diameter as the district of Møre, south of Trondheim. The radius of maritime contact from Stavanger extends to Orkney and the south of Jutland. Copyright: author's own.

The earliest power centre of the earls of the tenth and eleventh century was on the Brough of Birsay, on the west Mainland coast, which provided easy access to the western sea route. In the twelfth century Orphir became an important earldom estate; it lies on the north side of Scapa Flow, the large sheltered inland sea which has provided a refuge for fleets throughout history. The islands around Scapa Flow protect this inland harbour and the island of Hoy particularly provides shelter from the south-west gales. The urban centre of Kirkwall grew up at a strategic point on an isthmus connecting Scapa Flow with the route to the north isles of Orkney and it has provided an accessible political, commercial and ecclesiastical power hub from the twelfth century until the present day. Above all Scapa Flow gives direct access to the Pentland Firth, the waterway that divided the two earldoms of Orkney and Caithness, but which was also the main route for sailing north around Scotland. Of course this waterway united, rather than divided, the two earldoms in terms of medieval contact and as already noted, made it imperative that the earls maintained control of the Firth. The perils of navigating the tidal streams and rips which swirl along the Firth twice a day—as well as the feared whirlpool of the Swelkie—should not be underestimated. The sagas provide plenty of examples of disastrous shipwrecks of people whose loss caused grief and dislocation back home.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for the earls with their followings and local watchmen who knew the dangers of the Firth well, it was quite possible to maintain political control over the two sides of the Firth and combine the island domain with the territorial one in a joint power base, difficult though that may seem to us today.

The joint earldoms were really a tripartite maritime lordship, consisting of Shetland, Orkney and Caithness, all three divided by rough waters (Figure 2). At the northern extremity lay Shetland, an independent archipelago with its own culture and distinctive geography. Composed of much harder and older rocks than Orkney

¹⁰ Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 21.

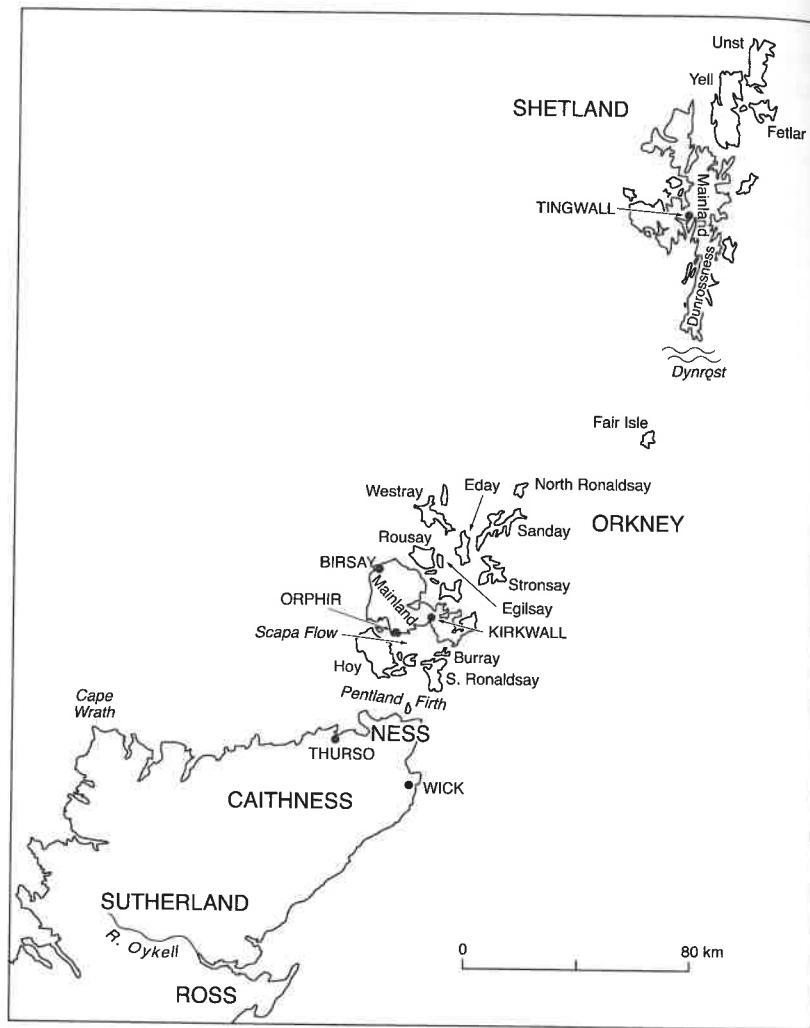


Figure 2: Map of the three parts of the earldom lordship—Shetland, Orkney, Caithness. Copyright: author's own.

(except for the southern peninsula of Dunrossness) Shetland is far less fertile with respect to arable culture, although it has excellent pasture for stock-raising. It is divided by deep voes, like miniature fjords, with large islands at the northern end of the archipelago. It was less easy to maintain political control over this extensive seascape, although the *þing* site at Tingwall provided an important social and cultural meeting point, being well placed for access from both north and south for the Shetland farmers to attend the annual Lawthing assembly.¹¹ Shetland was an integral part of the Orkney earldom until it was brought directly under the control of the Norwegian crown in 1195 as a result of the treacherous behaviour of Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson.¹² Once the most northerly component of the earldom had been lost, the surviving combination of Orkney and Caithness (which remained a joint lordship for nearly another two hundred years) was pulled inevitably in a southerly direction.¹³ Shetland remained the most closely connected with Norway of the three component parts, being nearest to the western province of Hordaland and the administrative centre at Bergen. When the earls no longer possessed Shetland they would not be so closely connected with Bergen, although they would still be obliged to attend the royal court there for their installation and for important meetings.

Despite the linking of the two earldoms and the survival of the conjoint comital establishment it was of course the case that the earls were subject to two very different political systems and that they were earls within quite separate national entities. The earls of Orkney were

¹¹ The *þing* ('public assembly') was the meeting of the annual assembly of chieftains and farmers and was common to all Norse communities: Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, pp. 206–9.

¹² *Orkenyinga saga*, ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit 34 (Reykjavik, 1965), ch. 112 (hereafter OS); *Sverris saga*, ed. Þorleifur Hauksson, Íslenzk fornrit 30 (Reykjavik, 2007), ch. 75.

¹³ B. E. Crawford, 'The Joint Earldoms of Orkney and Caithness', in *The Norwegian Domination and the Norse World c. 1100–c. 1400*, ed. S. Imsen, Norgesveldet Occasional Papers 1 (Trondheim, 2010), 75–98, at p. 90.

part of a kingdom where power was maintained by maritime access; Norway has been called a 'sea-borne realm' in the period before the mid-thirteenth century. After that there was a change from kingship based on sea to royal dominion based on land, although administrative structures in place maintained royal authority over the islands in the west.¹⁴ It was at this same period that the term *skattland* came into use in Norway to describe those external parts of the Norwegian kingdom which paid tax (ON *skattr*).¹⁵ This term is used in the 'Landlaw' of Magnús lagabœtir ('lawmender') issued in 1274, which was also introduced into the skattlands as a new national Lawcode.¹⁶ This period saw the development of Norway into a medieval kingdom on the lines of the countries of western and northern Europe, and the new law of hereditary succession to the throne meant that the king was also recognized as sovereign overlord of the skattland territories. The inhabitants of skattlands were theoretically considered to be royal subjects. This new concept was brought into the Norwegian realm just at the time that the Hebrides were lost, but Iceland and Greenland submitted to royal overlordship. There was a 'state-formation process' by which the peripheral Atlantic communities were incorporated into the medieval kingdom.¹⁷ The earls were also incorporated into this political structure nominally, although they retained a semi-independence, being so far removed from the main centres of royal authority.

¹⁴ S. Imsen, 'Introduction', in *The Norwegian Domination and the Norse World c. 1100–c. 1400*, ed. S. Imsen, Norgesveldet Occasional Papers 1 (Trondheim, 2010), 1–34, at p. 22.

¹⁵ *Historia Norvegiae* describes the islands in the west as 'tributary' a century earlier but this was a looser definition of the rendering of occasional tribute rather than regular payments of *skattr* as implied by the term *skattland*. *Historia Norvegiae*, ed. I. Ekrem and L. B. Mortensen (Copenhagen, 2003), pp. 64–5.

¹⁶ S. Imsen, 'From Tributes to Taxes', in *Taxes, Tribute, and Tributary Lands in the Making of the Scandinavian Kingdoms in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Imsen, Norgesveldet Occasional Papers 2 (Trondheim, 2011), 13–29, at pp. 16–17.

¹⁷ Imsen, 'Introduction', p. 30.

This is something of a contrast to the earldom of Caithness, which was part of the mainland of Scotland and therefore always territorially part of the political structures in the kingdom. This fact seems to have been acknowledged by the earls from almost the beginning of the earldom, at least as far as can be understood from *Orkneyinga saga*.¹⁸ This was entirely based on territorial links and sea power did not enter into the picture. Land-based authorities have a simpler task in front of them when they develop theories of national identity and a kingdom grows towards its natural boundaries—at least where the boundaries are defined by the sea. However, the kings of Scots were rather slow to get marching on the road to the creation of a single and undivided kingdom, for throughout the earliest period of the earldoms' history there were several political groupings in north Scotland, all of them vying with each other to dominate militarily. The ongoing struggle of the kings of Alba to defeat these rivals occupied two centuries and delayed the process of extending Scottish authority to Caithness.

EARL SIGURÐR I HINN RÍKI ('THE MIGHTY'), FIGURE 3

When we turn to consider the supposed achievements of the first Orkney earl, Sigurðr Eysteinnsson, we find his expansion on to the north Scottish mainland to be the only remembered record of his contribution to the earldom story.¹⁹ In fact it is the account of his death from a wound inflicted by the infected tooth of his defeated enemy, Earl Mælbrigte, and that of his burial in a mound on the banks of the River Oyckell which take up most of the chapter concerned with him.

¹⁸ Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 64.

¹⁹ *OS*, p. 31.

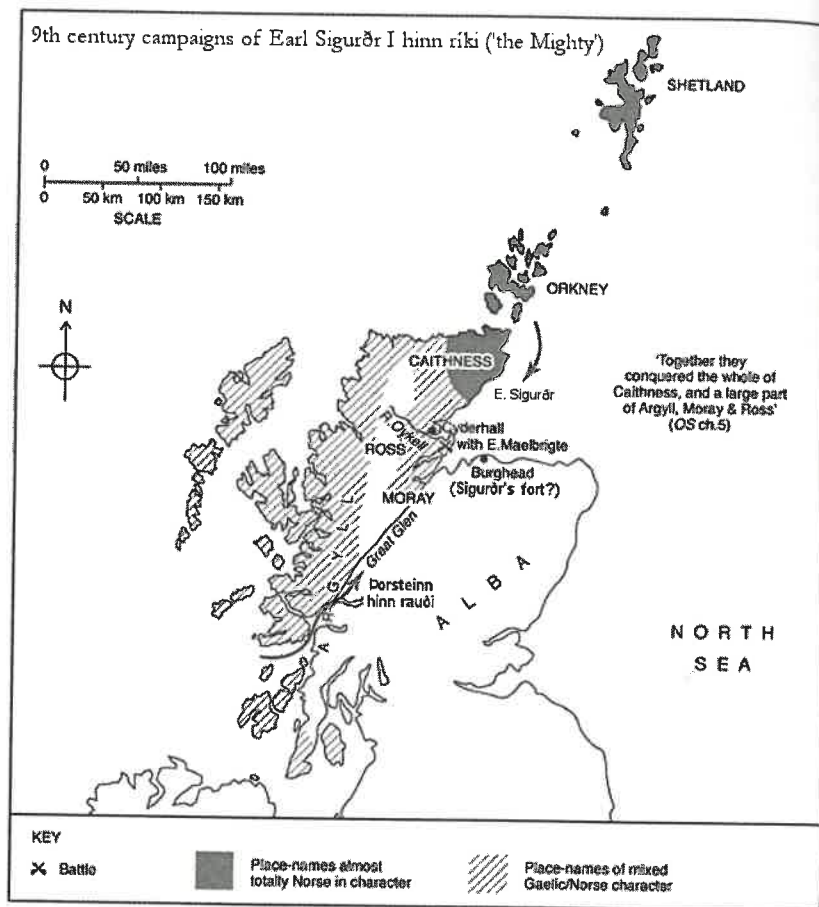


Figure 3: Map of the campaigns of Earl Sigurðr I hinn ríki and his co-ordinated attack on north Scotland with Þorsteinn hinn rauði. Copyright: author's own.

The explanation given for the death of Earl Sigurðr appears to reflect an Irish-Gaelic folk motif of the 'avenging head', one of several folkloric elements which it has been suggested indicate a mixed Gaelic-Norse culture in Orkney in the Middle Ages.²⁰ Was Sigurðr getting his just deserts for behaving like a Celt in cutting off the heads of his defeated enemies?²¹ We can also note that Sigurðr is said to have strapped the severed heads to the victors' saddles 'til ágætis sér', and that whilst riding back home, they 'hrósuðu sigri'.²² Perhaps his ensuing death—of a somewhat derisory nature—was told as an example of hubris for his show of unseemly pride?

The aggressive programme of conquest and settlement initiated by Earl Sigurðr on the north mainland marked the beginning of sustained political contact with the Celtic-speaking population of north Scotland. This was a situation which differs from the Norse conquest in the islands, where we have no historical evidence of any kind to inform us about the relationship of the incoming Norse with the native inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland. The Icelandic sources, in contrast, provide a picture of hard-won ascendancy by the Norse conquerors in Caithness during the tenth century.

There are many interesting aspects of this new phase of conquest which particularly concern us because it is the beginning of the link between Orkney and Caithness which leads to the circumstances of joint earldoms. First of all we should ask: why did the earls move across the Pentland Firth onto the north Scottish mainland and

²⁰ B. Almqvist, 'Scandinavian and Celtic Folklore Contacts in the Earldom of Orkney', *SBVS* 20 (1978–9), 80–105, at pp. 97–99.

²¹ I. Beuermann, 'Jarla Sögur Orkneyja, Status and Power of the Earls of Orkney According to their Sagas', in *Ideology and Power in the Viking and Middle Ages. Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes*, ed. G. Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson et al., *The Northern World* 52 (Leiden, 2011), 109–62, at p. 129.

²² *OS*, p. 31, 'to make a show of his triumph'; '[were] flushed with their success', *Orkneyinga saga, the History of the Earls of Orkney*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards (London, 1978, reprinted London, 1981), p. 27. Used for all translations of *Orkneyinga saga* given here, unless otherwise stated.

embark on long wars with native rulers of the area? It was a hard struggle to win control and this fact emerges clearly from *Orkneyinga saga*. First of all there was an opportunity to join forces with another famous viking warrior, Þorsteinn hinn rauði ('the red') (supposedly the grandson of Ketill flatnefr ['flat-neb'] from the Hebrides and the son of Auðr in djúpuðga ['the deep-minded'] and Óláfr hvíti ['the white'], king of Dublin), who was also seeking to expand onto the Scottish mainland. He would have easily been able to move north-east up the Great Glen route and meet Sigurðr in Moray and Ross. There was a famous partnership and many different Old Norse sources refer to their campaigns and their successes in conquering 'Katanes allt ok mikit annat af Skotlandi, Mærhœfi ok Ros'.²³

The motive which does explain much of the aggression of war-bands in the early medieval period was the need for plunder. The leaders of war-bands on the move needed to present their military followers with booty that would satisfy a demand for wealth and would suffice for payment and reward. The vikings plundered monasteries, towns and fertile settlements throughout north and west Europe in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries for this reason and to accrue wealth which they took back home. There is no evidence of any wealthy monastic or ecclesiastical establishments anywhere in

²³ OS, p. 8: 'The whole of Caithness and a large part of Argyll, Moray and Ross', p. 27. *Landnámabók* says the two of them won 'meir en hálf Skotland' ('more than half of Scotland'), *Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, in *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók*, Íslensk fornrit 1 (Reykjavik, 1986), p. 136. What the Icelandic authors meant by 'Scotland' is always difficult to translate but in this instance it may be that the western dominion of the Gaels is meant, i.e. Argyll. However, the statement in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* (or the *Scottish Chronicle*) that 'Northmen wasted Pictland' or 'ravaged Pictavia' at this time is possibly referring to the same campaigns: *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500–1286*, ed. and trans. A. O. Anderson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1922, reprinted Stamford, 1990), I, 395 (hereafter *ES*); B. Hudson, 'The Scottish Chronicle', *Scottish Hist. Review* 77 (1998), 148–61, at pp. 153–4. See also Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 57.

Scotland north of Easter Ross.²⁴ But this was frontier territory which provided opportunity for expansion and settlement. If control was won as far as the Firthlands (to the Moray and Cromarty Firths) the earls and their followers would have access to the natural land-route which cuts across the Highlands of Scotland, the Great Glen.²⁵ The Firthlands of Easter Ross were also fertile grain-growing territory, with access to good timber resources. The need for access to timber resources is likely to have been as urgent in the late ninth century as it was to the later earls in the eleventh century.²⁶

Moray and Ross are specifically mentioned in *Orkneyinga saga* as territory conquered by Þorsteinn and Sigurðr. Another indicative statement is 'þar lét hann [Sigurðr] gera borg á sunnanverðu Mærhœfi' that Sigurðr built a fort 'southwards in Moray', although this has caused historians some worries.²⁷ It does strengthen the possibility that some control was exercised over the north coast of Moray.²⁸ The advantage of controlling both shores of the Moray Firth

²⁴ There were early Christian monastic sites at Tarbat and Rosemarkie in Easter Ross. Excavations at the former (Portmahomack) have produced evidence that it was indeed attacked earlier in the ninth century from the evidence of demolition and burning which has been uncovered, as well as the destruction of Christian Pictish sculpture: M. Carver, *Portmahomack. Monastery of the Picts* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp. 135, 138, 144.

²⁵ The potential of this land route, and its significance for earldom strategies as opposed to the long and dangerous sea-route round Cape Wrath have been discussed in B. E. Crawford, 'The Making of a Frontier. The Firthlands from the 9th–12th centuries', in *The Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, ed. J. R. Baldwin (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 33–46, at pp. 40–4; Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, pp. 22–24, 67; B. E. Crawford and S. Taylor, 'The Southern Frontier of Norse Settlement in North Scotland. Place-names and History', *Northern Scotland* 23 (2003), 1–76, at p. 6.

²⁶ B. E. Crawford, *Earl and Mormaer. Norse-Pictish Relationships in Northern Scotland* (Groom House, 1995).

²⁷ OS, p. 8: 'southwards in Moray', author's own translation.

²⁸ The translation by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards is given as 'in the south of Moray' which of course points to an inland location which would be a

(ON *Breiðafjörðr*, 'Broad-firth') would be that it would enable these sea-borne warriors to access the water routes leading to the Great Glen. However, any control which might have been established by them over the Great Glen route would have been difficult to maintain permanently and Sigurðr's burial north of the Dornoch Firth certainly points to that waterway being the southern limit of effective control at the date of his death c. 892. The absence of any known pagan graves in Ross is an indicator that Norse settlement did not take place in Ross in the late ninth century.

These geographical factors may have been basic to the driving ambitions which led Sigurðr and Þorsteinn to come together and join forces in what the saga presents as a very wide-ranging strategy of conquest. The immediate consequences would have been the settlement of Norse speakers along the coasts of Caithness and Sutherland, penetrating some distance up the straths or dales which run deep into the mountainous interior. Warfare would be followed by consolidation of possession and the settlement of Norse speakers on the occupied land.²⁹ The place-names of Caithness and Sutherland are the source of evidence which give us assurance on this aspect of conquest. How long this process took is not known, for the

highly unlikely location: p. 27. Sigurðr would establish a coastal stronghold which he could access by ship. The Old Norse 'á sunnanverðu Mærhœfi' may be a slightly ambivalent indication from a northern perspective that he caused a fort to be built somewhere 'to the south' in Moray. The Dark Age coastal stronghold at Burghead, on the north coast of Moray, would have been an ideal location and there is some archaeological evidence that it was attacked in the late ninth/early tenth century. A silver horn-mount of ninth-century date, apparently of Anglo-Saxon type, was also discovered there but this is no unequivocal evidence for the fort ever having been in Norse possession. J. Graham-Campbell and C. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland. An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 105.

²⁹ B. E. Crawford, 'Earldom Strategies in North Scotland and the Significance of Place-names', in *Sagas, Saints and Settlements*, ed. G. Williams and P. Bibire, *The Northern World* 11 (Leiden, 2004), pp. 105–24, at p. 108.

chronology of the different names ending in the elements *-ból*, *-bólstaðr* and *-setr* is not easily established.³⁰ However, we should see the process as a colonial off-shoot from the lands already settled in Orkney.

SIGURÐR II HLQÐVISSON DIGRI ('THE STOUT'), FIGURE 4

Sigurðr digri had the same by-name as was later given to King Óláfr Haraldsson, the saint, and which is usually translated as 'the stout', although it carries the connotation of 'powerful warrior'. The late medieval *Earls' Genealogy* describes him as 'robustus ac corpulentus, magnus et strenuissimus bellifer'.³¹ He is said to have been 'höfðingi mikill ok víðlendr' by *Orkneyinga saga* and he brought Caithness under his sway.³² This would be an essential preliminary to expansion west, which marks the next phase of earldom history.

Although the information about Sigurðr Hlqðvisson in *Orkneyinga saga* is minimal, we do get the specific statement in *Njáls saga* that the earl's territories in Scotland included Ross and Moray, Sutherland and the Dales, which would be not unlikely if he then expanded his authority to the Hebrides, as he is said to have done.³³ We have an account of the battle of *Dungalsgnípa* (Duncansby Head) in *Njáls saga*, in which the Scots earls Hundi, Melsnati and Melkólfr were involved.³⁴ There is also the second battle of Skitten in

³⁰ Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, pp. 108–14.

³¹ Translated into Scots as 'the wicht and corpulent, ane grete and maist stowt battellare': *Bannatyne Club Miscellany: Containing Original Papers and Tracts, Chiefly Relating to the History and Literature of Scotland*, 3 vols., Publications of the Bannatyne Club 19 (Edinburgh, 1827–55), III, 75.

³² OS, p. 24: 'another great chieftain [who] ruled over several dominions', p. 36.

³³ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzk fornrit* 12 (Reykjavik, 1954), pp. 206–7. 'Dalir' probably refers to the river valleys of the north mainland which run down to the Pentland Firth: Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 65.

³⁴ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 207.

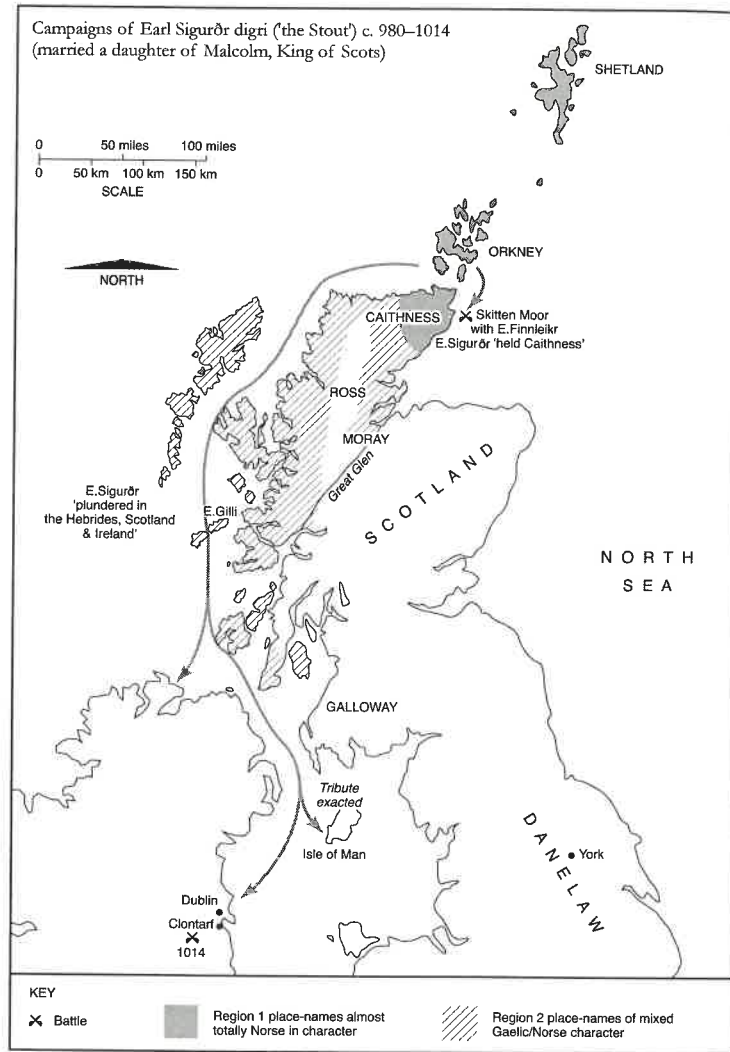


Figure 4: Map of Earl Sigurðr II Hlǫðvisson's campaigns, showing his activity in western Scotland and the Irish Sea. Copyright: author's own.

Orkneyinga saga, in which an Earl Finleikr challenged Sigurðr to combat.³⁵ Together these strongly suggest that there was continuing tension between the Norse earls and the native family, alongside the rulers of Moray, in north-east Caithness.

The story of Earl Sigurðr's banner is what the author of *Orkneyinga Saga* was most concerned to record and it must have been a well-known feature of both this earl's victories and his defeat, appearing as it does in both saga accounts relating to his success against Finleikr in Caithness and his death at Clontarf.³⁶ The story involves the influence of fate, the role of his mother—called 'margkunnig' ('a sorceress')—and the magic banner, woven with the symbolic figure of a raven: the bird of Óðinn.³⁷ As his mother predicted, it brought her son victory at Skitten but caused the death of three successive standard-bearers. The importance of such banners in viking martial endeavours is well-recorded and we need not doubt that Earl Sigurðr would have had his own, whether it was woven for him by his mother or not and whether it had the magic qualities attributed to it or not.³⁸ Eventually this magic banner brought about the death of the earl himself, for he carried it in the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, because by that stage no-one else would.³⁹

EXTENSION OF ROYAL POWER OVER THE EARLS (FIGURES 5 AND 6)
Once the dynasty of the rulers of Moray was finally crushed by a series of campaigns in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the Scottish kings were able to extend their authority north of the Beaul

³⁵ It is possible that Finleikr can be identified with Finlay, the father of Macbeth: Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, p. 72.

³⁶ *OS*, pp. 25–7.

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 24–5.

³⁸ See discussion in Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland*, pp. 196–7 for other examples.

³⁹ *OS*, p. 27.

Firth.⁴⁰ They were greatly aided in their ability to take military expeditions to the northern extremity of mainland Scotland by the mistakes of Earl Haraldr and his son Earl Jón, with regard to the episcopal authorities in Caithness. Caithness was therefore a province of the kingdom of Scotland which, despite the different ethnicity of the population and the different culture, was always going to be brought closer into the kingdom of which it was an integral part, when the opportunity offered. It was incorporated by a process of heavy fines, rather than by the installation of royal officials or by the confiscation of earldom lands (although the kings attempted to do that). The bond with the king of Scots was sealed by the personal submission of the earl, symbolised by an oath of fealty and a feudal ceremony of homage, and in return the earl was granted his earldom with the full freedom to run the northern province much as he liked.

The way in which the earl of Orkney was bound to his Norwegian overlord was somewhat different, although it also involved a ceremony of submission, and each earl was supposed to renew his allegiance to each new king. These ceremonies are mentioned in passing in the course of *Orkneyinga saga* and we cannot be sure that the later descriptions were not influenced by the saga-writer's own experience of the earls' relationship during the time of writing. The record of the events of 1210 when the joint earls Jón and Davíð Haraldsson went to make their peace with King Ingi and Jarl Hákon galinn is likely to be an accurate rendering of how the two earls were reconciled, as it was recorded in an almost contemporary saga. They had to pay a large fine (for not having been to give their allegiance sooner) and give security and hostages, 'oc suerie dennem troskab oc lydighed'. Then 'paa det sidste giorde K. Jngi dennem til sine Grefuer ofuer Ørnkøi oc Hætland, met saadan vilkor, som siden

⁴⁰ R. Oram, *Domination and Lordship: Scotland 1070–1230*, The New Edinburgh History of Scotland 3 (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 185–194.

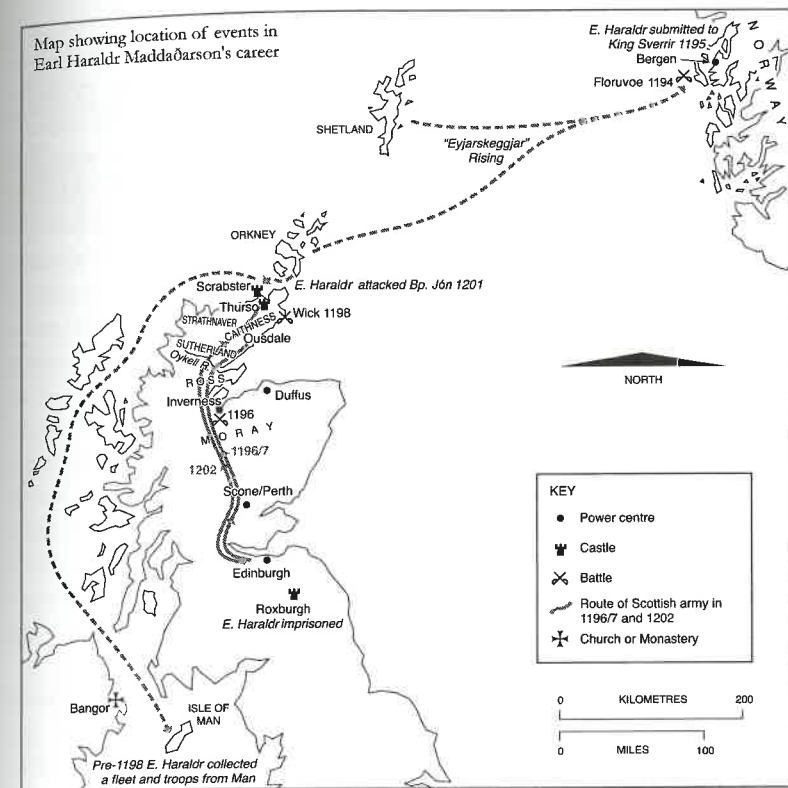


Figure 5: Map showing the far-flung location of events in Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson's life (1158–1206). Copyright: author's own.

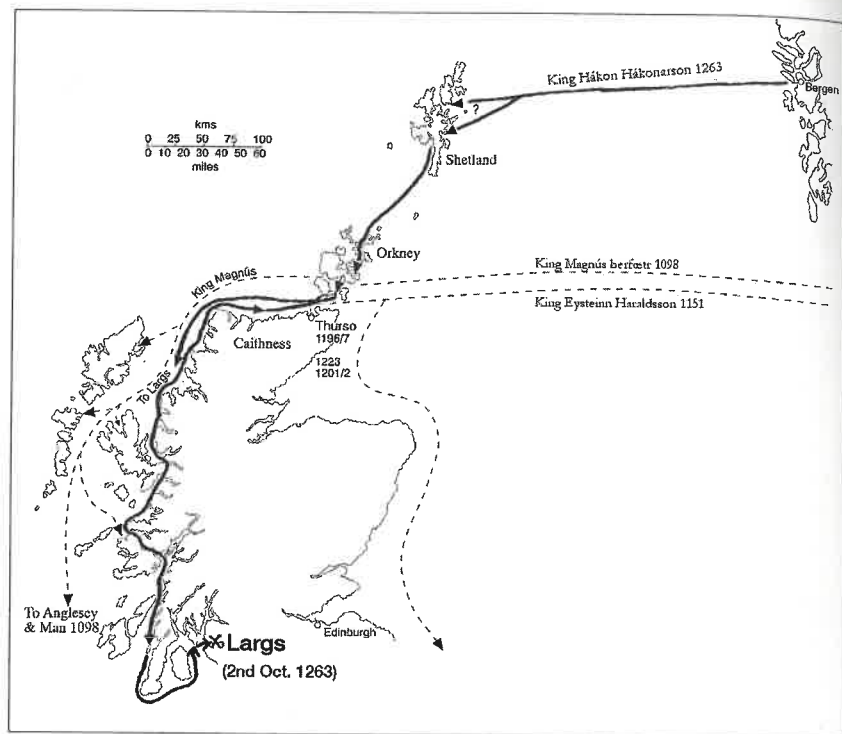


Figure 6: The route taken by King Hákon Hákonarson's fleet in 1263, showing the routes of earlier expeditions by Norwegian kings.⁴¹

⁴¹ Based on the author's map in P. G. B. MacNeill and H. L. MacQueen, *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 448.

bleff holdit indtil deris Dødedag'.⁴² This indicates that the grant of the earldom to the heir was not an automatic development, but conditional upon certain terms, which could be set by each king with the new earl. It was a situation which developed after their father Haraldr Maddaðarson had been tangentially involved in the Eyjarskeggjar rising against King Sverrir and paid dearly for his disloyalty, losing Shetland and having his powers over his earldom reduced. Earls in Norway were few and far between by this date and were regarded with some suspicion, as can be seen from the law governing the king's *hirð* ('retinue/military following').⁴³ It was a title of nobility which by this date was only granted to members of the royal family for life; and in a situation where there was no system of primogeniture, these powerful individuals could be regarded as a threat by those already seated on the throne.⁴⁴ The earls of Orkney were always an exception, in that it was allowed that the sons of an Orkney earl had a right to claim the earldom, but it came to be regarded as more of an official appointment than an inherited family right to the title.

The two earldoms therefore developed into somewhat different honours, both in nature and in status. We have no indication of how the earls regarded these differences but they must have been very aware of them; the circumstances of their relationship with their two overlords—the king of the Scots to the south and the king of Norway over the sea to the east—must have been rather important factors in

⁴² *Soga om Birkibeinar og Baglar: Bøglunga sogur*, ed. H. Magerøy, Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-institutt. *Norrøne Tekster* 5 (Oslo, 1988), p. 121: 'and to swear loyalty and obedience'; 'in the end, King Ingi made them his earls over Orkney and Shetland, upon such terms as were adhered to until their death-day', *ES* II, p. 381.

⁴³ See *Hirdloven til Norges Konge og hans Håndgangne Men*, ed. S. Imsen (Oslo, 2000).

⁴⁴ It was common for more than one king to share power until later in the twelfth century, when primogeniture was at last acknowledged as the normal way for the crown to be inherited.

their lives. They faced two ways and the dichotomy of two cultures, Scots and Norwegian, was something they lived with and adjusted to, even those new earldom dynasties which moved north from Southern Scotland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

From the point-of-view of the kings and royal administration the earldoms were peripheral to the political heartlands of both Scotland and Norway. The importance of the concept of 'centre and periphery' has been much debated by medieval historians and as the young kingdoms grew into political units the communities on the fringes of their geographical, national terrain were seen to be natural objectives for domination and incorporation. The islands off the Scottish coasts were certainly highly peripheral, if less so than Iceland and Greenland, which could only be reached by extremely long voyages of two to four weeks.⁴⁵

Eventually the anomalous position of the joint earldom and the divided loyalties of the earls came to a crisis point when a hostile relationship between the two kings developed over the position of the Hebrides. In 1263 King Hákon Hákonarson led a naval expedition west in order to assert his authority over the *Suðreyar* ('Southern Islands/Hebrides'). The allegiance of the earl of the time, Magnus Gilbertsson, was put to the test and he found himself in an impossible situation. Whichever of his overlords he supported would bring him into deep disfavour with the other one. The Norwegian evidence tells us that he failed to support King Hákon by not following the Norwegian fleet south-west from Orkney to the Hebrides, whilst the Scottish evidence indicates that strong measures were implemented in the north, with Earl Magnus possibly being constrained by hostage-taking and imprisonment.⁴⁶ Therefore the earl was considered guilty of a failure of allegiance by both kings and this

⁴⁵ Imsen, 'Introduction', p. 27.

⁴⁶ B. E. Crawford, 'The Earldom of Caithness and the Kingdom of Scotland 1190–1266', in *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland* ed. K. J. Stringer (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 25–43.

resulted in a reconsideration of the terms of his appointment when he visited King Magnús lagabœtir in 1267 and had to agree to many 'special arrangements', although we are not told in more detail what these consisted of.⁴⁷ In Scotland there is evidence of fines being imposed on Caithness and on the earl by way of punishment. In a world of territorial kingdoms and state structures it was very difficult for such an anomalous situation to continue. The fact that it did survive for nearly another century must be a result of the peripheral position of the earldoms on the fringes of the national entities of Norway and Scotland. Geography and maritime geography underlie the historical reality of the joint earldoms of Orkney and Caithness.

FROM BORDER BOUNDARY TO NATIONAL FRONTIER

The waterway which divided—or united—the earldoms of Caithness and Orkney has already been mentioned several times. We can never ignore this important feature in our study of the history of the two earldoms. The very fact that these two earldoms on the northern and southern sides of the Pentland Firth were held by the same family reflects an early medieval age of fluid frontiers and personal lordship over men and their territories.⁴⁸ That picture is exemplified by the many incidents in *Orkneyinga saga* showing the earls and their relatives and followers moving to and fro across the Firth as if it were one social and political arena, without any difference of national identity. The supposed agreement between the Norwegian king Magnús berfœtr ('barelegs') and the Scottish king Edgar which followed King Magnús's war-cruise around the northern and western coasts of Scotland in 1098 may have defined the various spheres of authority in

⁴⁷ *Hakon's Saga: the Saga of Hacon and a Fragment of the Saga of Magnus*, trans. Sir G. W. Dasent, *Icelandic Sagas 4, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, RS (London, 1894), ch. 319.

⁴⁸ S. Imsen, 'The Scottish-Norwegian Border in the Middle Ages: 3rd Anderson Memorial Lecture', in *Scandinavian Scotland—Twenty Years After*, ed. A. Woolf (St Andrews, 2009), pp. 9–30, at p. 12.

theory, but it probably made very little difference to the situation on the ground—or over the water. The activity across the Firth as described in the twelfth-century section of *Orkneyinga saga* (chapters 58–108) certainly gives no impression that the actors in the dramatic incidents were in the least bit concerned about whether they were acting out their roles on a Norwegian or a Scottish stage. If it were now a 'boundary' it should have made the Norwegian kings wary of infiltrating the southern side of the Firth and yet we hear about King Eysteinn Haraldsson capturing Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson in the harbour of Thurso in 1151.⁴⁹ The authority of the Scottish kings in Caithness at this time (especially that of King David) was exercised by attempts to influence the inheritance of the earls and by the promotion of the Scottish Church in the area, rather than by their own royal presence. That authority was also expressed in a charter of King David addressed to Earl Rognvaldr (as earl of Orkney) as covering the local people in Orkney as well as Caithness.⁵⁰ The Firth as a boundary did not seem politically relevant to the Scottish king either.⁵¹

This situation changed with the hostilities of 1263 and then the establishment of peace with the Treaty of Perth in 1266. The Pentland Firth became more of a national frontier thereafter as the Norwegian king's authority over Orkney was established legally in the Treaty. Nonetheless the earls continued to hold both Orkney and Caithness until the fourteenth century when political expediency made it desirable for the kings of Scotland to bring the earldom of Caithness into their own hands. The kings of Norway attempted to

⁴⁹ *OS*, p. 240.

⁵⁰ G. W. S. Barrow, *Charters of King David I: The Written Acts of David I King of Scots, 1124–53 and of his son Henry Earl of Northumberland, 1139–52* (Woodbridge, 1999).

⁵¹ We also know that King Hákon sent a letter to the men of Caithness when he was in Orkney with his fleet in 1263, warning them to pay a fine or else to expect hard terms, *Hákonar saga gamla*, ed. Guðni Jónsson, *Konunga sögur 3* (Reykjavik, 1957), p. 434.

treat the position of the Orkney earl as an official position which was held on contract, with the grant of title conditional on the earl's behaviour. The nature of the earls' authority changed with the times, and the times were changing. The days when an earl could be the vassal, or subject, of two kings were over and the Stewart kings were determined to extend their national frontier out beyond the Pentland Firth and around the Northern Isles. Orkney and Shetland eventually passed to Scotland in 1468–9 as a pledge for the dowry of Margaret, the daughter of King Christian of Denmark–Norway on her marriage to James III of Scotland.

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Late medieval Iceland saw the growth of administrative writing: documents, witness-letters and written inventories which were kept at the episcopal sees, monasteries and large manors.¹ While this corpus has been used as evidence for the history of late medieval Iceland, it has not yet been studied extensively in its own right, nor has it yet been approached through the framework of administrative literacy. As I will demonstrate, the study of the growth of administrative writing in late medieval Iceland allows for the examination of a site of overlapping cultural and social values. Icelandic witness letters, for instance, recorded the Norse tradition of oral contracts, providing fascinating insight into the form and ritual of the oral contract, while also supplanting them with Latinate formulae. In this article, I will begin to explore some of the issues relevant to the later Middle Ages in Iceland through a study of the development of the *máldagabækur*, collections of church inventories made by the bishops of Skálholt and Hólar from the early fourteenth century onwards.

Administrative writing, or perhaps more accurately 'pragmatic' literacy, came late to Iceland, particularly compared to the arrival of

¹ Traditional Old Norse normalisation fails to reflect the sound changes characteristic of the fourteenth-century and later (perhaps most noticeably, *o* and *ø* became merged with *ö*, while *œ* merged with *æ*). Here I use a standard fourteenth-century normalisation, following the standard in Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir's *Íslensk Fornrit* edition of fourteenth-century bishops' sagas. See also the recent *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Poetry on Christian Subjects*, 2 vols., ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 7* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), I, lxxv-lxxvii, for that project's extensive list of 'standard normalisations' for fourteenth-century material.

the written word.² While the earliest written texts in Iceland date from the early twelfth century, the oldest Icelandic administrative documents date from the beginning of the fourteenth century. For a basic measure of the increase in documentary writing, we need only to look at the numbers of extant individual documents in Icelandic, which increased dramatically over the course of the fourteenth century. There are almost no preserved documents from before 1300. Of the approximately 1,500 original documents preserved from the period before 1540, less than fifty date from 1370 or earlier. More than fifty percent of currently preserved documents date from the second half of the fifteenth century. Within the period 1300–70, the number and quality of the extant documents increases significantly after 1350 and over half of the documents preserved from this period date from 1350–70.³ In addition to numbers, there is a noticeable difference in standardization and consistency from the 1340s to the 1370s. Dates and locations, frequently omitted in the earliest documents, became standard by the middle of the century and the names on witness lists developed into the standard of first name and patronymic, followed by a marker of occupation or status.⁴

² On recent scholarship on different forms of literacy, see M. Mostert, 'Reading, Writing and Literacy', in *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*, ed. P. Hermann (Odense, 2005), pp. 261–85, at pp. 263–5. On administrative writing and literacy, see M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993).

³ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 'Manuscripts and Paleography', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. R. McTurk, (Oxford, 2005), pp. 245–64, at p. 249. These figures come in the context of a palaeographical survey and do not include documents which exist in later registers or copies.

⁴ See for instance the small collection of documents written at Hólar in the time of Bishop Egill Eyjólfsson (1332–41) in *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenskt fornbréfasafn*, ed. Þorlákr Jónsson *et al.*, 15 vols. (Copenhagen and Reykjavík, 1857–1972), II, 673–5, 735–6 (hereafter DI).

Of course, there are certain earlier forms of writing, such as the law codes which were written in Iceland by a very early date, which might reasonably be considered within the framework of administrative or pragmatic literacy. At the same time, it is undeniable that certain forms of practical writing, such as charters, inventories and other similar documents, did not appear in Icelandic until long after other kinds of texts. The implications of this late development of administrative literacy, as well as its separation from the advent of written technology in Iceland, have not yet been fully explored. However, they have been previously noted in examinations of Norwegian administrative literacy, which followed a similar trajectory.⁵

The fourteenth century was an important period in the history of manuscript production. While only a little over 100 manuscripts survive from before 1300, about 300 extant medieval Icelandic manuscripts can be dated to the fourteenth century.⁶ Indeed, recent scholarship has begun to emphasize the importance of the fourteenth century in the history of Icelandic manuscript production and saga writing. A renewed interest in the environment in which sagas were written down and a new concern with manuscript variations in their own right has led saga scholarship to reconsider the role of fourteenth-century scribes and manuscript producers.⁷ Additionally, a large number of named authors and scribes in the fourteenth century

⁵ J. R. Hagland, 'On Evaluating the Growth of a "Literate Mentality" in Late Medieval Norway', in *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. S. Ranković et al., Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 20 (Turnhout, 2010), 397–409, at p. 398.

⁶ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, 'Manuscripts and Paleography', p. 250; see also Stefán Karlsson, 'Íslandsk bogekspört til Norge í middelalderen', in *Stafkerókar*, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykjavík, 2000), pp. 188–205.

⁷ See for instance M. Driscoll, 'The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New', in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. J. Quinn and E. Lethbridge, The Viking Collection. Studies in Northern Civilization 18 (Odense, 2010), 85–102.

has allowed for the study of relationships between producers of texts, their patrons, assistants, fellow-authors and other interested parties.⁸ There was, for instance, a marked correlation between the circle of elite clerics responsible for the writing of bishops' sagas, annals and religious and secular literature in the fourteenth century and those producing pragmatic writing in this early period. Indeed, most of the writing which has been preserved from the early to mid fourteenth century was produced by a small and interconnected group of individuals. As Michael Clanchy writes of twelfth-century Britain:

The experience of medieval writers and makers of records cuts across the lines dividing knowledge which scholars draw today. Although writers became gradually more specialized as the demand for documents increased, in the twelfth century and earlier they tended to perform a variety of functions. One of Thomas Becket's biographers, William Fitz Stephen, describes how he was a draftsman in his chancery, a subdeacon in his chapel, a reader in his law court, and on occasions a judge.⁹

The same was true of Icelandic clerics in the fourteenth century. By far the most obvious example in fourteenth-century Iceland is that of Einarr Hafliðason, who was the author of the bishop's saga *Lárentius saga*, as well as that of a significant portion of the annal known as *Lögmannsannáll*.¹⁰ Indeed, Einarr wrote his portion of the annal in his

⁸ See especially Elizabeth Ashman Rowe's study of the production of *Flateyjarbók* at the end of the fourteenth century: E. A. Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389* The Viking Collection. Studies in Northern Civilization 15 (Odense, 2005), esp. pp. 14–22 and 205–62. See also E. A. Rowe, 'Literary, Codicological, and Political Perspectives on Hauksbók', *Gripla* 19 (2008), 51–76.

⁹ Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 82.

¹⁰ *Lárentius saga*, in *Biskupa Sögur III, Arna Saga Biskups, Lárentius Saga Biskups, Sögupáttur Jóns Halldórssonar Biskups, Biskupa Ættir*, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, Íslensk Fornrit 17 (Reykjavík, 1998), 214–441; *Lögmannsannáll*, in *Íslandske*

own hand. In addition to original compositions, he translated a miracle-story from Latin into Icelandic.¹¹ Einarr was also an important figure in early Icelandic administrative writing. Four or five documents have been identified as having been written in his own hand.¹² Others bear the mark of his influence: a land transfer document from 1385, for example, bears the note that Einarr 'firir sagði fyrgreindu kaup'.¹³ Einarr was one of the most frequent witnesses in the north of Iceland, appearing in over two dozen documents, including some of the oldest clear examples of witness-letters in Iceland.¹⁴ Einarr's writing thus touched on a wide number of disparate genres: bishops' sagas, annals, documents and *exempla*, as well as drafting or copying. Although his is a particularly noticeable example, it is by no means the only one, as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe's study of the production of Flateyjarbók makes clear.¹⁵ In this context, the study of Icelandic administrative writing may prove a fruitful avenue of research, leading to further insights into the distinctive upsurge in writing and manuscript production in fourteenth-century Iceland. Indeed, I would argue that fourteenth-century writing and manuscript production cannot be fully understood outside of the context of administrative writing.

Finally, no study of the growth of written records can proceed without an examination of the interrelated spheres of orality and

annaler indtil 1578, ed. G. Storm, Det norske historiske kildeskriftfond. Skrifter 21 (Christiania, 1888), 233–96.

¹¹ *Afburðr á Finnmörk*, in *Alfræði Íslenzke: Íslandsk Encyclopædisk Litteratur*, ed. Kristian Kålund, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1908–1918), I, 57–9.

¹² The precise number is debated. See *Íslandskæ Originaldiplomer indtil 1450*, ed. Stefán Karlsson (Copenhagen, 1963), p. xxxix and documents nos. 15, 24, 26, 27 and 39; on Einarr's full body of work, see *Biskupa Sögur* III, lxxvii; and DI III, 64, 72.

¹³ DI III, 382–4, 'dictated the above-described agreement', author's own translation. All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴ DI II, 417, 484, 673, 674, 675, 746; DI III, 55–6, 65, 71, 74, 76–7.

¹⁵ Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, see above, p. 30, n. 7.

literacy and the uses and audiences of works currently preserved in written form.¹⁶ Iceland, like Norway, had well-established legal traditions before the arrival of writing and continued to use these legal traditions until the end of the Middle Ages and afterwards. Written contracts, charters and legal documentation thus represent, in the words of Hallvard Magerøy, a 'literary superconstruction'.¹⁷ Oral formulae and juridical symbols retained their importance and the written documents worked to supplement rather than supplant the oral contract. In Old Norse studies, there has been significant interest in the relationship between the oral and the written. To date, however, this interest has stopped short of an approach which might attempt to integrate 'literary' writing with the varied and textually complex corpus of documentary texts produced in Iceland from c. 1300 to the end of the Middle Ages. While scholars such as Agnes Arnórsdóttir have pointed to the fourteenth century as the period in which Icelanders shifted from oral to written contracts, a comprehensive study of this process has yet to be undertaken.¹⁸ In fact, while recent scholarship has begun to take an interest in bureaucratic writing and pragmatic literacy in the Nordic countries, this, too, is a very new field.¹⁹

MÁLDAGAR AND MÁLDAGABÆKUR

Within this project of developing a stronger understanding of the production and use of written records in late medieval Iceland, the

¹⁶ On this question, and with particular reference to Scandinavia, see especially the recent volume *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed. S. Ranković.

¹⁷ H. Magerøy, 'Diplomatics', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. P. Pulsiano and K. Wolf (New York, NY, 1993), pp. 137–8, at p. 137.

¹⁸ Agnes Arnórsdóttir, 'Marriage Contracts in Medieval Iceland', in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400–1600*, ed. P. L. Reynolds and J. Witte Jr (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 260–389, esp. p. 383.

¹⁹ On Norwegian administrative writing, see J. R. Hagland, *Literacy i norsk seinmellomalder* (Oslo, 2005).

collections of *máldagar* provide an excellent corpus for study. Early in the fourteenth century, the bishops of Hólar and Skálholt began to collect the *máldagar*, originally kept at individual parish churches, into centralised registers called *máldagabækur* (sg. *máldagabók*). The earliest *máldagabók* was produced in the time of Auðun Þorbergsson, bishop of Hólar from 1313 to 1322, and Magnús Stefánsson in particular has suggested that this practice was imported from Norway by Bishop Auðun as part of an effort to centralise control of the Church and increase administrative and economic efficiency.²⁰ This argument has yet to be fully explored and much remains unknown about the uses of the *máldagabækur* and about the process of collecting this information from individual parish churches.

The *máldagabækur* are collections of church inventories called *máldagar*. These commonly include a description of the land, livestock and other properties held by the church. Many also list in some detail the inner contents of the churches, naming items such as the number and quality of vestments or liturgical books, as well as the treasure and decoration inside the church. The *máldagar* themselves appear to be a unique form of documentation, with no clear parallels elsewhere in Christian Europe. The information contained in the *máldagar* is a remarkable resource and the *máldagar* lend themselves particularly well to economic and social histories. They have been used for studies of book collections and of building and material culture.²¹ They also formed the basis of Margaret Cormack's well-known study of saints' cults in Iceland.²² Most inventively, Benedikt Eypórsson used the number of vestments recorded in the *máldagar* from the church at

²⁰ Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál: Studier i islandske egenkirkelige og beneficalrettslige forhold* (Bergen, 2000), pp. 86–7.

²¹ T. Oleson, 'Book Collections of Medieval Icelandic Churches', *Speculum* 32 (1957), 502–10; Kristján Eldjárn, *Um Hólaðakirkju: leiðsögn um kirkju og kirkjugrip*, 2nd ed. (Reykjavík, 1963); Magnús Már Lárusson, 'Auðunn rauði og Hólaðakirkja', *Árbók hins Íslenska fornleifafélags* 1960 (1960), 5–18.

²² M. Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400* (Brussels, 1994).

Reykholt to calculate the number of priests there, using a ratio of 1.6 vestments to a priest.²³ As can be seen by this partial listing of recent research making use of the *máldagar*, the value of these texts for historians lies especially in their detailed information on aspects of the economic and social history of Iceland. The inventories list not only the most precious or interesting assets of the church, but also mundane and poorer-quality items, sometimes specifying the quality of individual items. Taken as an aggregate, the *máldagar* create a remarkably full picture of daily life, economic activity and popular piety in Iceland. What is not yet fully understood, however, are the reasons for their production, their uses and for whom they were intended.

The *máldagar* carry a meaning of 'contract' as well as 'deed' and one of the original purposes of the *máldagar* was to lay out the obligations of the patron to their church at the time of the consecration of the church.²⁴ The *máldagar* were written and kept at individual churches, where there was an obligation to have them read aloud on a yearly basis.²⁵ The oldest extant *máldagi* is from the church at Reykholt and the oldest portions of this document have been dated to 1155.²⁶ This is an unusual document: the vast majority of the *máldagar* are only known from the *máldagabækur*, collections made by the bishops and held at the bishopric.

The *máldagabækur* have a rather complex textual history. The oldest extant collection is that of Bishop Auðun rauði ('the Red') of Hólar, first undertaken in 1318.²⁷ Two subsequent collections exist from the diocese of Hólar for the fourteenth century: that of Bishop

²³ Benedikt Eypórsson, 'Reykholt and Church Centres', in *Church Centres: Church Centres in Iceland from the 11th to the 13th Century and their Parallels in Other Countries*, ed. Helgi Þorláksson, Snorrastofa rit 2 (Reykholt, 2005), 105–16.

²⁴ Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power and Social Change 1000–1300* (Oxford, 2000), p. 293.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 293.

²⁶ *Reykjarholtsmáldagi*, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykholt, 2000).

²⁷ This collection has been edited in DI II, 425–89.

Jón skalli ('the Bald') Eiríksson (1359–90), which was written sometime after 1359 and is incomplete, containing only the records of approximately fifty churches, and that of Bishop Pétur Nikúlasson (1390–1415), which is dated to 1394.²⁸ There are two final *máldagabækur* from Hólar dating from before 1550: Bishop Óláfr Rögnvaldsson's *máldagabók* from 1461 and a *máldagabók* known as *Sigurðarregistur* dating from 1525.²⁹ Bishop Óláfr Rögnvaldsson's 1461 *máldagabók* is the earliest of the *máldagabækur* of Hólar to have survived in a contemporary copy. The manuscript containing the *máldagabók*, AM 274 4to, dates from the second half of the fifteenth century and contains multiple hands, with later entries that have been dated to as late as 1510.³⁰ *Sigurðarregistur* also exists in a contemporary copy, dated to 1525.³¹ The first three *máldagabækur*, together with Óláfr Rögnvaldsson's 1461 *máldagabók*, are found in a paper manuscript produced in 1639 for Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason; he later had a second copy made in 1645.³² A fragmentary manuscript dating from around 1500 contains a portion of Bishop Pétur's *máldagabók* which corresponds to the text of the 1394 *máldagabók*, but also includes a number of later interpolations.³³ This is only an imperfect description; many aspects of the manuscript history of the *máldagabækur* remain unclear and, not having been edited since the nineteenth century, they are in desperate need of textual study. The *máldagabækur*, like the individual *máldagar*, were not produced at one time but instead, like the Icelandic annals, were continually added to and they continued to be maintained years after the original date of

²⁸ DI III, 155–78; DI III, 511–95.

²⁹ See table below.

³⁰ See the description in DI V, 247.

³¹ DI IX, 293–334.

³² DI II, 424. The first manuscript (from 1369) has the shelfmark Biskupsskjalasafn Nr. 3, 4to.

³³ The manuscript has the shelfmark AM 273 II, 4to; see the note to the text in DI III, 510.

compilation.³⁴ In original documents such as the individual *Reykholtsmáldagi* or Bishop Ólafur Rögnvaldsson's *máldagabók* these interpolations can be identified by a change in hands, while for the fourteenth-century *máldagabækur* it can be much more difficult to track these additions.

For the diocese of Skálholt, the textual history of the *máldagabækur* is even more complex. The two fourteenth-century collections are *Hítardalsbók*, dated to the middle of the century, and the collection of Bishop Vilchin (1391–1405), dated to 1394.³⁵ As Margaret Cormack has cautioned, however, the dating of these collections of *máldagar* cannot be made with any precision, given the poor textual evidence.³⁶ Significantly less documentary material has survived from Skálholt than from Hólar, making it much more difficult to place the *máldagabækur* in the context of other forms of pragmatic writing, or to identify the local textual communities with the same amount of detail as is available from the north of Iceland.

Even from this very cursory description of the textual history of the *máldagabækur*, some of the difficulties involved in their study and use as sources for the history of the late medieval Church, or of the development of written records in Iceland, begin to become apparent. Their dating is extremely unreliable. For someone interested in a particular *máldagi* within a collection, this becomes even more difficult; an individual *máldagi* could have first been written much earlier than the collection, or it could, in whole or in part, postdate the collection by as much as half a century or more. Any analysis of the *máldagabækur* must take these constraints into consideration; at the same time, it may well be that further research situating the creation

³⁴ On the textual history of the Icelandic annals, especially *Flateyjarannáll*, see E. A. Rowe, 'The Flateyjarbók Annals as a Historical Source', *Scandinavian Jnl of Hist.* 27 (2002), 233–42.

³⁵ Vilchin's *máldagabók* can be found in DI IV, 27–240.

³⁶ Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland*, p. 26.

of the *máldagabækur* in their social and intellectual milieu will serve to elucidate some of the problems inherent in their textual transmission.

DATE	NAME	BISHOP	DATES OF EPISCOPATE
1318	<i>Auðunarmáldagi</i>	Auðun rauði Þorbergsson	1313–22
1360	<i>Máldagar Jóns skalla</i>	Jón skalli Eiríksson	1358–90
1394	<i>Máldagar Pétrs biskups</i>	Pétri Nikulásson	1390–1411
1461	<i>Óláfsmáldagabók</i>	Ólafur Rögnvaldsson	1458–95
1525	<i>Sigurðarregistur</i>	Jón Arason	1524–50

Table 1. *Máldagabækur* from Hólar

Recent scholarship on the *máldagar* and *máldagabækur* has tended to focus on the *máldagar* independently of the collections in which they are most often found. Scholars such as Orri Vésteinsson have identified about 130 *máldagar* dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as elements of later *máldagar* which might be acknowledged as remnants from this earlier period.³⁷ Similarly, by emphasizing the long history of the *máldagar* and focusing on elements which remained relatively stable over time, such as tithing areas, scholars have been able to use the fourteenth-century *máldagabækur* as evidence for the history of the Church in a much earlier period.³⁸ In this way, the *máldagabækur* have been used to study the Church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when Christian institutions were first developing in Iceland and when Icelandic

³⁷ Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland*, pp. 101–08, 293.

³⁸ For a recent example of this use of the *máldagabækur*, see the collection *Church Centres*, ed. Helgi Þorláksson.

society existed in its most recognizable state, the one described in the sagas of Icelanders.

The exception to this approach to the *máldagabækur* is Magnús Stefánsson's research on the Icelandic Church, which has consistently focused on the later Middle Ages.³⁹ On the subject of the creation of the *máldagabækur*, he argued that these were put together as part of a centralising effort on the part of the Norwegian bishops. Indeed, Magnús Stefánsson has specifically credited Bishop Auðun with the initiative of introducing this policy in Iceland, suggesting that Auðun may have been inspired by Norwegian registries of churches.⁴⁰ While significant in its attempt to explain the creation of the *máldagabækur* as more than simply a passive collection preserving information from an earlier period, this explanation is still not entirely satisfactory. Although the existence of these Norwegian registries may explain Auðun's interest in developing a centralised, written bureaucracy, they cannot really be compared to the *máldagar*, which are uniquely detailed inventories, following a specific formula for layout and contents. While the Norwegian example may have provided the inspiration to develop a written bureaucracy within the Icelandic Church, it cannot fully explain this specific interest in Icelandic church inventories.

MÁLDAGABÆKUR AND ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION

In the early fourteenth century, the Icelandic Church began to develop more complex administrative structures, under the influence of the archbishopric at Niðaróss and the wider international Church. In 1269–97 Bishop Árni Þorláksson engaged in an extended struggle

³⁹ Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*. Earlier work criticizing negative historical assessments of Ormr Ásláksson and other Norwegian bishops can also be seen as part of this project of reassessing the later Middle Ages on their own terms; Magnús Stefánsson, 'Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju í íslenskum búningi', in *Saga Íslands: Samin að tillutan Þjóðhátíðarnefndar 1974*, ed. Sigurður Lindal (Reykjavík, 1974–90), III, 111–257, esp. pp. 248–53.

⁴⁰ Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*, pp. 86–9.

with lay aristocrats over control of church property, a dispute known as *staðamál*.⁴¹ One result of *staðamál* was the creation of a benefical system in Iceland whereby the churches known as *staðir* (churches which owned the home-farm) came under the control of the bishop.⁴² This in turn created a renewed relationship of patronage and service between the bishops in Iceland and the priests who served them in hopes of acquiring a lucrative benefice.

A second consequence of the *staðamál* reforms of the late thirteenth century was a new interest in and need for episcopal bureaucracies. In part, this interest can be seen as an offshoot of the new benefical system and the bishops' newly-won control over church properties and church taxes.⁴³ Another factor may have been the increased number of Norwegian bishops and bishops appointed by the archbishop of Niðaróss. Bishop Auðun rauði, who produced the oldest *máldagabók* in 1318, had previously been a canon of the cathedral of Niðaróss and likely travelled to Iceland for the first time only after he was made bishop of Hólar in 1313. Over the course of the fourteenth century, the vast majority of the bishops of both Hólar and Skálholt came from positions within the Norwegian church. These bishops may well have needed a strong administrative structure in order to receive information about their new Icelandic dioceses and effectively govern them. Finally, developments in ecclesiastical administration in fourteenth-century Iceland were the product of concerted efforts on the part of the metropolitan to bring the dioceses in Iceland even further into line with the customs of the international Church. In 1327, Archbishop Eilífr commanded all the bishops in the archdiocese of Niðaróss to have *officiales*.⁴⁴ Throughout

⁴¹ The best account of *staðamál* is Magnús Stefánsson's 'Frá goðakirkju til biskupskirkju'.

⁴² Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*, p. 48.

⁴³ See Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, 'Íslenskt samfélag og Rómakirkja', in *Kristni á Íslandi*, ed. Hjalti Hugason *et al.*, 4 vols. (Reykjavík, 2000), II, 1–188, at p. 140.

⁴⁴ DI II, 630–1; Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, 'Íslenskt samfélag', p. 140.

Scandinavia, the emergence of the position of *officialis* was tied to the promulgation of the *Liber sextus* in 1298, which regularized the position of *officialis* throughout the Christian West.⁴⁵

It is within this context of increased focus on ecclesiastical administration that the collections of *máldagar* first appeared. We can begin to formulate some hypotheses regarding the bishops' motives for creating these collections through the short preambles which introduce each of the *máldagabækur*. There are of course some dangers in giving too much weight to the preambles, the foremost of which being that these might have been added at a later date, perhaps at the time when the *máldagabækur* were brought together into a single manuscript in the mid sixteenth century. However, the existence of a very similar preamble in Bishop Óláfr Rögnvaldsson's 1461 *máldagabók*, in a contemporary manuscript, suggests that they may well have been original.⁴⁶ The preamble to Bishop Auðun rauði's 1318 *máldagabók* reads:

[Þ]a er lidid var fra hingadburd vorz herra Jesu Christi þusund þriuhundrud og xvij aradogum Byskupsdæmis wírduligs herra Audunar Byskups. liet hann jnnvirdiliga skoda og reikna Godz allra kýrckna j sijnu Býskupzdæmi, og þad a þessa Bok skraseta hann fann sannligast og rietligast. huad huor kyrckia ætti ad fornu og nyu j lausu og fostu.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ On the development of the diocesan offices, especially the role of the official, see Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, 'Íslenskt samfélag', p. 140; see also E. Sigurdson, 'The Church in Fourteenth-Century Iceland: Literacy, Ecclesiastical Administration and the Development of an Elite Clerical Culture' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Leeds, 2011), pp. 97–106. Available at <<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/2610/>>.

⁴⁶ DI IV, 247.

⁴⁷ DI II, 425: 'In 1318, in the bishopric of the worthy Lord Bishop Auðun, he caused the goods of all the churches in his bishopric to be minutely examined and calculated and to write in this book that which he found to be most truthful and accurate regarding that which each church owned in moveable and unmoveable property, past and present'.

What is perhaps most immediately noticeable about the preface is the way it frames the creation of the *máldagabók* as the product of a comprehensive inventory of the diocese. Rather than describing the *máldagabók* as a compilation of pre-existing *máldagar*, Bishop Auðun's preface emphasizes instead the active process of surveying churches and creating data. Additionally, the preamble suggests—contrary to what is known about the process of creating the *máldagabækur*—that this book was to be seen as a single unit, produced at a single time and entirely under the guidance of Bishop Auðun. In short, the impression created by this preamble is that of a centralised administrative project undertaken by the new bishop of Hólar. This is a very different view of the *máldagabækur* than that which prevails in modern scholarship, which has been more interested in the longer oral and written tradition of the individual *máldagar*, as discussed above. The preamble to Bishop Auðun's *máldagabók* says nothing of the past, of longstanding tradition, oral or otherwise, or of the role of the *máldagar* as contracts between the churches and their lay patrons. Instead it presents us with an episcopal view of the *máldagabækur*, one which emphasizes the active role of the incoming bishop and the production of new data through a process of inventorying the churches in the diocese.

This preamble was copied in Jón skalli's 1360 *máldagabók* and Bishop Óláfr's *máldagabók* from 1461 with very little alteration.⁴⁸ These later *máldagabækur* add only the information that the *máldagabók* was compiled on the occasion of the bishop's first visitation around his diocese. In fact, this addition serves to reinforce the overall impression of a single administrative document produced by means of a well-established procedure, by specifying that the process of accumulating data took place during the bishop's visitation. The same can be seen in the preamble to Bishop Pétur Nikulásson's 1394

⁴⁸ DI III, 155; DI IV, 247. See also Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*, pp. 86–9.

máldagabók. The preamble dates its creation to the bishop's first visitation around the diocese in 1394, stating:

Anno domini CD°. ccc°. xc°. iiij . j fyrstann tíma er herra Petur visiteradi nordannlandz. reyknuduzt þuilljk ornamenta og kyrjrciu Eigner j faustu og lausu j Hóla Biskupzdæme sem hier fylgier.⁴⁹

An itinerary of Bishop Pétur's visitation has also survived, itself a remarkable document, confirming the dating of the visitation to 1394.⁵⁰ Additionally, an individual *máldagi* for the church at Viðidalstunga confirms the message from the preamble to Bishop Pétur's *máldagabók*. In its preamble, the individual *máldagi* claimed that it was made at the time of Bishop Pétur's visitation; apart from the addition of this preamble, the text of the *máldagi* is identical to the *máldagi* for Viðidalstunga preserved in Pétur's *máldagabók*.⁵¹ In addition to confirming the idea that the *máldagar* were created on the occasion of the bishops' first visitation, as outlined in the preambles, the existence of this loose *máldagi* might also provide more clues about the process of creating the *máldagabækur*. In particular, it suggests that it may have been standard practice to have a copy of each *máldagi* made at the time of the visitation, to be held at the parish church. This document is unfortunately preserved only in a very late copy and the language and contents may have been influenced by that of the *máldagabók*.⁵² At any rate, the *máldagabækur* are remarkably consistent in their claims that they were produced on the first visitation of the new bishop. Their assigned dates are also consistent with this

⁴⁹ DI III, 511: 'In the year of our Lord 1394, the first time that Lord Pétur went on visitation in north Iceland, the following ornaments and church properties were calculated in moveable and unmoveable property in the diocese of Hólar as here follows'.

⁵⁰ DI III, 507.

⁵¹ 'Anno Domini M°. ccc°. xc°. iiij . j fyrstann tíma er herra pietur visiterade nordann lands', DI III, 592 ('in the year of our Lord 1394, the first time that Lord Pétur went on visitation in the north of the country'). Cf. DI III, 538–40.

⁵² See the note to the text, DI III, 592.

suggestion, as all of the *máldagabækur* are dated to within a few years of the new bishop's consecration.⁵³

This view of the *máldagabækur* as the result of an active process of inventorying churches during the bishop's first visitation may be considered to be primarily rhetorical, given that it is clear from textual evidence that many of the *máldagar* were copied time after time. However, a small number of entries buried within the *máldagabækur* corroborate this impression of an active survey of churches and collection of new information. In particular, Bishop Pétur's *máldagabók* provides evidence for a later visitation carried out in 1399, not by the bishop, but by the two officials (*officiales*) of Hólar.

The *máldagi* for the church at Reykir, located midway through Bishop Pétur's *máldagabók*, opens with the claim that in 1399, 'jn festo vincentij þa er sijra þordur og sýra Steinmodur. reyknudu kyrckna gods vard so mykid gods kyrckiunnar a Reykium'.⁵⁴ This is then followed by the standard formulae of the *máldagi*. A second *máldagi*, that for Möðruvellir í Eyjafirði, also mentioned the visit of Þórðr and Steinmóðr in 1399. Möðruvellir was a *bændakirkja*, or farmer's church, meaning that the church did not own the home-farm. The farm was owned by secular landowners and this is reflected in its *máldagi*, which records a large number of donations from the family. On the occasion of the visit by Þórðr and Steinmóðr, the *máldagi* states that, 'Anno domini ccc°. xc°. nono. þa er sijra þordur og og sýra steinmodur reyknudu Gods kyrckiunnar a Modruvillum. handlagdi Sophia kyrckiunne þar til eignar ad auk alls þess. sem adur er skriffath'.⁵⁵ What follows is a description of the precise donations

⁵³ See above, Table 1.

⁵⁴ DI III, 530: 'on the Feast of St Vincent, when the Reverend Þórðr and the Reverend Steinmóðr assessed Church property, such were the goods of the church at Reykir'.

⁵⁵ DI III, 517: 'in the year of our Lord 1399, when the Reverend Þórðr and the Reverend Steinmóðr assessed God's church at Möðruvellir, Sophia gave to the church, in addition to all that which is written above'.

made by Sophia Eiríksdóttir, who became the owner of Möðruvellir í Eyjafirður after the death of her father, Eiríkr Magnússon.⁵⁶

What these two entries describe is essentially a follow-up visit taking place about five years after the initial visitation and presumably the writing of the first part of the *máldagabók*. While the preamble's claims that the *máldagabækur* were original creations and the product of an active process of inventorying could be understood only as rhetorical, these two entries suggest a similarly active process of collecting new data for the *máldagabók*, rather than copying existing *máldagar*. Here, though, we can see that the process of creating the *máldagabækur* was a continuous one, in which material was added and changed according to circumstances. Earlier *máldagabækur* include later additions that may well have been produced through a similar process, namely officials travelling to the churches and recording new information, but this process is hidden; no officials are named other than the bishop and there are no similarly explicit allusions to later visitations by administrative officials or by the bishop himself.⁵⁷

Þórðr Þórðarson and Steinmóðr Þorsteinsson were two very prominent members of the clerical elite at the end of the fourteenth century and each held positions as official and vicar-general (*ráðsmaðr*) at the end of the fourteenth century. They both died in the plague of 1402–4 and at their deaths were both described as official (*officialis*) of Hólar.⁵⁸ A charter from 16 April 1399 also names both Þórðr and Steinmóðr as officials; this is the first contemporary source

⁵⁶ There is also a family connection here, as Sophia's sister (unnamed) was Steinmóðr Þorsteinsson's concubine. She probably died in the plague together with Steinmóðr, because by 1415 another daughter of Eiríkr Magnússon, named Margarét, had inherited their property. DI III, 761–2.

⁵⁷ See for instance the *máldagi* for Breiðabólstaður í Vesturhópi from Bishop Auðun's *máldagabók*. While the entire collection is dated to 1318, the *máldagi* includes the record of a donation made by Bishop Egill Eyjólfsson, bishop of Hólar between 1332–41: DI II, 480.

⁵⁸ *Vatnsfjarðarannáll elzti*, published in *Annálar 1400–1800: Annales Islandici posteriorum saeculorum*, 8 vols. (Reykjavik, 1922–2002), III, 23.

corroborating that there were indeed two officials in the diocese of Hólar in the late fourteenth century.⁵⁹ In a document dated to 1396, Þórðr Þórðarson was described as *officialis* of Hólar, while Steinmóðr was named vicar-general, and indeed this was the more common configuration in fourteenth-century Iceland.⁶⁰ As vicar-general and official, and later as co-officials, Þórðr and Steinmóðr were both very active in the administration of the diocese of Hólar in the final decades of the fourteenth century. Bishop Pétur left Iceland in 1396, leaving Þórðr and Steinmóðr to manage the diocese. Having effectively taken over the role of bishop after Pétur's departure in 1396, the prominent role of Þórðr and Steinmóðr in the management of the diocese is further illustrated by their visitation in 1399.

The document from 1396 which names Þórðr Þórðarson as *officialis* and Steinmóðr Þorsteinsson as vicar-general provides an interesting addition to a discussion of ecclesiastical administrative documents at the end of the fourteenth century. The *máldagabækur* were not the only inventories being produced in fourteenth-century Iceland and this document was an inventory of the bishopric at Hólar, made when Bishop Pétur was preparing to travel from Iceland, leaving the bishopric in the hands of its vicar-general, Steinmóðr.⁶¹ The register detailed the church holdings of Hólar when it was turned over, presumably so that Steinmóðr could return it in the same state or better. This register focuses entirely on the goods inside the church, such as vestments, decorations and books; it makes no mention of the land holdings, dues, or other sources of income, nor does it describe the livestock or wealth of the bishopric. A small

⁵⁹ DI III, 643.

⁶⁰ DI III, 611.

⁶¹ '[E]r virdolighr herra herra petr med guds oc postolighs sætiz nad biskup a holum biodst til skips. en sira stæinmodr tok med stadnum', DI III, 611 ('when the reverend lord, Lord Pétur, bishop of Hólar by the grace of God and the Apostolic see prepared to set sail, and the Reverend Steinmóðr received the *staðr*').

number of inventories of Hólar have survived from the fourteenth century. Most focus even more explicitly on a single aspect of the management of Hólar: one is a list only of drift rights, for instance.⁶² A second is a more general list of the property of Hólar, although it, too, focuses primarily on livestock and loose goods.⁶³ These inventories are thus not in the same category of documents as the *máldagar* or *máldagabækur*, which are much more comprehensive general inventories. At the same time, the creation and preservation of these Hólar inventories can be seen as part of a similar process of developing written records at the bishops' sees in the mid to late fourteenth century. These documents were also closely tied to the position of the official and vicar-general. In addition to the 1396 inventory, undertaken by Steinmóðr as vicar-general, the account of drift rights was written by Einar Hafliðason, the influential official of Hólar from c. 1360–92.

CONCLUSION

A few brief conclusions can be drawn at the present stage about the development of the *máldagabækur*. Firstly, the *máldagabækur* were written in the context of a wide range of administrative activity. Moreover, they were written at a time in which a number of administrative documents, used for a range of purposes, were beginning to be produced and preserved, including other inventories. The production of the *máldagabækur* can thus be seen as one aspect of the more general trend towards the production and retention of written records. At the same time, their textual production was remarkably complex and multi-layered. Much like other documents, they contained a standardized formula and produced regularized information, in this case church inventories. But in spite of the veneration of standardization, the *máldagabækur* were a deliberate amalgamation of new inventories, or records of episcopal visitations, and a much

⁶² DI III, 277–85.

⁶³ DI III, 287–90.

older form of documentation, recording and affirming the contract made between a church and its patron. While the bishops and other producers of the *máldagabækur* emphasized the former process in their preambles to these collections, the preservation of this older format suggests that it, too, held meaning to late medieval Church administrators.

Secondly, the diocesan officers, elite Icelandic priests working at the diocesan level below the bishop, played an important role in the creation and maintenance of the *máldagabækur*, together with other ecclesiastical inventories from this period. This is significant, because it highlights the complex nature of the late medieval Church in Iceland, particularly in relation to its metropolitan in Norway. While bishops were consistently drawn from the ranks of the Norwegian and later Danish and other foreign clergy, the Icelandic Church continued to have a strong presence of Icelandic priests, managing the diocese and shaping its policies. Thus, the creation of the *máldagabækur*—and indeed the development of documentary writing more generally—cannot be understood simply as imported convention, brought to Iceland by the incoming Norwegian bishops. These bishops played a role, certainly, but their role was augmented and complemented by the efforts of a growing Icelandic administrative elite.

In the above discussion, I have done no more than scratch the surface of a complex topic about which a great deal more remains to be said. Indeed, much remains unclear both about the textual history of the *máldagabækur* and about the context in which these texts were produced. Future research might benefit from an examination of the different variations between the format and content of the different *máldagabækur* for instance, as well as from further investigation of the small number of loose *máldagar*, such as that from Viðidalstunga. In this article, I have attempted to highlight some of the possible avenues through which the *máldagabækur* might be approached within the framework of literacy studies. Further study in this area will

develop a stronger understanding not only of the history of the Church and administrative structures in Iceland, but also of the role that administrative literacy played in developing the history of literacy and writing in an otherwise undervalued period in Icelandic literary history.

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To speak of English boroughs and their relation to ethnic identity in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066 sees a rather stark juxtaposition of two aspects of scholarship that seemingly have been subject to almost completely inverse fortunes in terms of their diachronic popularity. For questions concerning the issue of ethnic identity in post-Conquest England, the latter part of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first really marks the period in which these began to receive more serious scholarly consideration. This development was likely a result of an increasing willingness to accept that, while it might not be appropriate to speak in the medieval period of nations as one might understand the term today, medieval people doubtlessly had a sense of identity and belonging to a wider community: a *gens*, or *natio* for example.¹ As such, scholars have thought it important to assess what effect the significant coming together of identity groups after 1066 had on English society,

¹ Some useful works on this subject include P. J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002); S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford, 1997), esp. ch. 8; *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Forde, L. Johnson and A. V. Murray (Leeds, 1995); A. D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford, 2003); R. Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity', *Jnl of Med. and Early Mod. Stud.* 31 (2001), 39–56. See also discussion and references in H. M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066–c. 1220* (Woodbridge, 2003), ch. 1.

particularly in terms of the social practices of its inhabitants, and their perceptions of identity.²

In particular, much attention has been paid to just how, when and why settlers who arrived in England from the continent came eventually to regard themselves—and be regarded—as English. Arguably the most comprehensive recent work on the subject is Hugh Thomas's 2003 monograph in which he elucidated some mechanisms through which he believed interaction and assimilation between the English population and continental settlers were effected. In particular, Thomas saw townspeople and the urban sphere as crucial to this process, although he was at pains to point out that it is necessary to appreciate the fact that assimilation was the result of many interrelated factors.³ Moreover, while this work doubtlessly did much to augment our understanding of post-Conquest identity, the chapter on urban interactions also had the effect of highlighting the importance of studying post-Conquest

² Again this work is fairly comprehensively surveyed in the introductory chapters of Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, esp. chs. 4–7. Some notable works include A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 2005); J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000), esp. chs. 7–9; C. Clark, *Words, Names and History: Selected Writing of Cecily Clark*, ed. P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995); G. Garnett, 'Franci et Angli: the Legal Distinctions between People after the Conquest', *ANS* 8 (1986), 109–37; I. Short, 'Tam Angli Quam Franci: Self-Definition in Anglo-Norman England', *ANS* 18 (1996), 153–76; I. Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *ANS* 14 (1991), 229–49; E. van Houts, 'Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England', in *Normandy and its Neighbours: Essays for David Bates*, ed. D. Crouch and K. Thompson (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 237–70. While work has most usually focused on Norman and English identities it is important to note that in fact many distinct ethnic identity groups from various other parts of the continent were also present in England at this time. See for example, E. Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World, 1066–1216*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series 88 (Cambridge, 2012).

³ Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, ch. 7.

English towns, a subject that has received rather little scholarly attention relative to many others within post-Conquest historiography.

This paper is concerned with one particular aspect of English urban history that, unlike the subject of identity, suffered a marked decline in popularity as the twentieth century progressed, namely that of boroughs. Any modern scholarship on English boroughs owes its genesis and indeed the greater part of its knowledge, to works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of which were concerned with the definition of boroughs in legal terms and how they may or may not be considered as distinct from rural villis and their feudal obligations.⁴ This legal approach fell out of fashion, however, towards the middle of the twentieth century as the focus shifted towards a greater emphasis on socio-economic concerns in particular.⁵ More recently, the increasing prevalence of anthropological theory as a tool of historical enquiry has spawned some novel views on the impact of boroughs. In particular, Keith

⁴ The seminal work remains J. Tait, *The English Medieval Borough: Studies on its Origins and Constitutional History* (Manchester, 1936). See also C. Stephenson, *Borough and Town: A Study of Urban Origins in England* (Cambridge, MA, 1933); H. M. Cam, *Liberties and Communities in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Local Administration and Topography* (Cambridge, 1944); A. Ballard, *The Domesday Boroughs* (Oxford, 1904); F. W. Maitland, *Township and Borough: Being the Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in the October Term of 1897; Together with an Appendix of Notes Relating to the History of the Town of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1898); M. Bateson, *Borough Customs*, 2 vols., Publ. of the Selden Soc. 18 and 21 (London, 1904–6).

⁵ For some useful work of this period, see M. W. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages: Town Plantation in England, Wales and Gascony* (Gloucester, 1988); M. W. Beresford and H. P. R. Finberg, *English Medieval Boroughs: A Hand-list* (Newton Abbot, 1973); S. Reynolds, *An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns* (Oxford, 1977); H. Swanson, *Medieval British Towns*, Social Hist. in Perspective Ser. (Basingstoke, 1999); R. H. Hilton, *English and French Towns in Feudal Society: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, 1995); D. Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City* (London, 1997), esp. ch. 5.

Lilley has sought to consider the French boroughs established within or alongside English towns after the Conquest in relation to the question of ethnic identity. He argues that the founding of these new French boroughs had the effect of buttressing ethnic divisions between the town's English and French inhabitants through the establishment of what he terms 'placed identities'.⁶ It is this issue that forms the basis of the following discussion.

To briefly outline this concept of placed identities more clearly, Lilley's argument is centred upon the assertion that the new boroughs of Norman creation were intended to establish French communities separated from and privileged above the native English population. This was achieved both through the granting of distinct and favourable laws to the new boroughs as well as the construction of a new physical settlement adjoining the established town. It was common for these new boroughs to be planned around a marketplace, which afforded both burgesses and lord financial benefits, and established the borough as a high status area. The French borough at Hereford provides a classic example of this process. Here, a new borough, planned around a market place, was established outside of the Anglo-Saxon defences and the burgesses there were granted customs based on the laws of Breteuil.⁷ This development not only established the French borough as the new socio-economic hub of the town through the removal of the marketplace from the Anglo-Saxon borough, but it also, through the grant of the laws of Breteuil, provided the burgesses there with a set of more favourable laws. The result was an ethnic division within the

⁶ K. D. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London, 2009), pp. 143–57; K. D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages, 1000–1450*, European Culture and Society Ser. (Basingstoke, 2002), 93–9; K. D. Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis: Moral Topographies of the Medieval City', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22 (2004), 681–98.

⁷ J. Hillaby, 'The Norman New Town of Hereford: Its Street Pattern and its European Context', *Trans. of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 44: 2 (1983), 181–95; Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, p. 148.

town between the privileged French settlers in the new borough and the English inhabitants of the old that was defined in both spatial and legal terms. Indeed, the Domesday entry for Hereford appears to make clear just such a division, stating that while 'anglici burgenses ibi manentes habent suas priores consuetudines ... Francigenae uero burgenses habent quietas pro xii denariis omnes forisfacturas suas'.⁸ It is this low amercement limitation of 12d that, as shall be made clear, is the most characteristic feature of the laws of Breteuil.

A somewhat analogous situation may be observed in a number of other towns. At Shrewsbury, Domesday Book also records the presence of French burgesses.⁹ Toponymic evidence suggests that these French burgesses too were settled outside of the Anglo-Saxon town, while a charter of King John making reference to the laws of Breteuil suggests that they were, as at Hereford, subject to these customs by at least that time (1205).¹⁰ At Nottingham, although Domesday is less explicit about any possible ethnic divide, simply contrasting the old borough ('ueteris burgi') with the new borough ('nouo burgo'), later records from the town show a terminological and legal distinction between French and English boroughs even up until the early eighteenth century.¹¹ The earliest evidence for the usage of these terms comes from thirteenth-century records and may therefore be regarded as rather anachronistic terminology in that it most probably by that time ceased to reflect any real ethnic divide

⁸ 'The English burgesses who live there have their former customs ... the French burgesses have all their forfeitures discharged for 12d'. *Herefordshire*, ed. F. Thorn and C. Thorn, Domesday Book 17 (Chichester, 1983), C14.

⁹ *Shropshire*, ed. F. Thorn and C. Thorn, Domesday Book 25 (Chichester, 1986), C14.

¹⁰ M. Bateson, 'The Laws of Breteuil', *EHR* 15 (1900), 302–18, at p. 307.

¹¹ *Nottinghamshire*, ed. C. Parker and S. Wood, Domesday Book 28 (Chichester, 1977), B3; S. N. Mastoris, 'The Boundary Between the English and French Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham: A Documentary Survey', *Trans. of the Thoroton Soc. of Nottinghamshire* 85 (1981), 68–74, at p. 68; Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 97–8.

within the town. It has been assumed, however, that this may be indicative of an earlier legal division.¹² Similarly, the Domesday Book entry for Norwich records the Frenchmen living 'in novo burgo', and toponymic evidence at Southampton in combination with the information recorded for French settlement in Domesday suggests the presence of distinct English and French areas within the town.¹³ In each of these latter three cases, however, there is no evidence that the new communities were endowed with the laws of Breteuil.

There appears, then, to be fairly good evidence for the existence in some towns of distinct and separate areas of French and English settlement. However, there has heretofore been little attempt to discern the effects of this division and how it impacted on ethnic relations in real terms. The inference might be invited that the creation of privileged French communities could attract resentment on the part of the established English inhabitants and would therefore serve to exacerbate any ethnic tensions that existed in the wake of the Conquest. However, evidence for the overt manifestation of tensions in towns as a result of the creation of new boroughs is somewhat scarce.

The only example cited by Lilley is that of Shrewsbury, claiming that the English burgesses there were unhappy about the privileges afforded to the Frenchmen living in the new borough under what he terms the 'more favourable laws' of Breteuil.¹⁴ However, it should be noted that the complaint made by the English burgesses of Shrewsbury is primarily concerning their geld assessment rather than

¹² Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages*, p. 98; Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis', p. 689; Mastoris, 'English and French Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham', p. 68; D. Roffe, 'Nottinghamshire and the North: A Domesday Study' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Leicester, 1987), ch. 7. See also below, p. 47.

¹³ *Norfolk (Part 1)*, ed. P. Brown, Domesday Book 33 (Chichester, 1984), 1,66; C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, AD 1000–1600*, (London, 1973), pp. 6–7; *Hampshire*, ed. J. Munby, Domesday Book 4 (Chichester, 1982), S2; Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, p. 149.

¹⁴ Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis', p. 689.

necessarily relating to any special privileges granted to the French burgesses in particular.¹⁵ They complain that their assessment is unfairly high due to the fact that there were far fewer dwellings liable for the geld payment than there were in 1066, for the Shrewsbury customs in Domesday claim there were 197 dwellings exempt from taxation in 1086. Indeed, part of the reason for this is the fact that the forty-three French burgesses were granted an exemption. However, this constitutes but one of a number of other factors that reduced the numbers liable for geld payment, namely the destruction of fifty-one houses to facilitate the building of the castle, the fact that fifty houses were unoccupied and that thirty-nine burgesses granted to the abbey were also exempt.¹⁶ It ought to be noted that the granting of geld exemptions was certainly not an exceptional practice either before or after 1066.¹⁷ The problem in the eyes of the English burgesses of Shrewsbury, therefore, was not that they perceived a policy of unfair favouritism towards the French burgesses, but that they thought it unreasonable, perhaps unrealistic, to expect the same amount of geld to be levied as was previously, considering the severely diminished numbers now responsible for paying it. It is perhaps significant too that the low amercement of 12d under the laws of Breteuil does not feature in the complaint, although it is in fact not clear whether or not the French burgesses of Shrewsbury had been granted these customs by 1086.

Indeed, there appears to be little if any evidence that these spatial—and in some cases legal—divisions reified and engendered real ethnic tensions within towns, the likes of which provoked violent conflict in some comparable situations on the continent.¹⁸ In fact,

¹⁵ *Shropshire*, C14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ J. Green, 'The Last Century of Danegeld', *EHR* 96 (1981), 241–58, at pp. 242–3.

¹⁸ For some examples see R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (London, 1993), pp. 233–5.

incidental comments by both Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury suggest English and French inhabitants were living together peacefully within towns and even intermarrying by at least the mid to late 1070s.¹⁹ If the absence of evidence for tensions is indicative of such an atmosphere of harmonious cohabitation, one must consider why the English population did not become embittered towards those in the apparently privileged French settlements. This therefore calls for a careful consideration of the nature of the new boroughs and the motives that potentially influenced their foundation. It shall be argued here that when borough foundation is considered in relation to broader synchronic and diachronic trends pertaining to social, economic and legal practices both within the urban sphere and in English medieval society more generally, it is perhaps possible to see why the new Norman plantations did not incite the levels of resentment that might be expected.

It is first necessary to consider the basis of the French boroughs' privileged status. As has already been noted, much emphasis has been laid on the significance of the laws of Breteuil in creating a division within towns that had simultaneously spatial, legal and ethnic dimensions. On the surface, the way in which the use of French laws may have served to buttress ethnic divisions and possibly incite ethnic tensions is fairly obvious; they were foreign laws designed to favour foreign settlers to the potential detriment of the native population. However, the extent to which the English borough customs avowedly based on the laws of Breteuil may be regarded as ostensibly French is a highly contentious and difficult issue.²⁰

¹⁹ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1969–80), II, 256–7; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998–9), I, 460–1.

²⁰ Hilton, *English and French Towns*, p. 38.

A thorough analysis of this problem is hindered by the fact that there is no extant record of the customs of Breteuil. Bateson's reconstruction of the Breteuil customs was to a large degree based on the assumption that the twelfth-century customs of Verneuil (themselves known only through a reproduction in a later grant to Pontorson) were sufficiently similar to those customs in England avowedly based on the Breteuil laws to conclude that the Verneuil customs must have been substantially similar to the original Breteuil customs.²¹ However, as Ballard observed, the distribution in other borough customs, both British and French, of the majority of the thirty clauses in Bateson's reconstruction of the Breteuil laws is not sufficient to show any incontrovertible sign of a common Bretollian origin; that is, the customs were either too widely distributed and appeared in a number of customs that cannot be shown to have any Bretollian influence, or they appeared in such a small number of customs so as to produce a fairly inconclusive distribution pattern.²²

There are only four clauses, on account of either their appearance in customs for which there is good evidence of Bretollian influence, or their explicit attribution to Breteuil in other documents, that may tentatively be ascribed a Bretollian origin: the stipulation that a military expedition from the town should return on the same day; a clause stating that an accused might avoid arrest if bail can be found; a clause limiting relief on the sale or succession of burgages to 12d; and the clause stating that amercements are to be discharged at a flat rate of 12d.²³ One must therefore question the extent to which the

²¹ Bateson, 'The Laws of Breteuil', pp. 754–7.

²² A. Ballard, 'The Law of Breteuil', *EHR* 30 (1915), 646–58.

²³ Ballard, 'The Law of Breteuil', p. 654. Ballard also postulated that the clause forbidding the assize *mortis antecessoris* from being held in the town may also be a Bretollian clause. However, the fact that a number of boroughs that were seemingly not granted the laws of Breteuil were exempt from the assize would suggest otherwise. Bateson, *Borough Customs*, I, 243 and n. 1. It has been suggested the reason for these exemptions was due to the fact that burgages could be freely bequeathed by will, while the assize was appropriate only for

so-called Breteuil class of borough customs in England after the Conquest might be perceived as having a distinctly and recognisably French character; the presence of a handful of clauses with a supposed French origin does not seem sufficient evidence to do so. This is compounded by the apparent rarity of most of these clauses. Only the first two appear in other extant customs from Normandy and their appearance across the Channel is somewhat rare, for they are each attested in only one English and three Welsh examples. The limitation of relief for the sale or succession of burgages is somewhat better attested with seven appearances; however, the extent to which it constituted a favourable privilege is questionable considering that there are lower limitations of between 4d and 1d to be found elsewhere.²⁴

The 12d amercement clause is the most commonly attested of the aforementioned four and it is the only one that may be fairly confidently ascribed a Bretollian origin on account of the explicit reference made to its Breteuil precedent in Domesday.²⁵ However, it should be noted that it does not appear in customs from France, even in the Verneuil customs.²⁶ Regardless of its geographical provenance, however, it does constitute a fairly significant privilege considering that fines in other contemporary boroughs could reach up to 100 shillings, as in London and Colchester.²⁷ The question remains, then,

dealing with land that was solely heritable in nature. See Tait's introduction in *British Borough Charters 1216–1307*, ed. A. Ballard and J. Tait (Cambridge, 1923), p. lxiii; also Bateson, *Borough Customs*, II, cxxiii.

²⁴ Ballard, 'The Law of Breteuil', pp. 649–54 contains the tables showing the distribution patterns of clauses. On the reliefs for sale or succession see *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, ed. A. Ballard (Cambridge, 1913), pp. 66–71; Bateson, 'The Laws of Breteuil', p. 509.

²⁵ *Cheshire*, ed. P. Morgan, Domesday Book 26 (Chichester, 1978), FT2,19.

²⁶ In the Verneuil customs a list of fines is enumerated for various offences, most but crucially not all of which are discharged at 12d. Ballard, 'The Law of Breteuil', pp. 647–8.

²⁷ *British Borough Charters*, p. 151.

as to why such a significant concession did not produce any traceable feelings of resentment amongst the English townspeople. The answer may be sought in a consideration of the broader trends and attitudes prevailing within medieval law and the nature of urban jurisdiction. For, as has already been touched upon in considering the exaction of geld, exemptions and other miscellaneous privileges granted to a specific group as a result of royal or seigneurial favour were by no means uncommon during this period. Diversity rather than universality of urban law was the norm both between and within towns, for even within the same settlement it was not uncommon for its inhabitants to be subject to different legal jurisdictions.²⁸ It is therefore unlikely that any feeling of entitlement to treatment under equal and uniform law existed within these communities. In this context, then, the 12d amercement clause may have been regarded as fairly unremarkable in constituting simply another instance of a concession to a group favoured by their lord.

However, what of those new French settlements for which there is no evidence that they were granted the law of Breteuil? Indeed, this would appear to be the case at Nottingham and Norwich. In these cases it is often difficult to establish what legal relationship the new areas of settlement had to the rest of the town. As has already been mentioned, a rather exceptional legal distinction between the two boroughs of Nottingham is in evidence from the thirteenth century until the early eighteenth. This distinction, however, was limited to only a handful of matters, namely inheritance, widows' dowries, feoffment by youths and fines for affrays.²⁹ The history of this legal distinction between the two boroughs of Nottingham is, however, very difficult to interpret. David Roffe has done much to demonstrate its possible existence from the time of Domesday Book at least—and most probably before also. Significantly, he raised the

²⁸ Some good examples of jurisdictional heterogeneity within towns are given in Nicholas, *The Growth of the Medieval City*, pp. 152–4.

²⁹ Mastoris, 'English and French Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham', p. 72.

possibility that the division between the two areas was in fact already essentially in existence by 1066, the area of the later French borough possibly having been the head of a comital estate centred upon Nottingham which passed to William Peverell after the Conquest.³⁰ The later division in customs that one finds in the thirteenth century was therefore a result of the new borough having been part of the Peverell honour and subject to its court until the family's escheat to the crown in c. 1154. However, there is nothing to suggest particularly significant privileges being extended towards French settlers, for what Mastoris's study demonstrated is that the customs within the English borough were in fact the slightly more favourable of the two, the fines there having been lower than in the French borough by as much as half.³¹

A similar instance of jurisdictional subdivision is also in evidence from at least the thirteenth century at Norwich, where the area of the French borough was roughly coterminous with one of the town's four leets, each of which had its own court dealing with minor matters of public order, market offences and the organisation of the frankpledge system.³² Nevertheless, the date at which these leets of Norwich emerged as distinct jurisdictional entities is somewhat unclear, for the two twelfth-century charters of Henry II and Richard I imply the existence of a single jurisdictional unit under a single borough court at that time.³³ Indeed, the potential antiquity of these thirteenth-century divisions in Norwich is bound up with more

³⁰ Roffe, 'Nottinghamshire and the North', ch. 7.

³¹ Mastoris, 'English and French Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham', p. 72.

³² Cf. the map in *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, ed. W. Hudson, Publ. of the Selden Soc. 5 (London, 1892), p. vii with Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis', p. 691, fig. 5. For a survey of the functions of the thirteenth-century leet courts in Norwich see *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, pp. xxiii–xlvi.

³³ *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols., ed. W. Hudson and J. C. Tingey (Norwich, 1906–10), I, cxxiv, 11–14. Cf. the alternative analysis previously offered in *Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich*, pp. xv–xvi.

complex questions related to the role of leets in East Anglia more generally during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This topic has been well surveyed by James Campbell and there is therefore little reason—not to mention insufficient space—to embark here upon a wholesale reproduction of the evidence he presents.³⁴

To keep things both necessarily simple and brief, it seems that one ought to accept the likelihood that Norwich, as a hundred in itself, had been organised into leets at some point before the Conquest for at least the purpose of apportioning Danegeld payments within the hundred. Whether before the thirteenth century they had developed their own courts, as some rural leets may well have done in the twelfth century or even before, is difficult to say. Personally, I am inclined to see such a development at Norwich as more suited to the period in which the borough and burgesses as a municipal entity were acquiring rights and duties formerly belonging to the crown; that is following their acquisition of the *firma burgi* from Richard I in 1194.³⁵ It was during this period that the responsibilities of the borough administration were becoming more numerous and thus some sort of devolution of jurisdiction to smaller courts may have been both convenient and necessary. The fact that Norwich from an early date likely had leets for the purposes of geld apportionment, possibly with the area of the French borough constituting a leet in itself, need not however entail the view that the leets served to foster divisions amongst the town's population. Significantly, from what little we know, it appears that decisions regarding the organisation of leets were taken at the level of the hundred.³⁶ In the case of Norwich this means that such decisions would have been taken at the level of the borough, thus the co-operation of inhabitants from all areas of the borough (both its old and new areas) would have been necessary for

³⁴ J. Campbell, 'Hundreds and Leets: A Survey with Suggestions', in *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 153–67.

³⁵ *Records of the City of Norwich*, I, 12–14.

³⁶ Campbell, 'Hundreds and Leets', p. 158.

fixing the town's geld apportionments. As such, it is possible that the early existence of leets in Norwich may in fact be regarded as encouraging rather than hindering interactions between its ethnically heterogeneous population.

So, the lack of evidence of ethnic tensions may be due to the fact that the laws of the new boroughs were not considered to be exceptionally unfair or that there was not always a legal distinction made between them and the existing settlement. Furthermore, it might be argued that the new boroughs were not intended to serve as closed and exclusionary communities designed to separate and privilege French settlers specifically. In fact, such a policy would run contrary to what is considered to have been one of the most important motives informing borough foundation, namely the desire to encourage migration to the town in order to stimulate economic growth and thereby provide increased income for the lord.³⁷ In this context, the desire on the part of borough founders that this migration should consist entirely, or even predominantly of a certain ethnicity is not only unlikely but entirely unattested. Unfortunately, the extreme scarcity of evidence pertaining to the character, ethnic or otherwise, of settlers in new boroughs makes it difficult to test this assumption. Nevertheless, invaluable evidence from the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* is able to shed some light on how and by whom new settlements came to be populated.

The chronicle contains a rental list—which Eleanor Searle dated to 1102–1110—detailing the names and occasionally the occupations of those who were renting in the new borough established by the abbot.³⁸ It is one of only a few sources of such an early date that lists large numbers of a town's inhabitants by name and thus permits some sort of demographic analysis. Crucially for the discussion here,

³⁷ Beresford, *New Towns*, pp. 206–12 and *passim*.

³⁸ *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. E. Searle (Oxford, 1980), pp. 52–9. See also E. Searle, *Lordship and Community: Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066–1538* (Toronto, 1974), p. 70.

unlike similar information available for residences in Colchester and Winchester which were already established settlements, the Battle rental provides information on the population of an entirely new post-Conquest plantation. An onomastic analysis of the Battle rental reveals that the vast majority of the settlers there were not only of likely English origin but were also for the most part natives of east Sussex.³⁹ As an abbatial foundation, Battle does not perhaps provide a direct parallel with those new French boroughs in the towns discussed above. However, it does aptly demonstrate the potential draw new settlements might have for the English population living within their hinterlands. Indeed, the frequent statement in customs that villeins might obtain freedom through residence in the borough for a certain period, provided that they were subject to no seigniorial claim during this time, would also appear to demonstrate that migration of this kind was occurring with a relative degree of frequency.⁴⁰

It would therefore be reasonable to assume that those new, supposedly French boroughs might also attract English settlers from the town's hinterland who were keen to take advantage of the privileges afforded by borough franchise. Indeed, references to the establishment of a French borough need not necessarily entail the assumption that it was intended as a truly ethnically homogeneous and separate community. Certainly no extant borough charter includes any ethnic qualification for borough franchise.⁴¹ In some cases certain villeins were disbarred from obtaining freedom through borough franchise, though for the most part franchise was open to anyone provided they fulfilled certain requirements, most commonly

³⁹ C. Clark, 'Battle c. 1110: An Anthroponymist Looks at an Anglo-Norman New Town', in *Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark*, ed. P. Jackson (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 221–40, esp. pp. 228–9; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 71–4.

⁴⁰ *British Borough Charters 1042–1216*, pp. 102–5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* pp. 101–11.

a period of residence in the borough of a year and a day.⁴² If any exclusionary clause based on ethnicity existed in any charter that is no longer extant, its appearance would have been truly exceptional judging by the precedent set by the surviving sources.

Indeed, it is perfectly possible for a community within a town to be viewed as broadly ethnically and culturally distinct without necessarily entailing true and absolute ethnic separation. As a result, some scant references do hint at the potential ethnic heterogeneity of the new French boroughs. The reference in the Domesday entry for Southampton to sixty-five Frenchmen and thirty-one Englishmen that were settled there after 1066 may quite possibly be a reference to the French quarter. This supposition is further supported by the following sentence in the entry which states 'hi inter se omnes reddent iiii libras et vi denarios de omnibus consuetudines'.⁴³ Whilst it is clear that the French population would have been in the majority, hence the demarcation as a French area, the number of English settlers was certainly not insignificant.

There is further evidence that the presence of Englishmen within a predominantly French area did not necessarily disbar them from financial, and therefore presumably social, advancement. Winchester, despite the fact there was no new borough established there after the Conquest, provides a good example. The wealth of evidence relating to the city's inhabitants, due to the compilation of three surveys dating from c. 1056, c. 1110 and 1148, allows for a detailed analysis of the diachronic changes in the social makeup of the town. Again, onomastic analysis is of great utility in considering the question of ethnicity. The general picture that emerges from the surveys is an increasing prevalence of continental Old Germanic

⁴² On the restrictions relating to villeins see Beresford, *New Towns*, p. 208.

⁴³ 'These [aforementioned Frenchmen and Englishmen] all pay amongst themselves £4 6d for all customary dues'. *Hampshire*, S2.

names at the expense of Old and Middle English names.⁴⁴ Whilst these statistics may in part have been influenced by the trend towards the adoption of continental names within English families during the twelfth century, they do strongly suggest a large amount of French settlement in the town, particularly between 1066 and c. 1110. Nevertheless, there is evidence for the continued presence of Englishmen within the social and financial elite of Winchester.⁴⁵ In particular, the English moneyers not only maintained positions as some of the town's more wealthy citizens but also continued to occupy dwellings on the high status streets that were increasingly dominated by French inhabitants.⁴⁶

The sharp increase in French immigration to Winchester may be owed in part to the town's function as a centre of royal administration for at least some time after the Conquest. However, evidence from the Pipe Rolls of Henry II reveal a number of cases in which the royal officials based in other towns were of English extraction.⁴⁷ What is more, evidence from London in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries shows a strong English presence maintained amongst the city's civic elite along with frequent interactions and even a number of exogamous marriages between English and French families.⁴⁸ There is evidence too from other

⁴⁴ O. von Feilitzen, 'The Personal Names and Bynames of the Winton Domesday', in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages: An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, ed. M. Biddle, Winchester Studies Series 2 (Oxford, 1976), 143–229, esp. pp. 184–5 and 188.

⁴⁵ M. Biddle and D. J. Keene, 'General Survey and Conclusions', in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 449–508, p. 476.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 480.

⁴⁷ Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, p. 184.

⁴⁸ Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 205–6; van Houts, 'Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England', p. 267; S. Reynolds, 'The Rulers of London in the Twelfth Century', *History* 57 (1972), 337–57; P. Nightingale, 'Some London Moneyers and Reflections on the Organization of the English Mints in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *NChron* 142 (1982), 34–50; F.

towns that Englishmen and English families achieved positions of status as wealthy merchants or landlords, as heads of guilds and occasionally as high ranking officials within civic government, even within towns in which one may observe distinct areas of French settlement.⁴⁹

So, although it is clear that in some towns there might be observed cohesive pockets of French settlement that were to varying degrees distinct from and privileged above the established English population, it does not appear that this entailed the development of significant ethnic tensions. It has been argued here that the reason for this is that the new boroughs do not appear to have necessarily constituted closed, exclusionary and ethnically homogeneous communities. Nor was there an intention that they should be so, for any such policy would prove detrimental to the borough's potential for economic growth. What should be stressed is that these boroughs and their associated economic privileges were not open solely to French settlers. This was not a result of any altruistic sentiment on the part of borough founders, in fact quite the opposite; it merely constituted a pragmatic policy that ensured maximal potential for economic growth in order to augment seigneurial income. It might be suggested that one ought therefore to look for signs that boroughs provided, certainly for the upper echelons of urban society at least, a productive environment for ethnic assimilation rather than discord. It may have been more common for divisions to be drawn along the

Stenton, 'Norman London', in *Social Life in Early England*, ed. G. Barraclough (London, 1960), pp. 179–208, at p. 193; H. W. C. Davis, 'London Lands and Liberties of St. Paul's', in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout*, ed. A. G. Little and F. M. Powicke (Manchester, 1925) pp. 45–59; J. H. Round, *The Commune of London: and Other Studies* (London, 1899), pp. 102–6; A. B. Beavan, *The Aldermen of the City of London: Temp. Henry III–1912: with notes on the Parliamentary Representation of the City, the Aldermen and the Livery Companies, the Aldermanic Veto, Aldermanic Baronets and Knights, etc.*, 2 vols. (London, 1908–13), I, 362–5.

⁴⁹ Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, pp. 184–5.

lines of class and for rupture to have been more likely the result of grievances related to fiscal matters rather than ethnic tensions.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For some interesting examples of divisions and frictions in other towns related to class and fiscal matters see C. West, 'Urban Populations and Associations', in *A Social History of England, 900–1200*, ed. J. Crick and E. van Houts (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 198–207, at p. 202.

Flann Mainistrech's *Götterdämmerung* as a Junction within *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*¹

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Lebor Gabála Éirenn ('The Book of the Invasion of Ireland') is the conventional title for a lengthy Irish pseudo-historical text extant in multiple recensions probably compiled during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.² The text comprises a history of the Gaídil ('Gaels') within the context of a universal history derived from the Bible and from classical historiography.³ *Lebor Gabála* traces the ancestry of the Gaídil back to Noah and follows their tortuous migrations, spanning many generations, from the Tower of Babel to Ireland via Spain. Here, the narrative breaks off to cover the origins, history and demise of the peoples who had inhabited Ireland prior to the arrival of the Gaídil. Then, resuming its account of the Gaídil themselves, *Lebor Gabála* gives an account of their conquest of Ireland and their history thereafter, mainly in the form of a king-list, down to roughly the time of the text's compilation.

¹ I am very grateful to David Alexander and my supervisor, Abigail Burnyeat, for discussing this paper with me, as well as to various delegates at the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic 2012 for their questions and suggestions.

² *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, ed. and trans. R. A. S. Macalister, 5 vols., Irish Texts Society Main Series 34–35, 39, 41, 44 (Dublin, 1938–56), although see below, p. 59. For a general introduction, see J. Carey, 'Lebor Gabála and the Legendary History of Ireland', in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. H. Fulton (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48.

³ For an overview, see M. I. Allen, 'Universal History 300–1000: Origins and Western Developments', in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. M. Deliyannis (Leiden, 2003), pp. 17–42.

The compilation has a somewhat formidable reputation for complexity. It includes both prose and verse. Its narratives are supported by a wide range of scholarly techniques and genres, including etymology, genealogy and synchronistic scholarship, as well as detailed knowledge and exegesis of the Bible and various historical authorities, its purpose being partially to relate the Gaídil typologically to the children of Israel.⁴

LEBOR GABÁLA ÉRENN: TEXTUAL HISTORY AND CRITICISM

One of the most troublesome—but also one of the most interesting—aspects of *Lebor Gabála* is the significant variance in content, structure and doctrine between its thirteen manuscript texts, which are generally grouped into four recensions.⁵ Since Robert Macalister's edition of *Lebor Gabála*, R. M. Scowcroft has offered another response to the text, as well as to various attempts to describe its textual history.⁶ He has argued that, rather than being derived from an authorial archetype, much of the material in the extant compilation is derived from subsequent commentary and supplementary material, as well as fundamental re-working in subsequent redactions and conflation of material from different versions.⁷ Any original with which the tradition began is no longer extant and Scowcroft does not believe it is possible to reconstruct it

⁴ R. M. Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Érenn Part II: The Growth of the Tradition', *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66, at pp. 21–6.

⁵ R. M. Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Érenn Part I: The Growth of the Text', *Ériu* 38 (1987), 81–142, at pp. 85–7.

⁶ For previous studies of the textual history of *Lebor Gabála*, see R. Thurneysen, 'Zum Lebor Gabála', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 10 (1915), 384–95 and A. G. Van Hamel, 'On Lebor Gabála', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 10 (1915), 97–197; Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* I, ix–xxxiv.

⁷ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 87–92.

definitively.⁸ Therefore, 'the very quest for an "original" [*Lebor Gabála*] ... is misguided'.⁹

While the resulting idiosyncratic nature of each extant version may frustrate textual critics and editors, it also provides a useful opportunity for insight into concepts of authority in medieval Irish textual culture and the self-perception of the personnel involved in it. Whether innovative or based on another strand of the tradition, the distinctiveness of each manuscript version suggests a complex and nuanced attitude to the authority of texts and to an extent, a sense of authorial empowerment on the part of those involved in redacting and compiling each version.¹⁰

Poetry in Lebor Gabála Érenn

In this paper, I illustrate and explore this aspect of the *Lebor Gabála* tradition through the treatment of one poem found in different versions of the compilation. The poem itself changes in only a few meaningful respects but its context, which is—at least partially—the domain of the compiler, varies markedly.

Éstid a eolchu cen ón ('Listen, scholars without flaw') appears in several versions of *Lebor Gabála* and is part of a considerable corpus of lengthy metrical histories found in the compilation.¹¹ It is

⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 94–5.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 88.

¹⁰ For the medieval practice of *compilatio*, see N. Hathaway, 'Compilatio: from Plagiarism to Compiling', *Viator* 20 (1989), 19–44.

¹¹ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 1909–2076, pp. 224–41. Hereafter *Éstid a eolchu...* will be referenced from Macalister's edition, in this format. A reference will also be included, where appropriate, to the text in the diplomatic edition of the *Book of Leinster. Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachonghála*, ed. R. I. Best, O. Bergin and M. A. O'Brien, 5 vols. (Dublin, 1954–1967), I, ll. 1307–455, pp. 41–6. The diplomatic edition is cited hereafter as *LL*. For other editions and translations of *Éstid a eolchu...* see below, p. 61.

attributed to the poet and historian, Flann Mainistrech (ob. 1056).¹² Studies of the frequently occurring genre of prosimetrum in medieval Irish literature have generally concluded that the function of the verse component is to support the prose either through marking moments of heightened pathos and drama or as evidence for statements made in prose. The evidential quality of a poem is derived from identifying it as the words either of an eyewitness or of a known scholar.¹³ Usually, poetry in *Lebor Gabála* is neither concerned with heightened emotion nor found in the mouths of characters involved in the action. It tends, in general, to be very similar to the accompanying prose in terms of content and doctrine. While much is anonymous, the longer poems tend to be attributed to scholars of the Middle Irish period, such as Flann Mainistrech, who worked shortly before or during the period in which *Lebor Gabála* was compiled.¹⁴

Macalister, Scowcroft and John Carey view much of the poetry as having been originally composed independently, before subsequently becoming extremely influential in the development of the prosimetric compilation. Thus, many are cited *in extenso* as direct sources, rather than supporting evidence.¹⁵ Scowcroft regards the original document behind the extant *Lebor Gabála* as having been written entirely in

¹² J. Carey, 'Flann Mainistrech (d. 1056)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Goldman (Oxford, 2004)
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9672>>, accessed 15 October 2011.

¹³ P. Mac Cana, 'Prosimetrum in Insular Celtic Literature', in *Prosimetrum: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. J. Harris and K. Reichl (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 99–130; G. Toner, 'Authority, Verse and the Transmission of Senchas', *Ériu* 55 (2005), 59–84.

¹⁴ Carey, 'Legendary History', p. 44; R. M. Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions of the *Lebor Gabála*', in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: Textual History and Pseudohistory*, ed. J. Carey, Irish Texts Society Subsidiary Series 20 (Dublin, 2009), 1–19, at pp. 8–9.

¹⁵ Macalister, *Lebor Gabála* I, x; J. Carey, *The Irish National Origin Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Medieval Gaelic History 1 (Cambridge, 1994), 19.

prose, with subsequent redactors adding and integrating poems into the prose.¹⁶ Macalister has described the verse in *Lebor Gabála* as an 'unmitigated nuisance' and, conceiving it to be independent from the prose, edits and prints it separately.¹⁷ However, both Carey and Scowcroft, while understanding the prose as being derived from the verse, also stress how both forms function integrally within the extant compilation, viewing the result in terms of the well-known medieval literary form, the *opus geminatum*.¹⁸ Scowcroft's analysis is particularly interesting for this study. He suggests that, in *Lebor Gabála*, authoritative verse is not simply invoked in support of prose but, instead, the latent authority of the cited verse is in a dialogic relationship with other poems and within a wider, composite and more complex exposition by the compiler of the recension:

The poetry remains more or less immutable—the voice of named authorities—while the prose, anonymous and adaptable, expounds and integrates their testimony, consolidating its allusive treatment of action and wealth of non-narrative detail into a full narrative line. This prose 'explanation' of poetic authority comes therefore to function as a theatre for the historian's own work as compiler and critic.¹⁹

In the case study presented in this article, the relationship of the 'historian's own work' with the poetic authority is examined through the treatment by different compilers of *Éstid a eolchu...* in the context of their own versions of *Lebor Gabála*. I thus hope to expand upon and stimulate further interest in the dynamic identified by Scowcroft in the development of the compilation.

¹⁶ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 87; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', p. 7.

¹⁷ Macalister, *Lebor Gabála* I, x.

¹⁸ Carey, *National Origin Legend*, p. 22; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', p. 7.

¹⁹ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 91. For examples of poems in *Lebor Gabála* that Scowcroft believes to be based on existing prose, see 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 90 and 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', p. 5.

Editions and Citations

When citing *Lebor Gabála*, one is faced with a dilemma. Macalister's edition has been heavily criticized in terms of text, translation and editorial strategy, to the extent that Daniel Binchy recommended that studies of the compilation continue to be based on the original manuscripts.²⁰ Conveniently, most of the relevant manuscripts are now much more accessible thanks to digitisation but they are still only available to those with the relevant expertise. For various reasons, Scowcroft has, albeit reluctantly, recommended that Macalister's edition continue to be used.²¹ Other options include the text of *Lebor Gabála* in the *Book of Leinster*, which can be found in the diplomatic edition of that manuscript.²² Carey's unpublished edition of what he analyses as 'Recension 1' of *Lebor Gabála* also includes the *Book of Leinster* text.²³ However, both of these editions, while more reliable than Macalister's, are restricted to one branch of the tradition, which Scowcroft has warned is not particularly representative.²⁴ Macalister's edition is, at least, representative. It includes the majority of variants from almost all the extant manuscripts and generally indicates the structural differences between their texts.

It is for this reason that citations of *Lebor Gabála* in this study will be from Macalister's edition, checked against the diplomatic edition

²⁰ D. A. Binchy, 'Review of *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: the Book of the Taking of Ireland. Part 4*', *Celtica* 2 (1952), 195–209, esp. p. 196; M. Dillon, 'Lebor Gabála Éirenn', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 86: 1 (1956), 62–72, at pp. 71–2; Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 82–3.

²¹ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 83.

²² *LL I*, ll. 1–1800, pp. 1–56.

²³ 'Lebor Gabála: Recension 1', ed. and trans. J. Carey, (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Harvard Univ., 1983). A translation of this recension is found in, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, ed. J. T. Koch and J. Carey, Celtic Studies Publications 1, 4th ed. (Andover, MA, 2003), 226–72.

²⁴ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 83.

of the *Book of Leinster* where appropriate. Quoted text from other versions has been checked against the original manuscripts and I have revised some of Macalister's translations. Mostly, however, this study is concerned with ordering of material, rather than with close reading, so the shortcomings of Macalister's edition, while worth noting, are not relevant to it.

ÉSTID A EOLCHU... IN CONTEXT

Éstid a eolchu... is a rather bleak collection of terse accounts of how seventy individuals of the Túatha Dé Danann ('People of the goddess Danu') died; the deaths, when not the result of violence or malevolent magic, tend to be the result of sorrow over earlier deaths.²⁵ The Túatha Dé Danann are broadly presented by *Lebor Gabála* as human descendants of Noah and the last people to occupy Ireland before the arrival of the Gaídil.²⁶ Their identity does not appear to have been so straightforward, however; many versions of the compilation also include some discussion as to whether they were, in fact, demons. Some modern scholars have interpreted material concerning the Túatha Dé Danann as pre-Christian mythology and the Túatha Dé Danann themselves as a kind of pantheon, preserved in euhemerized or demonized form in the Middle Ages.²⁷ Medieval sources do indeed, on occasion, describe the Túatha Dé Danann as gods.²⁸ However, a complex range of conceptions, both of them and of the religion of the pre-Christian past, has been identified within

²⁵ This is the customary translation of their name but see J. Carey 'The Name "Tuatha Dé Danann"', *Éigse* 18 (1980–1981), 291–4.

²⁶ *Lebor Gabála IV*, §§ 304–77, pp. 91–342; *LL I*, ll. 1049–456, pp. 33–46.

²⁷ Van Hamel, 'Lebor Gabála', pp. 190–1; *Lebor Gabála IV*, pp. 97–105; Dillon, 'Lebor Gabála', p. 67. For further references, see Scowcroft 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 82, n. 1.

²⁸ For example, both *Éstid a eolchu...* and the poem *Éstid in senchas sluagach* ('Hear the history of hosts'), also found in *Lebor Gabála*, refer to the Túatha Dé Danann as *dee* ('gods'): *Lebor Gabála IV*, l. 1982, pp. 232–3; *LL I*, l. 1377, p. 43; *Lebor Gabála IV*, ll. 2497–505, pp. 282–91.

medieval Irish literature, possibly based on Patristic models, and further study of this topic is certainly desirable.²⁹

Éstid a eolchu..., with one late exception, is always found as part of *Lebor Gabála*.³⁰ It appears in the following manuscripts.³¹

Recension *m*

- *Lbm* (Book of Lecan): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 P 2 cat. 535 (Connacht s. xv), 19ra3–19rb36.
- *Ym*: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, D i 3 cat. 539 (s. xiv), 1vb28–2rb7.
- *Rm*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 512 (Connacht? s. xv/xvi), 93va24–93va26 (first quatrain only).

Recension *a*

- *N* (Book of Leinster): Dublin, Trinity College, H 2 18 cat. 1339 (s. xii), 11ra18–11rb40.³²
- *F* (Book of Fermoy): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, Stowe D iii 1 cat. 671 (Munster? s. xv), 11vb21–12ra39.³³

²⁹ Carey, 'The Name'; J. Borsje, 'Omens, Ordeals and Oracles: on Demons and Weapons in Early Irish Texts', *Peritia* 13 (1999), 224–48; J. Carey, *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland*, Celtic Studies Publications 3, 2nd ed. (Aberystwyth, 2011), 1–38, see esp. p. 21, n. 30.

³⁰ Cambridge, University Library, MS. Add. 4207 (s. xix), fols. 44v–45r.

³¹ The sigla used hereafter are those used in Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 3–5. For more details concerning the manuscripts and for a guide to how they relate to Macalister's edition, see Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 84–6, 139–42.

³² *LL* I, ll. 1308–1455, pp. 41–46; D. Pódör, 'Twelve Poems Attributed to Fland Mainistrech from the Book of Leinster', 2 vols. (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Trinity College Dublin, 1999), I, 233–62.

Recension *c*

- *B* (Book of Ballymote): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 P 12 cat. 536 (Connacht s. xiv), 19ra37–19va11.
- *Lc* (Book of Lecan): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 P 2 cat. 535 (Connacht s. xv), 281va14–281vb50.

Éstid a eolchu... is not found in recension *b*. In terms of Scowcroft's account of *Lebor Gabála*'s textual history, this associates it with μ .³⁴ Scowcroft envisages a terse, original document (ω) being adapted and expanded twice, producing two main traditions (α and μ), each influenced by distinct interests and methodologies. Broadly, *m* is derived from μ while *b* is derived from α , *a* being an attempt to reconcile α and μ .³⁵

A genealogical context within m and N

In Scowcroft's account of the textual tradition, *m* and *N* are the earliest in terms of the development of the compilation. *Éstid a eolchu...* is one of only two poems on the Túatha Dé Danann in *m*, following a body of genealogies which traces them back to Noah.³⁶ It is then followed by a poem and two short anecdotes which focus on a particular character, Tuirill Biccree.³⁷ The coverage of the Túatha Dé Danann in *m* is then complete. If we read poems in *Lebor Gabála* and elsewhere as working in conjunction with accompanying prose, *Éstid a eolchu...* appears to support the genealogies in some way, although *m* does not make its role explicit.

³³ This manuscript consists of folios which have become detached from the *Book of Fermoy* proper, which is bound as Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 23 E 29 cat. 1134 (Munster? s. xv).

³⁴ Scowcroft describes *Éstid a eolchu...* as a 'later addition' to μ but does not elaborate: 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', p. 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 2; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 4–6.

³⁶ *Lebor Gabála* IV, §§ 316 (*N*) and 316a (*m*), pp. 126–33; *LL* I, ll. 1130–89, pp. 35–7. The other poem is *Éstid in senchas sluagach*, see above, p. 75, n. 28.

³⁷ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 319, pp. 134–7.

The prose coverage of the Túatha Dé Danann in N concludes with cognate genealogies, the material on Tuirill Biccreeo being absent.³⁸ *Éstid a eolchu...* is the third of three poems which follow N's prose, each, like *Éstid a eolchu...*, apparently the work of an eleventh-century scholar. *Eriu co n-úaill co n-idnaib* ('Ireland, with pride, with weapons'), is attributed elsewhere to Eochaid Ua Flainn and focuses on the arrival of the Túatha Dé Danann and the reigns of their kings.³⁹ *Túatha Dé Danann fo diamair* ('The Túatha Dé Danann under obscurity'), attributed to 'Tanaide', lists their major figures and their particular skills.⁴⁰ N is peculiar, in that it does tend to group poems together where other versions intersperse them more regularly with the prose.⁴¹ However, the implication is that the scribe of N does not interpret *Éstid a eolchu...* as directly supporting the genealogies, as the poem is separated from them by seventy lines of manuscript text in N (10vb3–11ra17). These complementary poems can thus almost be read as a verse account of the Túatha Dé Danann in Ireland entirely discrete from the prose.

The general character of *m* and N, however, may provide insights into the role *Éstid a eolchu...* plays in these versions. Both are derived from μ , the focus of which is, Scowcroft argues, on tracing the various settlers in Ireland genealogically back to Noah, establishing a

³⁸ *Ibid.* § 316, pp. 126–31; *LL* I, ll. 1130–86, pp. 35–7.

³⁹ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 1789–860, pp. 212–9; *LL* I, ll. 1190–261, pp. 37–9; the attribution to Eochaid is found at *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 366, pp. 182–3. See J. Carey, 'Eochaid ua Flannucáin (d. 1004)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50109>>, accessed 15 October 2011.

⁴⁰ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 1861–904, pp. 220–5; *LL* I, ll. 1263–306, pp. 40–1; and for the attribution to Tanaide, see *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 366, pp. 184–5. This more obscure poet is thought to have lived during the eleventh century: Carey, 'Legendary History', p. 44.

⁴¹ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 91.

continuous line of its kings and associating them with Tara.⁴² With a few exceptions, *m* does not tend to deviate extensively from these topics. N keeps the structure of μ and interpolates content from α , resulting in a version similar in character to *m*.⁴³

The genealogies of the Túatha Dé Danann appear to have something of a pedigree within the textual tradition of *Lebor Gabála*. First, versions of the genealogies cognate with those in *m* and N appear across the extant versions of the compilation.⁴⁴ Each places twenty-three generations between Noah and Nuadu Argetlám, first king of the Túatha Dé Danann in Ireland. In terms of biblical chronology, twenty-three generations from Noah reaches Obed, father of Jesse, father of King David.⁴⁵ This suggests that these genealogies of the Túatha Dé Danann were derived from a chronological scheme which synchronised the arrival of the Gaídil in Ireland with the kingdom of David. Scowcroft has demonstrated that such a scheme underlies the earliest versions of *Lebor Gabála* that it is possible to reconstruct.⁴⁶ The scheme which predominates in later versions generally ascribes the events a much later date, synchronising the overthrow of the Túatha Dé Danann by the Gaídil with Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persians.⁴⁷ The core interest in N and *m* is thus genealogical and regnal history. The poem need not relate directly to these topics but, as I shall argue presently, compilations of death-tales are a well-attested feature in medieval Irish historical writing and the poem can thus be read as an integral part of these two versions of the compilation.

⁴² Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', pp. 7, 32. For the kingship of Tara, see B. Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 214–25.

⁴³ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 97.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 112.

⁴⁵ Luke III:23–38; Matt. I:1–17.

⁴⁶ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', p. 31; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', p. 11.

⁴⁷ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', pp. 29–31.

One distinctive feature of *Éstid a eolchu...* in *m* is the inclusion of four additional quatrains at the end of the poem, which are also found in *Lc*.⁴⁸ These quatrains reject the idea that the Túatha Dé Danann are still alive and living in the *síd* or in Tír Tairngire; instead, they are in Hell.⁴⁹ Carey doubts that these quatrains were part of the poem as originally composed.⁵⁰ However, if they are later additions, it is not clear whether they were added by the compiler of *m* or in an earlier version of the poem. They do not fit comfortably with the rest of *m* or *N*. The Túatha Dé Danann retreat to the *síd*—a kind of underground world—after the arrival of the Gaídil in Mesca Ulad ('The Intoxication of the Ulstermen') and De Gabáil in tSída ('Concerning the Seizure of the Fairy Mound'), but this does not happen in any version of *Lebor Gabála*.⁵¹ The term *Tír Tairngire* has been shown by James Carney to be a translation of *terra repromissionis* ('promised land') and generally refers to a Christian paradise.⁵² Only in a few late Middle Irish texts is a place with that name inhabited by the Túatha Dé Danann.⁵³

Within this article, these interesting quatrains must receive less attention than they merit. Suffice to say, while they are clearly of relevance to *Éstid a eolchu...*, they appear to attack a viewpoint not expressed anywhere else in the *Lebor Gabála* tradition, perhaps suggesting that the poem as it appears in *m* was intended for another

⁴⁸ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 2061–76, pp. 240–1.

⁴⁹ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 2064, 2068 and 2074, pp. 240–1.

⁵⁰ Carey, *A Single Ray*, p. 18, n. 25.

⁵¹ *Mesca Ulad*, ed. J. Carmichael-Watson, Medieval and Modern Irish Series 13 (Dublin, 1941), ll. 1–16, 1; 'De Gabáil in t-Shída (Concerning the Seizure of the Fairy Mound)', ed. and trans. V. Hull, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 39 (1933), 53–8.

⁵² J. Carney, 'Review of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, Edited with Introduction and Notes by Carl Selmer', in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: an Anthology of Criticism*, ed. J. M. Wooding (Dublin, 2000), pp. 42–51, at p. 47.

⁵³ J. Carey, 'The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition', in *The Otherworld Voyage*, ed. Wooding, pp. 113–19, at p. 117, n. 21.

context. If they are a later addition to the poem, they constitute an interpretation of it akin to those to which we shall now turn.

Gods, demons or humans? F and c

F is generally regarded as a version of recension *a* along with *N*, although it is the result of a more extensive process of interpolation.⁵⁴ Recension *c* is an attempt to reconcile recensions *a* and *b*. In F and *c*, *Éstid a eolchu...* is found in a similar location towards the end of both recensions' coverage of the Túatha Dé Danann and following a corresponding, although independently expanded, body of genealogies.⁵⁵ It is also preceded by a somewhat opaque passage that is not found in *m*, which discusses the 'gods' (*dei*) and 'un-gods' (*andei*) among the Túatha Dé Danann.⁵⁶ Carey sees some of this material as being derived from an independent tract, which he has reconstructed.⁵⁷

There follows a list of trios who fulfilled certain roles among the Túatha Dé Danann. F then contains a passage, not found in Carey's tract, which introduces *Éstid a eolchu...*:

Atbert tra araile beirtid demna so, arro fetattair cutpu daenna impu o lo, din as firu; ar mairchetar a ngenelacha for culu, 7 do raebattar la tiachtain creitmi. Conad dia n-aidedaib ro chan Flann Mainistreach in duan-sa sis ga foirgeall.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 97–8.

⁵⁵ *Lebor Gabála* IV, §§ 316–17, pp. 126–35, § 368, pp. 186–97.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* § 317, pp. 134–35; *LL* I, ll. 1058–66, p. 34.

⁵⁷ 'A Túath Dé Miscellany', ed. J. Carey, *BBCS* 39 (1992), 24–45. I am grateful to Răzvan Stanciu for this reference.

⁵⁸ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 318, pp. 134–5: '**Others say**, indeed, that they are demons, since they knew that [they took] human bodies around them by day, which is more true; for their genealogies endure backward and they existed at the time of the coming of [the] faith. So it is in testimony to their deaths that Flann Mainistrech chanted this poem', author's own translation.

The argument seems to be that the Túatha Dé Danann were demons and their apparent humanity is an illusion of their own making. An intriguing but obscure passage unique to recension *b* is also concerned with the ability of the Túatha Dé Danann to manufacture human bodies, although their relationship with demons there is more complex.⁵⁹ The formula *atbert araile* implies that the passage in *F* is countering something else, such as the unqualified description of them as ‘gods’ in § 317. Indeed, while Macalister prints § 318 as a separate paragraph, it is not separated visually from § 317 in the manuscript.

If their human bodies are illusory, the illusion has depth, as the bodies seem to have genealogies. Alternatively, this passage could suggest that the Túatha Dé Danann have genealogies despite not being human. The reference to them existing at the coming of Christianity is also obscure; in *Lebor Gabála*, the Túatha Dé Danann are placed well before the Christian era and are apparently destroyed by the as yet non-Christian Gaídil, although one manuscript of recension *c* does attribute the victory of the Gaídil to their precocious faith.⁶⁰ Otherwise, the late Middle Irish *Acallam na Senórach* (‘Colloquy of the Elders’) depicts familiar members of the Túatha Dé Danann interacting with St Patrick.⁶¹ It is perhaps an illustration of the dynamic nature of *Lebor Gabála* that, like the additional quatrains in *Éstid a eolchu...* in *m* and *Lc*, this passage appears to relate to material outwith its own version of *Lebor Gabála*.

Éstid a eolchu... alone does not support the idea that the Túatha Dé Danann existed until the arrival of Christianity, unless that may be implied from the arrival of the Gaídil, who are mentioned in the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* §§ 320–1, pp. 138–41.

⁶⁰ *Lebor Gabála* III, § 268, pp. 154–5.

⁶¹ See for example, ‘Acallamh na Senórach’, ed. W. Stokes, in *Irische Texte* 4: 1, ed. W. Stokes and E. Windisch (Leipzig, 1900), ll. 5371–88, pp. 147–8; trans. A. Dooley and H. Roe, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 149–50.

poem.⁶² However, by exhaustively citing how the Túatha Dé Danann died and by often including illness or physical violence as a cause, the poem can be understood as showing them to have had human bodies. The poem is clearly thought of as relevant to the discussion of the origin of the Túatha Dé Danann, as *F* is particularly explicit in citing it as evidence, the word *foirgeall* (‘authoritative testimony’; OIr *forgeall*) implying that it carries distinct insight or authority.⁶³

In *Lc* and *B*, *Éstid a eolchu...* is cited in the context of the same issue but apparently supporting the other side of the argument:

Ocus ciatberaid araile gomdis demna Tuatha De Danann, ar thiachtain in nErinn gan airigudh, 7 adubradar fein is a nellaibh dorchaidhi thangadar, 7 ar imad a fheasa 7 a n-eolais 7 ar doilghe a ngeinealaigh do breadh iar cul; acht cheana ro fhoglaimead eolas 7 filidhecht. Ar gach ndiamair n-dana 7 ar gach lere leighis 7 gach amaindsi eladhna fuil an Erinn, is o Tuatha De Danann ata a bhunadh; 7 ge thainig creideamh an Erinn, ní ro dichuirtea na dana sin, daigh at mhaithe iad. Ocus is follus nach do deamhnaib na dho sidhaibh doibh, ar ro fheadar cach gur gabhsad cuirp daenna umpu o lo dinas firu 7 airimhthear in geinelach for culu 7 do raebadar la tiachtain credme. Conadh dia n-aigheadhaibh ro chan Fland Maineisdreach in duan-sa sis.⁶⁴

⁶² *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 2053–6, pp. 238–9; *LL* I, ll. 1448–51, p. 46.

⁶³ *Dictionary of the Irish Language: Compact Edition* (Dublin, 1983), *s.v.* *forgeall*.

⁶⁴ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 371, pp. 200–3: ‘And though some say that the Túatha Dé Danann were demons—for they came into Ireland without being perceived, and they themselves said they came in dark clouds, it is on account of their excessive knowledge and their learning and on account of the difficulty of following their genealogies back—but, in truth, they pursued knowledge and powers of vision, for in Ireland, all obscurity in art, all clarity in reading and every exactitude in craft, their origin is thus with the Túatha Dé Danann and, although the Faith came to Ireland, these arts were not discarded, for they are good. For all know that they took human bodies around them by day, which is more true. And (their) genealogy can be traced back and they existed at the time of the coming of the Faith, so that of their deaths,

The emphasised text closely resembles part of the passage we have cited from F, while the rest of the passage similarly resembles a passage in *b*, which also argues that the Túatha Dé Danann were not demons.⁶⁵ The passage in *c* thus appears to be constructed out of pre-existing material although its arrangement in *c* gives the material from F new meaning. The overall sense of the passage in *c* seems to be that the Túatha Dé Danann are not demons but the passage includes the idea that they only had human bodies by day. Macalister regards this phrase as out of place, describing it as a 'gloss' when it occurs in *c*.⁶⁶ However, the phrase is presented as part of the main text in both *c* and F. The rest of the passage from F effectively argues that they are human and cites *Éstid a eolchu...* in support of this view.

Recension *c* is not quite as firm as F in citing the support of *Éstid a eolchu...* but the wording makes a connection clear. Also, across the three manuscripts, the attribution to Flann Mainistrech is worded with sufficient differences to suggest that the attribution is not simply fossilised within the tradition but was re-expressed by the scribes handling it.⁶⁷ This might be said to be evidence of a continued, active interest in linking the poem to the prose.

Lc is the only manuscript outwith *m* to include the four additional quatrains.⁶⁸ The prose in *c* also specifies that the Túatha Dé Danann are not of the *síd*, which could be inspired by these quatrains or, conversely, could have led to their inclusion. The additional quatrains never explicitly state that the Túatha Dé Danann are human, however.

Flann Mainistrech chanted this poem', author's own translation and emphasis.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* § 353, pp. 164–5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 203, n. A.

⁶⁷ *Lebor Gabála* IV, p. 202, n. 19.

⁶⁸ See above, pp. 76–7.

ANALYSIS

Éstid a eolchu... thus appears in two contexts: as part of a genealogical and regnal account of the Túatha Dé Danann and as part of the discussion concerning their identity. Within the latter context, it appears to be cited in F as evidence for identifying them as demons and in *c* for identifying them as human. As I will now show, these contexts are cogent uses for the poem paralleled elsewhere both in the *Lebor Gabála* tradition and in medieval Gaelic literature more widely.

Genealogies, death-tales and historical writing

Within medieval Gaelic historical poetry, lists of the death-tales of prominent figures of a dynasty or particular group are a recognized genre. Peter Smith has categorized them as 'Versified Battle-lists and Death-tales of the Kings' in his taxonomy of historical poetry. He draws examples from the seventh to the twelfth century, including *Éstid a eolchu...* but observes that verse compilations of the death-tales of an entire dynasty only begin to appear in the ninth century.⁶⁹

Indeed, death-tale poetry appears with particular frequency among the works of eleventh-century scholars associated with or cited in *Lebor Gabála*. For example, two poems in *Lebor Gabála* record the deaths of the leaders of the Fir Bolg and Gáidil respectively.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁹ P. Smith, 'Early Irish Historical Verse: the Development of a Genre', in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Text and Transmission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Dublin, 2002), pp. 326–41, at pp. 328, 332.

⁷⁰ These poems are *Fir Bolg batar sunna sel* ('The Fir Bolg were here for a season') and *Gáedel Glas ótat Gáedil* ('Gáedel Glas, of whom are the Gáedil'): *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 1493–544, pp. 46–53; *LL* I, ll. 893–940, pp. 28–30; *Lebor Gabála* II, ll. 339–510, 347–350, 371–98, 415–8, pp. 90–107, 90–1, 92–7, 98–9; *LL* I, ll. 244–387, pp. 8–13, at ll. 260, 280–91, 304–7. The former is attributed to Tanaide, for whom see above, p. 78, n. 40; the latter is attributed to Gilla Cóemáin (fl. 1072), see *LL* I, §§ 117, 165, pp. 30–3, 78–9; P. J. Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin*, *Studien und Texte zur Keltologie* 8 (Münster, 2007), 25–32.

addition, several examples of death-tale poetry occur among the other purported works of Flann Mainistrech. For instance, *Ríg Themra dia tesbann tnú* ('The kings of Tara who lack envy') and *Ríg Themra toebaige iar tain* ('The kings of Tara of the slopes, after that') together list the deaths of the kings of Tara from Eochu Feidlech to Mael Sechnaill mac Domnaill (ob. 1022).⁷¹ Sporadically, cause of death is also supplied in Flann's poem on world kingship, *Réidig dam, a Dé, do nim* ('Unravel for me, O God, your heaven').⁷² An early example from outside *Lebor Gabála* is *Fianna bátar i nEmain* ('Warriors that were in Emain'), which is attributed to the tenth-century poet Cinaed Ua hArtacáin (ob. 975) and recounts the deaths of characters familiar from a wide range of texts and cycles.⁷³

Examples of death-tale poetry are thus found relating to individuals from the Christian and pre-Christian era, to Gáidil and non-Gáidil and to characters from a variety of literary sources. No example other than *Éstid a eolchu...* relates to individuals whose humanity is noticeably in doubt. Therefore, there seems no *prima facie* reason for interpreting the poem in itself as addressing the question of the Túatha Dé Danann's identity. On the contrary, complementing a regnal and genealogical history is a perfectly appropriate role for this sort of poem. However, this raises the question of the role death-tale poetry played in historical writing and thus exactly how *Éstid a eolchu...* might complement *m* and *N*.

⁷¹ Pódr, 'Twelve Poems' I, pp. 279–303; *LL* III, ll. 15,640–780 and 15,782–989, pp. 504–8 and 509–15;

⁷² S. Mac Airt, 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship', *Études Celtiques* 6 (1953–54), 255–80; 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship cont.', *Études Celtiques* 7 (1955–56), 18–45; 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship cont.', *Études Celtiques* 8 (1958–59), 99–119, 284–97. The edition ends unfinished.

⁷³ W. Stokes, 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes', *Revue Celtique* 23 (1902), 303–48; J. Carey, 'Cináed ua hArtacáin [Cineth O'Hartagain] (d. 975)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50109>>, accessed 15 October 2011.

The account of an historical character's death could be useful in constructing chronology: the death of a person cannot happen more than once, it removes the character from subsequent proceedings and, if a killer is involved, it provides a terminus post quem for his own disappearance from the record. *Éstid a eolchu...* does not deal with a line of kings or a dynasty with a clear order by generation or succession but with a more complex group, some of whom are contemporary with one another. However, the individual narratives in the poem appear to be in chronological order when compared with the genealogies and with the accounts of their deaths which occur in prose in the *Lebor Gabála* tradition. Carey—without giving reasons—has given 1056, Flann Mainistrech's death-date, as the latest possible date for the production of *Lebor Gabála*'s coverage of the Túatha Dé Danann in its extant form, presumably because he sees the structure of *Éstid a eolchu...* as closely following the structure of its account as a whole.⁷⁴ While both prose and poetry could have influenced each other, the point is that a collection of death-tales can play an important role in structuring time and is thus worth citing in an historical compilation.

I am aware of three specific examples where *Éstid a eolchu...* is potentially being used in this context elsewhere. Accounts of the deaths of the kings of the Túatha Dé Danann who ruled Ireland appear in a king-list in the *Book of Leinster*, which cites *Lebor Gabála*.⁷⁵ Some deaths of individuals of the Túatha Dé Danann appear in a body of synchronisms interpolated into *Lc* and in a text known as *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda Flainn Mainistreach* ('Flann Mainistrech's Book of Synchronisms'), found independently in the *Book of Ballymote*.⁷⁶ Scowcroft believes that these latter texts share a common source.⁷⁷ The date and history of the *LL* king-list is uncertain.

⁷⁴ Carey, *National Origin Legend*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ *LL* I, ll. 5360–402 and 5400, pp. 180–1.

⁷⁶ *Lebor Gabála* IV, §§ 376–7, pp. 208–11; *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus No. 830: Texts, Translations and Indexes*, ed. and trans. B. MacCarthy (Dublin, 1892), pp.

In the *LL* king-list and *Éstid a eolchu...* the deaths mentioned occur in the same order. The accounts in the *LL* king-list are a lot terser but what details it gives are the same. Specifically, its account of the death of Bres mac Eladan closely follows the wording in the poem: 'Bress mac Eladan meic Néit .uiii. mbliadna d'ól rota i richt lomma ros marb';⁷⁸ '... ropo domna trota tra / ól rota i rricht ind lomma.'⁷⁹ Also, the *LL* king-list's description of the death of the Dagda (Eochu Ollathair) uses the same distinctive phrase as the poem: 'Eochu Ollathair .lxxx. marb de gae chró';⁸⁰ 'Marb in Dagda do gâi chró / isin Bruig, ní himmargó'.⁸¹

The synchronistic tracts cite the deaths of individuals—although rarely the causes of the deaths—and the accession of new kings among the Túatha Dé Danann using the reigns of the Assyrian kings as a framework. The *Leabhar Comhairsireachda* goes further and specifies the Assyrian regnal year in which each event occurs. The order of events in *Éstid a eolchu...* and in these tracts is similar, although with some divergences. There are several examples of individuals appearing in the same or adjacent quatrains in the poem and dying during the reign of the same Assyrian king in the tracts. For instance, in Lamprides' reign Cermad mac in Dagda, Corpre File, Etan, Cian, Elloth and Donand died.⁸² These appear in three adjacent

286–317. The attribution to Flann Mainistrech in an eighteenth-century hand is unlikely to be correct, see Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 128, n. 135.

⁷⁷ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 128–9.

⁷⁸ *LL* I, l. 5384, p. 180: 'Bres son of Elada son of Néit, seven years. He was killed after drinking bog-water disguised as milk', author's own translation.

⁷⁹ *Lebor Gabála* IV ll. 1951–2, pp. 228–9: 'for him it was a cause of quarrel indeed, / drinking bog-stuff in the guise of milk'; *LL* I, ll. 1350–1.

⁸⁰ *LL* I, l. 5386, p. 180: 'Eochu Ollathair, fifty-three years; he died of a spear of gore', author's own translation.

⁸¹ *Lebor Gabála* IV, ll. 2033–4, pp. 236–7: 'The Dagda died of a dart of gore / in the Brug—it is no falsehood', *LL* I, ll. 1428–9, p. 45.

⁸² *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 376, pp. 208–11; *Palatino-Vaticanus*, p. 292.

quatrains in the poem.⁸³ Once more, *Leabhar Comhairsireachda* possibly references *Éstid a eolchu...*: two deaths are described as follows: 'ocus isin coiced bliadain deg iar sin, bas Cairbri filed do gae grene ocus bas Eadaine...'.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, in the poem we find 'Marb de gai grene glaine / Corpre mór mac Étaíne...'.⁸⁵

The three texts discussed briefly here employ more advanced chronological devices than *Éstid a eolchu...* does. The first gives lengths of reign and the two synchronistic tracts use the world-kingship to establish a single chronology for the material.⁸⁶ *Éstid a eolchu...*, however, does appear to have been used in their production. Its usefulness may be derived from the potential of this type of poem to provide a relative chronology, as mentioned above. If *Éstid a eolchu...* was also used in the production of synchronistic texts, this would provide a parallel for its role in *m* and *N*, where it complements versions in *Lebor Gabála* that are focused on regnal and genealogical history.

The identity of the Túatha Dé Danann

Both *F* and *c* are reasonably explicit about why they are citing *Éstid a eolchu...* and attestations elsewhere in the extant literature of the issues and concepts involved have previously been mentioned. If we consider the additional quatrains in *m* and *Lc* to be a later addition to the poem, this would provide a further instance in which *Éstid a eolchu...* might be seen in light of uncertainty as to the identity of the Túatha Dé Danann.

⁸³ *Palatino-Vaticanus*, ll. 1921–32, pp. 226–7; *LL* I, ll. 1432–44, p. 45.

⁸⁴ *Palatino-Vaticanus*, p. 292: 'and in the fifteenth year after that, Cairpre died by a beam of the sun and Étaín died', author's own translation.

⁸⁵ *Lebor Gabála*, IV ll. 1929–30, pp. 226–7: 'of a beam of the pure sun / died Cairpre the great, son of Étaín', author's own translation; *LL* I, l. 1328–9, p. 42. The expected genitive of Étaín would be *Étaíne*.

⁸⁶ Smith suggests that this sort of apparatus developed after the work of Flann Mainistrech and was perhaps based on it: 'Historical Poetry', p. 341.

It is not clear if the use of *Éstid a eolchu...* in this context is actually a later development subsequent to the reading evidenced in *m* and *N*. Indeed, the additional quatrains in *m* demonstrate that such an interpretation had been made by someone at the time of *m*'s compilation. On the other hand, both *F* and *c* are derived from a lost version or group of versions, termed *U by Scowcroft, which did not influence *m* or *N*.⁸⁷ The interpretation of *Éstid a eolchu...* in *F* and *c* could thus be derived from an innovation at that stage.

It is also possible that a general uncertainty concerning the Túatha Dé Danann fluctuated over time or was particular to certain circles of scholars, although both these factors are unfortunately difficult to measure. The compilatory character of *Lebor Gabála* means that inconsistencies in the treatment of certain subjects are to be expected. Indeed, Scowcroft has suggested that the compilation purposefully brings different types of material and different viewpoints together.⁸⁸ For example, as we have seen, *F* appears to conclude that the Túatha Dé Danann were demons but also includes genealogies tracing them back to Noah; *F*'s remark 'ni fes bunadhus doibh' may represent the compiler's own view, although even that sentence closely echoes the ninth-century text, *Scél Túain maic Chairrill* ('The Tale of Túain mac Cairrill').⁸⁹ In contrast, *N* does not mention the possibility that the Túatha Dé Danann are demons and similarly includes their genealogies; nonetheless, *N* remarks cryptically that they initially came to Ireland in dark clouds.⁹⁰ Integrating a range of authoritative sources seems to have been at least as much of a priority in *Lebor Gabála* as propagating particular interpretations was; this

⁸⁷ Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 4–5.

⁸⁸ Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 91.

⁸⁹ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 306, pp. 106–9: 'their origin is uncertain', author's own translation; 'Scél Túain maic Chairrill', ed. and trans. J. Carey, *Ériu* 35 (1984), 93–111, at l. 57.

⁹⁰ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 306, pp. 106–9; *LL* I, ll. 1054, p. 33.

seems starkly evidenced by the way *c* constructs a discussion of the Túatha Dé Danann entirely out of material from *a* and *b*.⁹¹

The interpretation of *Éstid a eolchu...* in *F* and *Lc* could thus be derived from an attempt to reconcile it with other material in the tradition. Rather than taking a cavalier approach to the *intentio auctoris* of the poem and use it to propagate their own views, the redactors of *Lebor Gabála* can be understood as questioning and engaging with the poem in the context of other early material in the tradition. For example, *b* does not include *Éstid a eolchu...* but it does cite the deaths of the Túatha Dé Danann as a reason for regarding them as human.⁹² Both this passage and the corresponding section of *c* cite their knowledge and skills as an argument that they are not only human but also good.⁹³ The difficulty of tracing their genealogies is cited as key to the debate about whether they are human, as it is in the passages introducing *Éstid a eolchu...* in *F* and *c*.⁹⁴

In *m* and *N*, *Éstid a eolchu...* follows on from genealogies. In *F*, it follows both genealogies and material on the knowledge and skills of the Túatha Dé Danann. There is, therefore, considerable overlap between the topics of the debate on their identity in *b*, *F* and *c* and the poem's wider context in *N* and *m*. If *N* or *m* were read in light of the debates found in *b*, their human ancestors, their deaths and the broadly realistic reign-lengths of their kings in these versions could easily be re-analysed as arguments that they are human, whatever the original purpose of such material.⁹⁵ Indeed, it has been suggested by both Carey and Myles Dillon that the original purpose of locating the Túatha Dé Danann in the historical scheme set out in *Lebor Gabála*

⁹¹ See above, p. 76.

⁹² *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 353, pp. 164–5.

⁹³ *Ibid.* § 371, pp. 200–3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* § 353, pp. 164–5.

⁹⁵ For the use of genealogies of gods in refuting paganism elsewhere, see T. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 201.

was to render them human beings and thus euhemerize them.⁹⁶ This may also explain the presence of the additional quatrains in the texts of *Éstid a eolchu...* in *m*. The later versions may thus be interpreting the intention behind the material more accurately than the earliest extant versions.

Specifically, suspicion concerning the ancestry of the Túatha Dé Danann could be due to the archaic nature of these genealogies within the *Lebor Gabála* tradition. As discussed above, these genealogies are based on synchronising the arrival of the Gaídl with King David, while subsequent versions of the compilation date the same event much later.⁹⁷ Such a discrepancy may be behind the suggestion in *b* that the genealogies of the Túatha Dé Danann cannot be reckoned back.⁹⁸

The interpretation of *Éstid a eolchu...* in *F* and *Lc* could be regarded as rhetorical invention reflecting a new agenda of the compilers, comparable with the treatment of *intentio auctoris* in medieval commentary tradition, as analysed by Rita Copeland.⁹⁹ There were undoubtedly wider cultural and intellectual anxieties that influenced the treatment of the Túatha Dé Danann in texts like *Lebor Gabála*. However, the debate concerning them, into which *Éstid a eolchu...* is explicitly drawn in *F* and *c*, very often concerns material already contained within the *Lebor Gabála* tradition. The debate may thus be an expression of perceived tensions and disagreements arising from attempts to reconcile the different versions of the compilation and not the conscious imposition of an entirely new interest on the material. There are problems with this interpretation, however. For example, it assumes a detailed, general knowledge of the entire tradition on the part of the scribes and compilers. This is not at all

⁹⁶ Dillon, 'Lebor Gabála', p. 62; Carey, *A Single Ray*, p. 16.

⁹⁷ See above, p. 75.

⁹⁸ *Lebor Gabála* IV, § 353, pp. 164–5.

⁹⁹ R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 186–220.

impossible but it is not evidenced in the texts they actually produced, which have been shown to have definite affiliations.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

Éstid a eolchu... is a junction for some of the key concepts and methodologies within the *Lebor Gabála* tradition. Its various interpretations and uses give the impression that the meaning of an 'authoritative' poem could, in fact, be manipulated by later compilers or continuators, with interesting implications for the nature of its authority. However, this manipulation should not necessarily be understood as conscious deception. The treatment of the Túatha Dé Danann as an historical people and the discussion of whether they are human, while differing in presentation, have been shown to be potentially interlinked conceptually and based on the same material. The different uses of *Éstid a eolchu...* may thus be the product of the developing understanding and discussion of that material in the course of the *Lebor Gabála* project, rather than the imposition of new readings upon it. The poem was considered authoritative but its meaning was derived from a wide-ranging consideration of the *Lebor Gabála* tradition and perhaps other texts as well. Indeed, the frequency of references in the treatment of this poem to ideas not expressed in *Lebor Gabála* itself in or around *Éstid a eolchu...* adds a new dimension to the poem's treatment; these include the existence of the Túatha Dé Danann at the coming of Christianity or their repose in *Tír Tairngire*. These remind us that even a text with the scope of *Lebor Gabála* was composed, compiled and intended to be read in a wider literary and cultural context which may also have been authoritative and influenced the treatment of material within the compilation.

¹⁰⁰ Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', p. 18.

Rhetoric, Translation and Historiography: the Literary Qualities of
Brut y Tynysogyon

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Brut y Tynysogyon ('the Chronicle of the Princes') is a Welsh historical chronicle thought to have been translated into Welsh from Latin chronicles which are no longer extant.¹ Entries begin with the year 681 and continue through 1282; a later continuation in Peniarth 20 extends the entries to the year 1332.² The text is often noted for its

¹ See *Brut y Tynysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1955), pp. xi–lxii (hereafter referred to as *BT, Red Book of Hergest*). *Brut y Tynysogyon* is a continuation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De Gestis Britonum*, itself translated into Welsh as *Brut y Brenbinedd*, a text found in many of the same manuscripts as *Brut y Tynysogyon*. See *Brut y Brenbinedd: Llanstephan MS. 1 Version*, ed. B. F. Roberts, Medieval and Modern Welsh Series 5 (Dublin, 1971) and *Brut y Brenbinedd, Cotton Cleopatra Version*, ed. and trans. J. J. Parry (Cambridge, Mass., 1937). For editions of the three versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon*, see *Brut y Tynysogyon, Peniarth MS. 20*, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1941) (hereafter referred to as *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*); *Brenbinedd y Saesson, or The Kings of the Saxons: BM Cotton MS. Cleopatra B v and The Black Book of Basingwerk, NLW MS. 7006*, ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1971); *Brenhinoedd y Saeson, 'The Kings of the English', A.D. 682–954: Texts P, R, S in Parallel*, ed. and trans. D. Dumville, Basic Texts for Mediaeval British History 1 (Aberdeen, 2005); and *BT, Red Book of Hergest*. For a translation of the Peniarth 20 version, see Thomas Jones, *Brut y Tynysogyon, or, The Chronicle of the Princes, Peniarth MS. 20 Version* (Cardiff, 1952) (hereafter referred to as *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*). Thanks are due to Prof. Paul Russell for his comments on various drafts of this paper and for assistance with my Latin translations; all mistakes are my own. Thanks are also due to Prof. Catherine McKenna for her comments and to the audience of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic 2012 for their helpful observations.

² See *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. 228–36; for discussion see G. and T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Continuation of *Brut y Tynysogyon* in Peniarth Ms. 20', in *Ysgrifau*

value as an historical document providing essential details of medieval Welsh history from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries and the various political and dynastic struggles therein. Yet its remarkable literary qualities are rarely considered, despite the fact that, beginning with the entry for the year 1014, it surpasses the sort of brief, annalistic entries that one would expect of a chronicle and instead embellishes the provided historical information with character descriptions, rhetorical flourishes, fast-paced battle scenes and even extended elegiac passages.³ The work is thus more in line with the historiographical modes of medieval authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury or Henry of Huntingdon than the genre of the purely annalistic chronicle.⁴ The presence of these literary features calls for an examination of the stylistic choices made by the compilers and the effect these choices have on the resulting product. For the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on the section of *Brut y Tynysogyon* documenting the death of Rhys ap Gruffudd, prince of Deheubarth, in 1197, as this entry exemplifies

a Cherddi Cyflwynedig i Daniel Huws: Essays and Poems Presented to Daniel Huws, ed. Tegwyn Jones and E. B. Fryde (Aberystwyth, 1994), pp. 293–306.

³ The extended narrative entries begin in the entry for 1014, which relates the death of Brian, king of Ireland. Though it is expected that an historical chronicle would contain some degree of bias expressed by the chroniclers, this paper operates on the expectation that *Brut y Tynysogyon* would behave throughout as it does in its early entries, as a sparse and factually-concerned list of events. The text's literary value has been noted in passing by Thomas Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', *Scottish Stud.* 12 (1968), 15–27, esp. pp. 25–6, and by R. I. Jack, *Medieval Wales, The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (London, 1972), pp. 23 and 26–7.

⁴ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain, An Edition and Translation of De gestis Britonum [Historia regum Britanniae]*, ed. M. D. Reeve and trans. N. Wright (Woodbridge, 2007); William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*, 2 vols., ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998); and Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum, The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996).

the characteristic rhetorical style of the text.⁵ In the Peniarth 20 version only, a thirty-six-line Latin poem and a Latin epitaph for Rhys have been added to the entry; as these lines have already been discussed by Huw Pryce, the present discussion will focus primarily on the prose entries eulogising the Lord Rhys, with attention drawn to the poems in this context at the paper's conclusion.⁶

Brut y Tywysogyon itself survives in fifty-two manuscripts dating from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries.⁷ Three distinct versions of the text, each represented by the name of a principal manuscript, have been identified and edited by Thomas Jones;⁸ the

⁵ For background on Rhys see R. Turvey, *The Lord Rhys* (Ceredigion, 1997) and *Yr Arghwydd Rhys*, ed. H. Pryce and N. A. Jones (Cardiff, 1996). The most cited example of panegyric in *Brut y Tywysogyon* is the elegy for Rhys in the Peniarth 20 version of the text; see Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 25; Jack, *Medieval Wales*, p. 30; and Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin', in *Yr Arghwydd Rhys*, pp. 212–23.

⁶ *BT*, *Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. 140–1; Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin', pp. 212–23.

⁷ *BT*, *Chronicle of the Princes*, p. xlv; *BT*, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xxi–xxxv; *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, pp. xvi–xxv.

⁸ See above, n. 1, p. 94; also *BT*, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi–lxii. For the Peniarth 20 edition of the text, Jones uses Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 20 (s. xiv¹); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3046D (formerly Mostyn 143, s. xvi); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3055D (formerly Mostyn 159, AD 1587); and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 213 (s. xvii^{1/2}); others have since been discovered (see *BT*, *Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xlv–lix). The primary manuscripts of Jones's edition of the Red Book version are Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 18 (s. xiv^{med}); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3035B (formerly Mostyn 116, s. xiv²); the Red Book of Hergest (Oxford, Jesus College 111, s. xiv–xv); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Llanstephan 172 (c. 1580); and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 19 (s. xiv–xv). Though the Red Book of Hergest text itself is not actually the basic text for this edition, as it contains many errors and 'inferior readings', it is appropriate to follow convention and call it 'the Red Book version' (see *BT*, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi; xxxviii–li). The primary manuscripts of *Brenhinedd y Saesson* are London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra B. v. (s. xiv^{med}) and the Black Book of Basingwerk (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 7006, s. xv²); see *Brenhinedd y*

Peniarth 20 version is the oldest by about eighty years.⁹ Each one of these versions has given rise to its own group of associated manuscripts, with some manuscripts, especially later ones, exhibiting interpolations from one or more of the other versions. Thus much of the scholarship concerning *Brut y Tywysogyon* has been dedicated to examining this complicated textual history, assessing the relationships between the different manuscript versions and the relationship between the Welsh translations and the extant group of Latin chronicles known as *Annales Cambriae*.¹⁰ The Peniarth 20 version survives in ten manuscripts, the Red Book of Hergest version in twenty-nine manuscripts and the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* version in thirteen manuscripts.¹¹ The Red Book version and the Peniarth 20 version are textually very similar; a few significant differences will be discussed below. The version known as *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, so called because it combines an account of the English kings with a version of

Saesson, pp. xv–xxv; also *Brenhinoedd y Saeson*, pp. v–x. Dates, where available, have been taken from D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000). In this paper, when referring to *Brut y Tywysogyon*, I am referring to the text overall, inclusive of the three versions.

⁹ Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p. 59; for Jones's discussion of the date of Peniarth 20, see *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec: sef, Cyfieithiad Cymraeg Canol o'r Promptuarium Bibliae*, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1940), p. lxxxix.

¹⁰ See *BT*, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi–lxii; *BT*, *Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. ix–xii; *BT*, *Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xi–lxxv; Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', pp. 15–27; K. Hughes, 'The Welsh Latin Chronicles: *Annales Cambriae* and Related Texts', *PBA* 59 (1973), 233–58, repr. in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources*, ed. Dumville, *Studies in Celtic History* 2 (Woodbridge, 1980), 67–85 and reviewed by Dumville, *Studia Celtica* 12/13 (1977–8), 461–7; see also G. and T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Continuation of *Brut y Tywysogyon*', pp. 293–306; *Annales Cambriae, A.D. 682–954: Texts A–C in Parallel*, ed. and trans. Dumville, *Basic Texts for Brittonic History* 1 (Cambridge, 2002); and J. E. Lloyd, 'The Welsh Chronicles', *PBA* 14 (1938), 369–91.

¹¹ *BT*, *Chronicle of the Princes*, p. xlv; *BT*, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xxi–xxxv; *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, pp. xvi–xxv; this manuscript survival rate suggests that the Red Book version circulated most widely.

Brut y Tynysogyon, is often heavily abbreviated, which Jones attributes to the chronicler's inclusion of the history of English kings at the expense of space for the history of the Welsh.¹² Though the earliest manuscripts of *Brut y Tynysogyon* date to the fourteenth century, it is generally accepted that the text's translation from Latin into Welsh first occurred in the thirteenth century.¹³

As stated above, the markedly elevated rhetorical style of *Brut y Tynysogyon*, though often mentioned in passing by scholars, is a feature of the text which has not been discussed at length. Thomas Jones briefly notes that the 'chronicler is a conscious literary artist' who 'often aims at literary effect'.¹⁴ He attributes the inconsistent and fluctuating length of entries to irregularities in the compiler's sources: 'The chronicle shows great unevenness in its treatment ... The varying meagreness and fullness of the compilation, it need hardly be stressed, reflects the original sources which were at the disposal of the compiler'.¹⁵ R. I. Jack has also observed that the Peniarth 20 version is 'more literary' than the other versions.¹⁶ Yet a complete study of the function of rhetoric, language and literary tropes in the various versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon* which gives rise to this general impression of the Peniarth 20 text has not been done. Examining why the chroniclers chose to write in an elevated rhetorical fashion, when simple annalistic formulae would have satisfied the function of the chronicle genre—and addressing the significance of this choice to expand—may lead to new conclusions about the motivations or even political goals of the chroniclers in the composition and translation of

¹² *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, p. xiv: 'The earlier and shorter notices in the Latin original of *Brut y Tynysogyon* he took over in full, but the later and, in general, fuller entries down to the year 1197 he has attempted to compress, presumably to allow room for the addition of the earlier entries on the Saxon kings'.

¹³ *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xxxvii–xl.

¹⁴ Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 22.

¹⁶ Jack, *Medieval Wales*, p. 30; he states that 'in general Peniarth 20 has more high rhetoric than Hergest'.

their narrative. While I would very much like to provide complete answers to these questions, the purpose of this paper will be to discuss some preliminary questions that need to be addressed before such a study can be done comprehensively.

As Thomas Jones and Kathleen Hughes have demonstrated, the various versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon* are Welsh translations of some unknown Latin historical chronicles.¹⁷ Thus it is first important to determine whether the rhetorical and literary qualities present in the Welsh *Brut y Tynysogyon* are the work of the Welsh translator or taken from the Latin originals. Jones has argued that the three versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon* are ultimately derived from three independent Latin exempla which themselves originated in some unknown Latin chronicle written sometime in the thirteenth century, probably at the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida.¹⁸ He posits that the surviving group of Latin chronicles known as *Annales Cambriae* were also derived, in a separate line of transmission, from this lost Latin *Ur-text*.¹⁹ As this original text is unknown, it is difficult to tell how much the annals were altered in translation from Latin to Welsh and in transmission. There are a few instances, however, where the various versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon* can be compared to demonstrably

¹⁷ *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xxxvii–xl and Hughes, 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', pp. 17 and 19.

¹⁸ For details, see *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi–lxii and *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xxxvii–xxxix; this model is in need of re-evaluation; see *Brenhinoedd y Saeson*, ed. Dumville, p. vi.

¹⁹ *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xxxvi–xlii. The manuscripts of *Annales Cambriae* are: London, British Library, Harley 3859 (c. 1100); London, British Library, Cotton Domitian A. i. (s. xiii^{ex}); and London, Public Record Office, MS E. 164 ('The Breviate Domesday', s. xiii^{ex}, which Hughes refers to as 'PRO'); see Hughes, 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', pp. 3–4; K. Hughes, *The Early Celtic Idea of History and the Modern Historian: An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge, 1977); Lloyd, 'Welsh Chronicles', pp. 369–91; and D. Huws, 'The Neath Abbey Breviate of Domesday', in *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages*, ed. R. A. Griffiths and P. R. Schofield (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 46–55.

equivalent passages in the surviving Latin chronicles in order to determine whether rhetorical and literary adornments are present in the Latin versions as well as the Welsh: rather conveniently, the three versions of *Brut y Tynysogyon* have many passages in common with the *Cronica de Wallia*, a Latin chronicle found in Exeter, Cathedral Library MS 3514 and containing entries from 1190 to 1266.²⁰ Jones writes,

Although the complete Latin compilation has not survived, many of the original Latin entries, which were embodied in it and subsequently translated thrice into Welsh, may still be traced in one or more of the four sets of Latin annals listed above ... the RB and Peniarth MS. 20 versions of the *Brut* are in such close substantial agreement that with the help of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Cronica de Wallia* large portions of the original Latin text can be reconstructed.²¹ Thus we have some basis for comparison with a Latin text which is likely to have some characteristics in common with the lost Latin chronicles upon which *Brut y Tynysogyon* was based.

Julia Crick's important recent study on Exeter 3514 establishes that the manuscript was copied in Wales 'in the decades [on] either side of the Edwardian conquest, probably in a milieu very close to the

²⁰ *Cronica de Wallia* is not, strictly speaking, a version of the group of texts collectively referred to as *Annales Cambriae*. While it does have sources in common with *Annales Cambriae*, its similarities with *Brut y Tynysogyon* over *Annales Cambriae* indicate derivation from the Latin chronicle(s) underlying *Brut y Tynysogyon* rather than from *Annales Cambriae* itself. Along with portions of *Cronica de Anglia*, another annalistic chronicle found in Exeter MS 3514, *Cronica de Wallia* has been edited by Thomas Jones in "'Cronica de Wallia" and Other Documents from Exeter Cathedral Library MS. 3514', *BBCS* 12 (1946), 27–44; for a valuable recent study of the Exeter manuscript, see J. Crick, 'The Power and the Glory: Conquest and Cosmology in Edwardian Wales', in *Textual Cultures: Cultural Texts*, ed. O. Da Rold and E. Treharne (Woodbridge, 2010), pp. 21–42.

²¹ BT, *Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xl–xli, also BT, *Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. xi–xiii.

political centre'.²² She asserts that the *Cronica de Wallia* scribe was working 'in or after 1266': a time of great political upheaval in Wales very nearly contemporary with the annals themselves.²³ Crick demonstrates that the various texts in this manuscript (including sections of Honorius of Autun's *De imagine mundi*, pseudo-Methodius and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*) represent 'an assertion of intellectual and aesthetic standards' in which 'the place of Welsh history was staked out ... using the universal language, in texts copied in contemporary European script'; the compilers were highly conscious of current artistic, literary and political trends.²⁴ The section of *Cronica de Wallia* upon which the present article focuses is consistent with this assessment, as the text reflects a high quality of Latin in keeping with the rhetorical modes of its day.

As mentioned above, Hughes observes that the *Cronica de Wallia* entries from 1190 to 1216 are closely parallel to *Brut y Tynysogyon*.²⁵ She calls this particular date range 'the nearest we can come to the Latin original of the *Brut y Tynysogyon* in its earliest known version, before it became conflated with supplementary material'; she also

²² Crick, 'The Power and the Glory', p. 24. She argues that the manuscript was a Welsh production based on its preservation of genealogies of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, the First Variant version of *De gestis Britonum*, a distinctly Welsh version of Dares Phrygius's *De excidio Troiae historia* and various archaic insular abbreviations: *ibid.* pp. 25; 33.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 35.

²⁵ Hughes also notes that the entries for 1228–30 'have correspondences with the Brut': 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', p. 17. In agreement with Jones, she argues that the *Cronica de Wallia* uses a Strata Florida source, just as *Brut y Tynysogyon* is suspected to have done, based on the fact that the text is particularly concerned with events in Strata Florida: *ibid.* p. 19; see also BT, *Chronicle of the Princes*, p. xxxix. Hughes ends this date range at 1248 because the Exeter annals 'omit a reference in 1248 to the settlement of a debt owed by Strata Florida to King Henry, which the Bruts say was recorded in the monastic annals'; the remainder of the chronicle is a conflation of extracts from St David's annals and the Bury chronicle: 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', p. 19, n. 1.

observes that the entries 'are in a rhetorical style similar to that of the *Bruf*'.²⁶

<i>Cronica de Wallia</i>	Peniarth 20 version	Red Book version	BL Cotton Cleo. B. v.
Qua combusta eadem die Rogerus de Mortuo Mari et Hugo de Sail cum maximo apparatu in ualle eiusdem uille turmas magnas bellicis armis munitissimas, acies instauratas loric[at]as, clipeatas, galeatas , contra Resum principem exposuerunt. Quos ut Resus uir magnanimus aspiciens manu ualida, corde audaci leonem induens , in hostes irrumpens eosdemque actutum in fugam conuertens, fugatos instanter persequens uiliter, sed uiriliter tractauit. ²⁷	agwedy ylosgi dyd hwnw y kyuansodes roesser dy mortmyr ahu dy say diruawr lu ynydyffryn yn emyl ydref hono ac ygossodassant eutoruoed yn aruawc olurygeu atharyaneu a helmeu yn erbyn y kymry. aphan weles rys hyny val yroed wr mawr vrydus ef aymwisgawd megys llew orymus law a beidyawdyr galon ac agyrchawd y elynyon ac ay gyrrawd ar ffo agwedy eu gyrru ef ay hynlidyawd yn wrawl ac ay lladawd. ²⁸	A gwedy llosgi, y dyd hwnw yn y dyffryn yn gyuagos y kyweirawd Roser Mormer a Hu Dysai yn vydinoed aruawc o veirch a llurugeu a helmeu a tharyaneu yn dirybud yn erbyn y Kymry. A phan welas y mawrurydus Rys hyn, ymwisgaw a wnaeth megys llew a llaw gadarn a chyrchu y elynyon yn wrawl a'e hymhoelut ar fo a'e hynlit a'e traethu yn dielw, kyt bei gwrawl. ²⁹	Ac odena y bryssiassant hyt yn Radynor, ac a'y llogassant. A'r dyd hwnw y doeth Rosser Mortimer a Hvgyn o Say a llu diruawr o wyr arvauc ymladgar yn erbydyneve yn barawt y ymlad. A gwedy gvelet o Rys hynny, kyrchu y elynyon a oruc megys llew , ac ev kymhell ar ffo ac ev hynlit yn wrawl ac eu seythu gan ev llad yn olofrud. ³⁰

²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 19.

²⁷ Jones, 'Cronica de Wallia', p. 30: 'On the same day that it was burned, Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai, with the greatest preparation, from that same valley,

Hughes demonstrates these similarities in rhetorical style using the entry from 1196, which compares Rhys to a lion as he defeats Roger de Mortimer and Hugh de Sai. The various versions are reproduced as above.

It is apparent that the tricolon 'loric[at]as, clipeatas, galeatas', for example, is recreated in the Welsh, with the items in different order: 'a llurugeu a helmeu a tharyaneu'. The description of Rhys as a lion is also retained: the Latin reads 'manu ualida, corde audaci leonem induens'; the Peniarth 20 version reads 'megys llew orymus law a

sent forth great hosts with the most fortified weapons of war and battle lines equipped with cuirasses, shields and helmets, against the Lord Rhys. So when the brave man Rhys saw them, **with a strong arm and brave heart and taking on the guise of a lion**, bursting upon his enemies, he immediately turned them about to flight, and with them instantly put to flight, he pursued them depravedly, but treated them manfully', translation by the author and Paul Russell.

²⁸ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 136b: 'And after it had been burnt, on that day Roger de Mortimer and Hugh de Sai arrayed a mighty host in the valley near that town, and they placed their forces armed with corselets and shields and helmets against the Welsh. And when Rhys perceived that, as he was a great-hearted man, he armed himself **like a lion with a strong hand and daring heart**, and attacked his enemies and drove them to flight, and after driving them he manfully pursued them and slew them', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 76.

²⁹ 'And after it had been burnt, that day in the valley close by, Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai drew up their forces equipped with horses and corselets and helmets and their shields without warning against the Welsh. And when the great-hearted Rhys saw this, **like a fierce lion he armed himself with a stout heart and a strong hand**, and he attacked his enemies manfully and turned them to flight and pursued them and treated them vilely, although manfully', *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. 176/177.

³⁰ *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, p. 192: 'And thereupon they hastened to Radnor, and they burned it. And that day Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai came with a mighty hold of armed fighting men in their ranks ready to fight. And after Rhys had seen that, he fell upon his enemies **like a lion**, and he forced them to flight and manfully pursued them, and shot at them, slaughtering them murderously', *ibid.* p. 193.

beidyawdyr galon'; the Red Book version reads 'megys llew dyfal o galon lew a llaw gadarn', with the *calon* 'heart' and *llaw* 'hand' reversed, and the abbreviated *Brenhinedd y Saesson* entry, represented solely by BL Cotton Cleopatra B. v. in Jones's edition, simply reads 'megys llew'.³¹ Thus it is possible to trace the evolution of a select passage through comparison of a single episode (keeping in mind that the exact relationships between the passages and their chronology are unknown). The account of Rhys's victory in battle in auxesis, a sequence of clauses increasing in force, is found in both the Latin and Welsh versions; thus this example indicates not only that the Welsh translator was using a Latin text very much like *Cronica de Wallia*, but also shows that in such a case where the Welsh text closely parallels the Latin, rhetorical devices such as tricolon, climax, auxesis and metaphor used in the Latin version have been carried over into the Welsh.

Paul Russell has discussed the use of rhetorical tricolons, 'paratactic' narrative structure, rhetorical climaxes, anaphora and comparisons to classical and biblical figures in the context of *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*.³² This text, for which Russell proposes a composition date between 1137 and 1148, can be used as a benchmark for the sort of rhetorical devices extant in Welsh texts of the central Middle Ages.³³ The presence of rhetorical ornamentation in the *Vita Griffini* is perhaps expected in the genre of the royal biography, which by definition elevates the status of the subject

³¹ Note the word-play here between *glew* 'strong' and *llew* 'lion', which can figuratively mean 'brave' or 'fierce warrior'. Thanks are due to Paul Russell for pointing out that the phrase 'manu ualida, corde audaci leonem induens' is in fact very similar to those in the Welsh versions.

³² *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: the Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. and trans. P. Russell (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 36–9; 48–9; see also P. Malone, "Entirely Outside the World": Rhetoric, Legitimacy and Identity in the Biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Harvard Univ., 2009), pp. xvi–xviii.

³³ *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*, ed. Russell, pp. 46–7.

through praise and flattering character descriptions. Given that many passages in *Brut y Tynwysogyon* concern the actions of political leaders and often include descriptions of their physical person, political activities and heroic deeds in battle, the conventions of the royal biography genre are indeed an appropriate model for the sort of descriptions we see in *Brut y Tynwysogyon*.

It is also important to determine whether any instances of rhetorical amplification having been added to the vernacular version can be found. If we assume for the moment that the Peniarth 20 version of *Brut y Tynwysogyon* corresponds to *Cronica de Wallia* from 1190 to 1216 unless the redactors or translators of the Welsh version chose to change the text, we could then argue that the entry for 1213 in the Welsh versions (corresponding to 1212 in *Cronica de Wallia*) has been greatly expanded by the Welsh-language redactors to describe the ferocity of a battle between Rhys Gryg and Rhys Ieuanc. See table overleaf.

<i>Cronica de Wallia</i>	Peniarth 20 version	Red Book version
Duo filii Griffini, Resus scilicet et Owen, fauentibus sibi regis baronibus, abdita terrarum de Stratchewy uiriliter penetrantes ad Dynneur usque peruenerunt; cuius castelli cum adiacentibus cantaredis tunc temporis Resus filius Resi possessor erat et dominus. Venientes itaque castellanos in breui dedicioni cogentes castellum optinuerunt, sola uita eisdem castellanis concessa cum armis. Qui modicum post similiter Francorum suffulti uirtute castellum de Lana[m]deuri cum armis optinuerunt, sola uita castellanis concessa. ³⁴	athranoeth ykerdassant odyno a rys yn dywyssawc ymlaen y vydin gyntaf. afauk. ymlaen yr eil vydin. ac ywein ymlaen y vydin diwaethaf. ac ef agyuarvv rys vychan ar vydin gyntaf agwedy ymlad yn galet onadunt. ef ayrrwyf rys vychan yn llyle ar ffo wedy llawer oy wyr a daly ereill. athraytoed rys yeuanc yn ryuelu ef a aeth rys vychan ac agadarnhaawd kastell dinefwr o wyr ac arueu ac alosges tref llandeilaw vawr yn gwbyl ac a aeth ymeith. ac ef adoeth rys yeuag wrth y kastell athranoeth y peris dodí ysgolyon wrth ymuroed a gwyr aruawc y ysgynu y muroed ac ary kyrch kyntaf y kat y kastell oll eithyr ytwr ac yn hwnw yr ymgynnullawd	A thrannoeth kyrchu a orugant gyuoeth Rys Gryc a chyweiraw y bydinoed a dodí Rys Jeuanc a'e vydin yn y blaen ac Fawcoc a'e vydin yn y canawl ac Ywein ap Gruffud a'e vydin ynn ol. Ac ny bu bell yny gyfaruu Rys gryc a'e lu ac wynt. Ac yn y vrwydyr a'r vydin gynntaf y goruwyt ar Rys Gryc a'e wyr, ac y kilyawd ar ffo, wedy llad re o'e wyr a dala ereill. Ac yna yd aeth Rys Jeuanc ar veder ymlad a chastell Dinefwr. Ac eisoes Rys Gryc a'e raculaennawd ac a gadarnhawd y castell o wyr ac arueu. A gwedy llosci Llan Deilaw y kilyawd ymdeith. Ac eisoes Rys Jeuanc a gyrchawd y castell. A

³⁴ Jones, "'Cronica de Wallia'", p. 35: 'The two sons of Gruffudd, namely Rhys [Ieuanc] and Owain, with the support of the king's barons, bravely penetrating the remote parts of the territory of Ystrad Tywi, finally came to Dinefwr; over which castle and adjacent cantrefi Rhys [Gryg] ap Rhys was owner and lord at that time. Coming and besieging the castle, they quickly forced the people in the castle into surrender and seized the castle, granting them only their lives and their weapons. A little later, likewise supported by the bravery of the Normans, they captured the castle of Llandovery, granting the people in the castle their lives only', author's own translation.

y kastellwyr oll ac yr amdiffynasant wynt yn galet. ac ergydeu ac acherric ac apheiryaneu ereill. ac or tu allan yr oed saethydyon ac albryswyr yn bwrw ergydeu a mwynwyr yn kladu amarchogyon aruawc yn gwassnaethu an diodefedyon gyrcheu yny vv dir vdunt kyn pyrrawn rodi ytwr.³⁵

thrannoeth dodí a oruc peiryannaev a dychymygyon y ymlad a'r castell, a gwneuthur esgolyon wrth y muroed y wyr y drigaw dros y muroed. Ac velly y goresgynnawd ef y castell oll eithyr vn twr. Ac ynn hwnnw yr ymgymertth y castellwyr wrth ymlad ac amdiffyn ac ergydeu a pheiranneu ereill; ac ody allan yd oed saethydyon ac arblastwyr a mwynwyr a marchogyon yn ymlad ac wynt. Ac velly y kymhellwyt arnunt kyn prynghawn tau y castell.³⁶

³⁵ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. 160a–161b: 'And on the following day they marched thence, with Rhys as leader in the van of the first troop, and Falkes in the van of the second troop, and Owain in the van of the rear troop. And Rhys Fychan encountered the first troop. And after they had fought hard, Rhys Fychan was there and then driven to flight, after many of his men had been slain and others had been captured. And whilst Rhys Ieuanc was fighting, Rhys Fychan went and fortified the castle of Dinefwr with men and arms, and he completely burned the town of Llandeilo-fawr and made off. But Rhys Ieuanc came before the castle. And on the following day he had ladders placed against the walls, and armed men to scale the walls. And on the first assault the whole castle was taken, except for the tower. And in that all the garrison gathered together and they defended strongly with missiles and stones and other engines. And from without archers and crossbow-men were shooting missiles, and sappers digging, and armed knights making unbearable assaults, till they were forced before the afternoon to surrender the tower', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 89.

³⁶ 'And on the following day they made for the territory of Rhys Gryg and they arrayed their troops and placed Rhys Ieuanc and his troop in the van and Falkes

I have not been able to find any other instances of material added to the vernacular version of *Brut y Tynysogyon* through comparison with *Cronica de Wallia* in particular. Thomas Jones does find other such instances of expansion from the annalistic source; an exhaustive comparison of the *Brut* texts to extant equivalent sources and a full assessment of the manuscripts of *Annales Cambriae* would be necessary to address this issue definitively. Since we do not know the exact shape or contents of the original Latin chronicle which formed the basis of *Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tynysogyon*, any conclusions drawn from these comparisons are tenuous at best. It is always possible that instances of text in *Brut y Tynysogyon* that do not correspond to extant *Annales Cambriae* manuscripts could have come from other Latin versions; the textual history is almost too complicated to untangle.³⁷ What is clear, however, is that the

and his troop in the centre and Owain ap Gruffudd and his troop in the rear. And it was not long till Rhys Gryg and his host met with them. And in the battle with the first troop Rhys Gryg and his men were defeated, and he retreated in flight, after some of his men had been slain and others had been captured. And then Rhys Ieuanc went with the intention of laying siege to the castle of Dinefwr. But nevertheless Rhys Gryg forestalled him and fortified the castle with men and arms. And after having burnt Llandeilo he retreated thence. But nevertheless Rhys Ieuanc made for the castle. And on the following day he placed engines and contrivances to lay siege to the castle, and made ladders against the walls for his men to climb over the walls. And thus he gained possession of the whole castle except for one tower. And in that the garrison undertook to fight and put up a defence with missiles and other engines; and outside there were archers and crossbow-men and sappers and knights besieging them. And thus they were forced before afternoon to surrender the castle', *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. 196/197. This version is much more extensive than the Latin. The first half of the paragraph on p. 196 of *BT, Red Book of Hergest* should appear in *Cronica de Wallia* between 1211 and 1212, but interestingly does not: see Jones, 'Cronica de Wallia', p. 35.

³⁷ See, for example, Wendy Davies's assertion that the 'significance' of *Brut y Tynysogyon* 'for the pre-Conquest period lies in the fact that they occasionally have entries which are not to be found in any of the surviving texts of the

vernacular version of events in this particular case has been expanded and reworked to create a much fuller, more descriptive and seemingly eyewitness account.

We must then refine our question about the literary qualities of *Brut y Tynysogyon*: rather than asking why the Welsh-vernacular chroniclers depart from the simplistic formula one would expect of an annalistic document and instead craft a literary narrative, as it is apparent that these qualities exist in the Latin exemplar as well, we must instead ask why and how the annals shift from the quality of the earlier entries to the embellished narrative style of the later entries. The question of audience is also important in this transition from Latin to vernacular: would Welsh have allowed the text to be more accessible? For whom was it translated? It is apparent from the numerous references to biblical and classical figures in the text that the anticipated audience was a learned one.

As mentioned above, previous scholars have used the elegy for Rhys ap Gruffudd as an apt example of the rhetorical refinement of the text. Following the convention of royal biography, this entry praises Rhys in a series of comparisons to classical and biblical heroes.³⁸ The Peniarth 20 version names him 'drwyd herkwllff eil achel herwyd garwder y dwy vron. hynawster nestor. glewder tydeus. kedernyt samson. dewred hector. llymder curialius. tegwch aphryt paris. huolder vlixes. doethineb selyf. mawrvryt aix'.³⁹ Fitting the

Annales Cambriae, but which appear to have been derived from pre-Conquest annalistic material, presumably from earlier texts of the Annals which have not survived. These relate almost entirely to the tenth and eleventh centuries', *Wales in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in the History of Early Britain (Leicester, 1982), p. 201. Thus it is always possible that rhetorical elements in the Welsh version were not created by the translator but found in another no-longer-extant source.

³⁸ Russell notes that the *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* contains copious comparisons to Judas Maccabaeus in particular: *Vita Griffini*, p. 48.

³⁹ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 139a: 'the magnanimity of Hercules! A second Achilles in the sturdiness of his breast, the gentleness of Nestor, the doughtiness of

context of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Dares Phrygius's *De excidio Trojae historia*, Rhys is equated with heroes of the Trojan War. This flowery praise—markedly different from the bare entries found in the chronicle's earliest sections—places Rhys in the ranks of great classical and biblical heroes. The passage indicates significant familiarity with classical figures and with conventions of biographical writing on the part of the chronicler and a similar familiarity expected of his audience.

In the Red Book text, further ties to the classical world are made through reference to Statius, Virgil and the jealous Fates, who snatch Rhys away from his people:

Ac yn y vlwydyn dymhestlus hono yd ymdangosses Antropos a'e chwioryd, y rei a elwit gynt yn Dwyesseu y Tyghetuenoed, y kygoruynus wenwynic nerthoed yn erbyn y veint arderchawc dywysawc hyt na allei ystoriaeu Ystas ystoriawr na chath[leu] Feryll vard menegi y veint gwynuan a dolur thrueni a doeth y holl genedyl y Brytanyeit pan dores Agheu, yr emelltigedic vlwydyn hono, olwyn y Tyghetuen y gymryt yr Arglwyd Rys ap Gruffud gan y hadaned dan darystigedic vedyant Agheu.⁴⁰

It is interesting that this chronicler's hyperbolic description not only evokes the names of Statius and Virgil as a way of equating Rhys with previous great heroes of Western civilisation, but also implies that the chronicler himself is more qualified than these previous great

Tydeus, the strength of Samson, the valour of Hector, the fleetness of Eurialius, the comeliness and face of Paris, the eloquence of Ulysses, the wisdom of Solomon, the majesty of Ajax?, *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 77; for the equivalent passage in the Red Book version, see *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, p. 178.

⁴⁰ 'And in that pestilential year Atropos and her sisters, who were formerly called the Goddesses of the Fates, showed their envious, venomous powers against such an eminent prince that neither the histories of Statius the historian nor the songs of Virgil the poet could tell how great a lamentation and grief and misery came to the whole race of the Britons when Death, in that accursed year, broke the wheel of Fate to snatch the Lord Rhys ap Gruffudd on its wings under the subduing power of Death', *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. 178/179.

historians to relate such events, as he says that Statius and Virgil would be unable to adequately explain how great the lamentation was, which is precisely what he is doing in presenting an elegy to the deceased prince. The Peniarth 20 version notably lacks this mention of Statius and Virgil: it reads instead,

[A]r dymestlawl dyghetven greulonaf chwaer y antropos heb wybot na mynu arbet y neb yr hon a arucidyawd erchyrwynu ogygoruynus law personolaeth y kyfryw wr hwnw. yr hwn a ganorthwyawd kynno hyny ydeyghetuen mam dynyadawl anyan o hygar dechreu y yeuegit ef ac odynd y diodefawd mynet dros gof goruchelder y rot pan vwryawd hwn yr llawr.⁴¹

The equivalent Latin entry in *Cronica de Wallia* also attributes Rhys's death to Atropos's negligence and the inconstancy of Fortune, indicating that these allusions, as well as the high rhetoric used to lament the death of Rhys, are original to the Latin version:

Hoc enim anno pestifero Atropos, sororum seuissima que nemini parcere gnara, cunctis mortalibus inuisa, magni uiri, scilicet Resi, excidium ausa est demoliri, quem instabilitatis mater Fortuna, nature condicionem hoc solo oblita, iugi celsitudine rote passa est permanere suoque ab etatis sue exordio benigno reouerat gremio. Ad tanti ergo obitum uiri accedens aut sine lacrimis enarrandum, utpote planctu

⁴¹ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 139b: 'And cruellest, tempestuous Fate, sister to Atropos, without knowing how or desiring to spare anyone, ventured to approach with envious hand the personage of such a man as that; — he whom before that Fate, mother of human nature, had aided from the beloved commencement of his youth; and thereupon she suffered to be forgotten the height of her Wheel, when she cast this man to the ground', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 77. The abbreviated *Brenbinedd y Saesson* version reads only 'Ac y bu varw Rys ap Grufud, tywyssauc Deheubarth Kymre, blodeu y marchogion, a'r gorev o'r a uu o genedyl Gymre eroet, .iiij. Kalendas Maij, gwedy llawer o uudugolaythev' ('And Rhys ap Gruffudd, prince of South Wales, the flower of knights, and the best that had ever been of the race of the Welsh, died on the fourth day before the Calends of May, after many victories'), *Brenbinedd y Saesson*, pp. 192/193.

dignum, aut cuique sine dolore recordandum, quia omnibus dampnosum, aut sine merore audiendum, quia cunctis lugubrem, deficio, uox silet, lingua stupet. Tanti uiri probitates quas ille magnanimus historiographus Thebanus, si temporis uicissitudo concessissit, Tebaide sopita pertractante gauderet, uerum ille historiographus Troianus poetarum nobilissimus, si misera fata dedissent, grandiloquo stilo in longum diffunderet eum.⁴²

Interestingly, the Latin version of this passage is much more elaborate than the Welsh versions and reflects a thorough understanding of Latin on the part of the chronicler. Peniarth 20, while lacking the mention of Virgil and Statius found in the Red Book version, also mentions Atropos, the wheel of Fortune, and Fate as a 'mother', indicating a common source for the material.⁴³ However, if the Peniarth 20 compiler was indeed using a Latin version similar to *Cronica de Wallia* as a source, it is clear that he has misunderstood the distinction between Fate and Atropos made in the Latin and has attributed Rhys's misfortune to the cruelty of 'mother' Fate rather

⁴² Jones, 'Cronica de Wallia', pp. 30–1: 'For in this pestilential year Atropos, the most savage of the sisters, knowing how to spare nobody, and hated by all mortals, brought about the destruction of a great man, Rhys. Fortune, the mother of instability, forgetting the circumstances of nature with regard to this person alone, allowed him to remain on the height of the wheel perpetually, and from the beginning of his life had gathered him into her kindly lap. Therefore, to approach the death of so great a man, which is not to be narrated without tears, as is worthy of lament, or to be remembered by each person without sorrow, because it caused the loss of all things, or to be heard without grief, because it is mournful for all, I am insufficient; the voice is silent; the tongue is numb. The honesty of that man, which that great-hearted Theban historiographer would have celebrated, as the *Thebaid* reliably relates, if the vicissitudes of time had granted it, then that Trojan historian, most noble of poets, if the wretched fates had allowed, would have praised it with his eloquent pen for a long time', author's own translation. I am very grateful to Paul Russell and Rosalind Love for their assistance with this translation.

⁴³ Notably, it is not immediately apparent that the Peniarth 20 version is closer to the Latin than the Red Book version, although it is older.

than to Atropos. The Red Book compiler has similarly misunderstood the reference to Atropos, blaming Rhys's death on 'Antropos a'e chwioryd y rei a elwit gynt yn Dwyesseu y Tyghetuenoed'.⁴⁴ Despite these discrepancies, it is apparent that the rhetorical style of the Latin version has been taken into the Welsh versions, which exhibit a strong Latin influence.⁴⁵

The present discussion will conclude with a brief examination of the Latin poem eulogising Rhys and the Latin epitaph that was written for him (see appendices for text).⁴⁶ Both poems are written in elegiac couplets and found only in Peniarth 20. The presence of these poems in a vernacular prose chronicle brings up interesting questions of genre and form, as one would expect a Welsh-language *marwnad* ('elegy') to lament the death of Rhys rather than a Latin elegy; the shift in language and form is notable.⁴⁷ Also noteworthy is the abrupt change from the two-column layout of the Welsh prose to the wide, single-column layout of the Latin verse.

Though several Welsh-language poems for Rhys are extant, composed by important *beirdd y tywysogion* (poets of princes) such as

⁴⁴ The Red Book compiler has also misinterpreted the reference to Statius: where the Latin version says that Statius would have praised Rhys had he been alive to hear about him, the Red Book version attributes the absence of praise for Rhys by Statius to the poet's inability to convey the magnitude of the Britons' lamentation.

⁴⁵ We must assume that the Latin versions, here represented by *Cronica de Wallia*, also underwent some changes as the annals were transmitted. An examination of the other manuscripts of the Welsh-Latin annals independent of their printed editions would be necessary to address this issue fully.

⁴⁶ Below, pp. 120–123. For the poem eulogising Rhys found in the *Annales Cambriae* manuscript London, Public Records Office, E. 164/1 (s. xiii^{ex}), see *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. Williams ab Ithel (London, 1860), pp. 60–1 and Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin', pp. 222–3.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of poetry in Irish annals, see G. Toner, 'Authority, Verse and the Transmission of *Senchas*', *Ériu* 55 (2005), 59–84.

Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, no *marwnad* written for him has survived.⁴⁸ Peniarth 20's verse elegy for Rhys, which in the context of the Welsh vernacular would suggest the *marwnad* genre, is in the context of its Latin medium dependent on Latinate models like the *planctus*, a popular literary form in the Middle Ages certainly known in Wales. It is notable that Latin was chosen as a medium for composition, introduced with the following statement in Welsh, 'a llyma y gwerseu mydyr lladin awnaethpwynt pan vv varw yr arglwyd rys',⁴⁹ challenging our assumption that Welsh was the preferred medium for eulogising deceased noble patrons and immediately hearkening back to the lament of Rhygyfarch ap Sulien written at Llanbadarn Fawr some one hundred years earlier.⁵⁰

It is also notable that, following the conclusion of the thirty-six-line elegy, the chronicler returns to Welsh to introduce the epitaph for Rhys: 'Llyma wedy hyny y gwerseu mydyr o / ladin ysyd yn

⁴⁸ Extant Welsh-language poems for Rhys include 'Gwynfardd Brycheiniawg a gant yr awdl hon i'r Arglwydd Rhys', in *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, ed. K. A. Bramley *et al.*, Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion 2 (Cardiff, 1994), 423–4; 'Canu i'r Arglwydd Rhys, Seisyll Bryffwrch a'i cant', in *ibid.*, pp. 394–405; 'Arwyrain yr Arglwydd Rhys, Cynddelw a'i cant', in *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr*, ed. N. A. Jones and A. P. Owen, 2 vols., Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion 3–4 (Cardiff, 1995), II, 160–73; 'Dadolwch yr Arglwydd Rhys, Cynddelw a'i cant', *ibid.* II, 174–206; and 'Englynion a gant Cynddelw i Rys fab Gruffudd', *ibid.* II, 207–19; for further discussion, see Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin er cof am yr Arglwydd Rhys', pp. 212–23 and N. A. Jones, 'Canu Mawl Beirdd y Tywysogion i'r Arglwydd Rhys', in *Yr Arghwydd Rhys*, ed. Pryce and N. A. Jones, pp. 129–44.

⁴⁹ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 139b: 'And these are the Latin metrical verses that were composed when the Lord Rhys died', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 77.

⁵⁰ M. Lapidge, 'The Welsh-Latin Poetry of Sulien's Family', *Studia Celtica* 8–9 (1973–4), 68–106; for an important recent study of the work of Rhygyfarch ap Sulien and his milieu, see S. Zeiser, 'Latinity, Manuscripts, and the Rhetoric of Conquest in Late-Eleventh-Century Wales' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Harvard Univ., 2012).

volyant ar y ved ef ac / a wnaethpwynt wedy daruot y gladu ef';⁵¹ the poem itself is then presented in the original Latin. The chronicler does not, for example, provide a Welsh translation of the epitaph, nor of the elegy. It is unclear whether the chronicler of the Peniarth 20 version blurs the lines between genres with the addition of these poems, or keeps them separate according to language; the prosimetric structure of the entry is surely notable.

It also seems clear, in examining the praise epithets for Rhys in the prose sections of this lament, that the Welsh chronicler was at least partly dependent on the conventions of traditional Welsh praise poetry. These praise epithets occur in all the versions of *Brut y Tywysogyon*: 'oed gyghorwr kenedyl agorchyuygwr y kedyrn ac amdiffynwr ydarystygedigyon wyr, grymus ymladwr y kaeryd kyffrowr ytoruoed aruthrwr gelynolion vydinoed ... och am ogonyant y ryueloed atharyan ymarchogyon amdiffynwr ywlat tegwch areu breich kedernyt llaw haelyoni llygat ac eglurder adwyndra blaenwyd mawr vryt ymdwynygrwyd dosparth ...'.⁵² We do not know whether the

⁵¹ *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 141: 'After those, these are the metrical verses of Latin which are an eulogy on his sepulchre and which were composed after he had been buried', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 78.

⁵² *BT, Peniarth MS. 20*, pp. 138b–139a: 'a counsellor as he was of his kinsmen and a conqueror of the mighty, and a defender of the vanquished, powerful stormer of fortresses, inciter of armies, and assaulter of hostile troops ... Alas for the glory of battles and the shield of knights, the defender of his land, the splendour of arms, the arm of prowess, the hand of generosity, the eye and lustre of worthiness, the summit of majesty, the light of reason ...', *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 77; for the equivalent passage in the Red Book version, see *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, p. 178. Praise epithets are also extant in the equivalent section of *Cronica de Wallia*: 'O miserorum tutum refugium, nudorum indumentum, esuriencium morsus, siciencium potus! O omnium postulancium prompta satisfactio donorum! O dulcis eloquio, comis obsequio, morum honestus, sermone modestus, uultu hilaris, facie decorus, cunctis benignus, omnibus equus, simplicitatis dhaut ficte pietas, humilitatis aut fabricate sublimitas! Heu! heu! iam Wallia uiduata dolet ruitura dolore', Jones, 'Cronica de Wallia', p. 31, for *equus* read *equum* ('O safe refuge for the wretched, clothing for

translator of the chronicle would have placed these praise epithets in the category of *planctus* or whether he would have considered them to be ultimately reliant on Welsh poetic forms. There does seem to exist some debt to Welsh vernacular models in this passage, echoing the language of extant Welsh praise poetry: Rhys is described as 'y gwr a oed ben a thar[y]jan a chedernit y Deheu a holl Gymry'; such similes describing a warrior as a shield or sometimes a pillar in battle are found in the poetry of the *beirdd y tywysogion* and in earlier praise poetry such as the poems attributed to Taliesin.⁵³

With the insertion of these Latin poems into Peniarth 20's entry for 1197, the panegyric for Rhys becomes much more extended than in the Red Book version. The ordering of the various sections of praise and lament in Peniarth 20 also vary from the Red Book version: mention of Atropos and the wheel of Fortune follow, rather than precede, the praise-epithet section reproduced above. The mentions of Camber, Loctrinus and Albanactus in the Latin elegy further reinforce the connections to Geoffrey's *De gestis Britonum* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*: Rhys is put in the context of this legendary history, as though he were an extension of the ancient line of British kings set out in Geoffrey's text.

the naked, food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty! O ready provider of gifts for all who petition! O sweet in eloquence, agreeable in behaviour, honest in habits, modest in speech, cheerful in expression, noble in appearance, kind in all things, fair to all, a dutifulness of unfeigned simplicity, an exaltation of undisguised humility! Alas! alas! Wales mourns, now widowed and doomed to be destroyed by grief, translation by Paul Russell and the author). Jones notes that the last line of this passage, 'iam Wallia uiduata dolet ruitura dolore', is echoed in the concluding line of the Latin elegy for Rhys, 'Wallia iam viduata dolet ruitura dolore' (see Appendix A), suggesting some sort of correspondence between the two texts. Notably, this concluding line is a dactylic hexameter rather than the elegiac couplets of the rest of the poem.

⁵³ 'The man who was the head and the shield and the strength of the South and all Wales', *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. 178/179.

What, then, is the effect achieved by the inclusion of classical references, praise epithets and rhetorical ornamentation in the chronicle's entry for 1197, when so many other entries are bare of adornment? Jones attributes the inconsistencies in treatment of different years in the text to irregularities in the compiler's sources: 'The varying meagreness and fullness of the compilation, it need hardly be stressed, reflects the original sources which were at the disposal of the compiler'.⁵⁴ These variations in length of treatment might also be examined as a reflection of the chronicler's own interest in the figures discussed: one could examine the text in terms of local concerns and see whether it is possible to definitively determine biases in favour of local or popular rulers. Such local bias is already assumed in the case of *Annales Cambriae* when Kathleen Hughes determines whether sections of annals are southern or northern productions, or even whether the compiler was Welsh.⁵⁵

Jack attributes *Brut y Tywysogion*'s unusually literary style to the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth who, he states, 'had a profound effect on the reading habits and story-telling of later medieval Europe'.⁵⁶ As attested by the popularity of both the Latin text and its Welsh translation *Brut y Brenhinedd* in Wales, Geoffrey's writing probably had an enormous influence on Welsh vernacular historiography in the centuries following its conception, and this can be observed in the high literary style of *Brut y Tywysogion*.⁵⁷ In direct contrast to this hypothesis, Thomas Jones argues that Geoffrey's influence on *Brut y Tywysogion* was limited: the *Brut y Tywysogion* chronicler operated with motivations and concerns very different

⁵⁴ Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 22.

⁵⁵ See Hughes, 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', p. 23; also Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 24 for the same assumption.

⁵⁶ Jack, *Medieval Wales*, pp. 23; 26–7.

⁵⁷ Chronologically, this influence would have to occur after the 1130s, when *De gestis Britonum* was written, and before the Welsh vernacular translations of the thirteenth century.

from Geoffrey's and was unlikely to have used him as a model.⁵⁸ As both of these scenarios are overly general and fail to take into account the necessary chronology, I would like to propose a third scenario. Given that the Latin chronicle from which *Brut y Tywysogyon* derives is thought to have been written in the thirteenth century, *after* the popularity of Geoffrey's text had taken hold in Wales, it is likely that Geoffrey's writing influenced not only the vernacular chroniclers, but also the writers of the Latin annals. That is to say, the influence of Geoffrey's style occurred at the level of the underlying Latin chronicles rather than at the level of the vernacular translation. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact demonstrated in this paper that the marked literary style of *Brut y Tywysogyon* is present in its Latin exempla.

What, then, is the effect of these literary qualities on the presentation of history? It seems as though these features serve to create a narrative vastly more involved and engaging than simple factual recording. If the Welsh-Latin chronicles were produced during the period of erosion of Welsh sovereignty and the decline of the 'native' Welsh monasteries in favour of continental ones in the late thirteenth century, this shift in narrative style from the bare chronicle of the earlier period to the elevated rhetoric of the entries from the twelfth century onwards could be interpreted as a reaction to changes in the Welsh political climate and social structure, which destabilised a formerly familiar political structure and thus its narrative history, especially around the time of the death of the Lord Rhys. In this light, *Brut y Tywysogyon* could be read as an attempt to promote the history of Wales and its princes by engaging in wider trends in contemporary historiography, with Geoffrey of Monmouth as a stimulating precedent. The chroniclers may have been writing in an 'elevated' style rather than in the 'low' style in order to engage with a greater Latinate tradition, placing Welsh history within a larger category of European history writing and legitimising its presence and relevance.

⁵⁸ Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 18.

Though in the vernacular, this text is certainly never outside the umbrella of Latin tradition. In the context of other historiographical texts of the central Middle Ages, *Brut y Tywysogyon* succeeds as an historical production: its narrative qualities enhance the excitement of the events, engage the reader's attention and probably contributed to its widespread popularity. Thus it also succeeds as a literary production, and would benefit from further investigation and interpretation.

APPENDIX A: The Latin verse lament for Rhys ap Gruffudd in the Peniarth
20 version of *Brut y Tynysogyon* (BT, Peniarth MS. 20, pp. 140–1)

- Nobile cambrensis cecidit dyadema decoris.
Hoc est resus obit cambria tota gemit
Resus obit non fama perit sed gloria transit
Cambrensis transit gloria resus obit
5 Resus obit decus orbis abit laus quoque tepescit
In gemitum viuit cambria resus obit
Semper resus obit populo quem viuus amauit
Lugent corda tacent corpora resus obit.
Resus obit vexilla cadunt regalia signa.
10 Hic iam nulla leuat dextera resus obit.
Resus obit ferrugo tegit galeam tegit ensem
Arma rubigo tegit cambria resus obit.
Resus abest inimicus adest resus quia non est
Iam tibi nil prodest cambria resus abest.
15 Resus obit populi plorant gaudent inimici.
Anglia stat cecidit cambria resus obit.
Ora rigant elegi cunctis mea fletibus isti
Cor ferit omne ducis dira fagitta necis.
Omnis lingua canit reso preconia nescit.
20 Laudes insignis lingua tacere ducis
Ploratu plene vite laxantur habene
Meta datur meri laus sine sine duci.
Non moritur sed subtrahitur quia semper habetur
Ipsius egregium nomen in orbe nouum
25 Camber loocrinus reso rex albaque nactus.
Nominis et laudis inferioris erant
Cesar et arthurus leo fortis vterque sub armis.
Vel par vel similis resus vtrique fuit
Resus alexander in velle pari fuit alter
30 Mundum substerni gliscit vterque sibi
Occasus solis tritus resi fuit armis
Sensit alexandri solis in orbe manum
Laus canitur cineri sancto cantetur ab omni
Celi laus regi debita spiritui
35 Penna madet lacrimis quod scribit thema doloris
Ne careat forma littera cesset ea.

Translation (adapted from Turvey, *The Lord Rhys*, pp. 117–18 by Paul Russell and myself; for Modern Welsh, see Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin', pp. 217–19)

- The noble crown of Welsh honour has fallen.
This is to say, Rhys is dead, the whole of Wales mourns.
Rhys is dead; his fame has not perished, but his glory has passed away.
The glory of Wales has passed away, Rhys is dead.
5 Rhys is dead, the glory of the world has gone, his praises too grow cold.
Wales lives on in her grief, Rhys is dead.
Still Rhys is dead, for his people for ever whom he loved while alive.
Their hearts grieve, their bodies are silent, Rhys is dead.
Rhys is dead, the standards fall, no right hand
10 Lifts his royal symbols aloft here, Rhys is dead.
Rhys is dead, rust covers his helmet and his sword;
Rust covers his armour, Wales, (for) Rhys is dead.
Rhys is gone, the enemies close in, for Rhys is no more.
Nothing is of benefit to you now, Wales, Rhys is gone.
15 Rhys is dead, the people weep, (while our) enemies rejoice.
England stands, Wales has fallen, Rhys is dead.
My face is wet with all the tears of his elegy.
The dire arrow of the leader's death strikes every heart.
Every tongue sings songs of praise to Rhys; the tongue cannot
20 Keep silent about the praises of (our) famous ruler.
The reins of life fall slack, full of lamentation.
A marker is deservedly given; praise without end to a leader.
He does not die but is removed, for his fair name
Is held ever fresh throughout the world.
25 Camber, king Loocrinus and Albanactus
Were inferior in name and repute to Rhys.
Caesar and Arthur, both strong (as) lions in arms,
Rhys was their equal or similar to both.
Rhys was a second Alexander of like desire,
30 Both yearned for the world to stretch out beneath them.
The west was beaten down by the arms of Rhys;
He felt the hand of Alexander in the sun's orbit.
Praises are sung to holy ashes; let due
Praise be sung by everyone to the king of heaven (and) the holy spirit.
35 My pen grows wet with tears for it writes on a theme of grief,
Let it not lack beauty, let not the writing cease.

APPENDIX B: The Latin epitaph for Rhys ap Gruffudd in the Peniarth
20 version of *Brut y Tynysogyon*.

Grande decus tenet iste locus, si cernitur ortus
Si quis sit finis queritur ecce cinis
Laudis amator honoris odor dulcedinis auctor.
Resus in hoc tumulo conditur exiguo
5 Cesaries quasi congeries solis radiorum
Principis et facies vertitur in cineres
Hic tegitur sed detegitur quia fama perhennis.
Non finit illustrem voce latere ducem
Colligitur tumba cinis hac sed transuolat ultra
10 Nobilitas claudi nescia fune breui
Wallia iam viduata dolet ruitura dolore.³²³

³²³ BT, *Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 141.

Translation

If its origin is sought, that place has great majesty;
If one asks what is his end, here are his ashes:
One who loved a fair name, one fragrant with distinction, a fount of gentleness,
Rhys is buried in this small tomb;
5 The prince's hair, like a mass of the sun's rays,
And his face are turned to ashes
Here he lies hidden, but he is revealed, for his eternal fame
Does not allow the ruler, famed for his words, to lie concealed.
His ashes are collected in this tomb but his nobility flies beyond it
10 Refusing to be confined by a short rope.
Wales mourns, now widowed and doomed to be destroyed by grief.³²⁴

³²⁴ Translation adapted from Turvey (*The Lord Rhys*, p. 118) by Paul Russell and myself; for translation into Modern Welsh, see Pryce, 'Y Canu Lladin', p. 221.