ROY FLECHNER

IDENTIFYING MONKS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL BRITAIN AND IRELAND: A REFLECTION ON LEGAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS [1]

The mundane existence of those labouring for the monastic community or provisioning it from their own plots of land is usually glossed over in narrative sources whose interests lie rather in the more edifying stories of monks praying, learning, instructing the laity and preaching the word of God. At best, narrative texts would mention peasant dependants incidentally, although we may also catch occasional glimpses of them in charters or normative sources, such as royal legislation, synodal acta, or works of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. But whichever sources we use, it is not always possible to tell apart peasant dependants from monks in the strict sense because the terminology is often ambiguous: in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England the nouns *monachus* and *frater* could mean both monk and peasant dependant, with *monachus* (equivalent of Old Irish *manach* and later *bachlach*) being more common in Irish texts and *frater* in English texts.

The expressions *monasterium*, *mynster*, *ecclesia*, and so on, may be just as ambiguous, to the extent that they can obscure the circumstances of the people associated with them, including their peasant dependants. Historians applying the term 'minster' nowadays would do so with an awareness to the fact that it denotes a variety of settlements, some only nominally religious, with different goals and personnel. This diversity is highlighted in some of the most influential studies of minsters, by Christopher Brooke, Sarah Foot and John Blair [2]. Likewise, for Ireland, historians acknowledge that there is no expression that aptly encompasses the

2. C. Brooke, *Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England: the search for their origins*, in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo. Espansione e resistenze*. Atti della XXVIII Settimana di studio (Spoleto, 10-26 aprile 1980), Spoleto, 1982, pp. 685-711, at

variety of early medieval religious institutions, nor is it possible to infer from the use of a diverse vocabulary – for example *urbs, ciuitas, ecclesia*, or *monasterium* – that each word invariably designated a distinct type of institution (although sometimes it did) [3]. Similar ambiguities have also been noted for the ecclesiastical vocabulary in early medieval Wales [4]. Here, I shall use the expressions 'church', 'monastery', 'ecclesiastical estate', and so on in their broadest possible sense, including also settlements or institutions that may have been predominantly secular despite their religious appellation. I will not draw a sharp distinction between monastic and ecclesiastical unless such a distinction emerges from the sources themselves. Nevertheless, I will use different words when referring to institutions in England and Ireland in compliance with what has become common historiographical parlance for either place: 'minsters' for England and 'ecclesiastical settlements' or 'monasteries' in Ireland [5]. By retaining these expressions I hope to reflect the discrete terminologies of what continue to be largely separate historiographical strands for either place, the peculiarities of which ought to be borne in mind in the comparison ahead.

The final caveat to be made about language is that in a historical essay such as this, when considering what different words might have meant and for whom, we must be careful not to become too absorbed in semantics. For present purposes, therefore, lexical ambiguity will be accepted as an endemic feature of the period, except when it can clearly be shown that specific terminology was chosen to draw precise distinctions. For example, in Anglo-Saxon England more so than in Ireland or Wales, it is possible to argue for a more pronounced division between clerical and monastic spheres at least in the ideology propagated within the highest echelons of the church hierarchy [6]. And in Ireland there are

pp. 697-698; S. Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England c. 600-900*, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 5-6; J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford, 2005, p. 3.

3. C. Etchingham, *Bishops, church and people: how Christian was early Christian Ireland?*, in *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell' alto medioevo*. Atti della LVII Settimana di studio (Spoleto, 16-21 aprile 2009), Spoleto, 2010, pp. 325-351, at p. 328.

4. W. Davies, *A Welsh Microcosm. Studies in the Llandaff Charters*, London, 1978, p. 122.

5. Brooke, *Rural ecclesiastical institutions in England* cit. (note 2), pp. 697-698; Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England* cit. (note 2), p. 3; Etchingham, *Bishops, church and people* cit. (note 3), p. 328.

6. Distinctions between monks (*monachi*) and clerics (*clerici, presbyteri, diaconi*, etc) are made, for example, by the Council of Hertford §§4, 5, eds. A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils*

instances in which authors differentiate between *manaig* (the Old Irish plural of *manach*) who are *túathmanaig* and *manaig* who are *fírmanaig*, the former ostensibly denoting peasant dependants and the latter monks who took vows (I discuss this in detail later). But unless such distinctions are made explicit we run the risk of creating false binaries if we simply assume their existence [7].

The Irish/Anglo-Saxon comparative perspective adopted here is meant to allow us to test how variables such as royal power, aristocratic property strategies, and agricultural regimes affected the legal and social position of peasant dependants. More specifically, I will be asking how and in what ways such people were free or servile, what was their relationship to the land on which they were settled, what is known about the labour services that some of them owed, and whether or not there were distinctions (of legal status or economic practice) between peasant dependants living in different zones of the ecclesiastical estate, especially between those living nearest to the core and those living the furthest away from it. Hence, the first part of this essay will explore legal questions affecting the situation of peasant dependants, such as the implications of land transfers and the legal status of individuals, and the second part will concentrate on peasant life on the ecclesiastical estate, examining the spatial division of the estate and its economic regimes.

To-date there has not been much scholarly engagement with the social and economic standing of peasant dependants of churches in the insular world [8]. In Ireland the most important discussions of the textual

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and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland, 3 vols, Oxford, 1869-1871, III, p. 120; the Council of Clofesho §28, HADDAN and STUBBS, eds., Councils, III, p. 374; as well as the Dialogue of Ecgberht §12, HADDAN and STUBBS, eds., Councils, III, pp. 408-9; and especially in the Canons of Theodore, version **U**, I.1.2-3, I.4.5, II.2, II.6, ed. P. W. FINSTERWALDER, Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen, Weimar, 1929, pp. 289, 294, 313-315, 319-321.

7. A famous assumption being the hypothesis of a divide between a monastic and episcopal church in early medieval Ireland, made by K. HUGHES in her The Church in Early Irish Society, Ithaca, 1966. Central contributions to the debate that followed are R. SHARPE, Some problems concerning the organization of the church in early medieval Ireland, Peritia, III (1984), pp. 58-72; R. SHARPE, Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland: towards a pastoral model, in J. BLAIR and R. SHARPE, eds., Pastoral Care before the Parish, Leicester, 1992, pp. 81-109.

8. The exception being the debate on the pastoral care they received. See especially SHARPE, Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland cit. (note 7), who argues for a robust system of pastoral care which reached out to the laity; and C. ETCHINGHAM, Pastoral provision in the first millennium: a two-tier service?, in E. Fitzpatrick and R. GILLESPIE, eds., The Parish In

evidence are by Kathleen Hughes, Charles Doherty, Thomas Charles-Edwards and, most recently, Colmán Etchingham, whose comprehensive work makes subsequent studies seem like mere footnotes [9]. In England, the more influential studies of the peasantry of minsters – for example by Rosamond Faith and John Blair – have had to contend with scant evidence from the early medieval period, which it was necessary to augment by later Anglo-Saxon or post-conquest evidence [10]. Peasant dependants of minsters are never mentioned as a distinct social or economic class and as a consequence one is left to infer their existence from passing references, as Alan Thacker, Blair, and Foot have done [11]. There are also rare instances in which they are attested in archaeology, most famously in a cemetery of men, women and children, clearly separated from an all-male cemetery at Wearmouth, which is likely to be that of the monks. According to the excavator, Rosemary Cramp, in all probability those interred in the mixed-sex cemetery were lay *fratres* and their families [12]. In contrast, Ireland can boast a wealth of early medieval hagiographical and normative sources that are rich in detail about the status and (sometimes) daily routines of *manaig* but there is no compelling archaeological evidence of the kind we have at Wearmouth.

Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building, Dublin, 2006, pp. 79-90, who maintains that *manaig* were the sole recipients of pastoral care. The issue has been recently revisited in R. FLECHNER, *Investigating 'peasant conversion' in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England: a preliminary enquiry*, in N. EDWARDS, M. NÍ MHAONAIGH and R. FLECHNER, eds., *Transforming Landscapes in the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles II*, Turnhout, 2017 (forthcoming).

9. HUGHES, *The Church in Early Irish Society* cit. (note 7), pp. 136-144; C. DOHERTY, *Some aspects of hagiography as a source for Irish economic history*, Peritia, I (1982), 300-328; T. M. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The church and settlement*, in P. NÍ CHATHÁIN and M. RICHTER, eds., *Irland und Europa: die Kirche im Frühmittelalter*, Stuttgart, 1984, pp. 167-175; C. ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland AD 650 to 1000*, Maynooth, 1999, pp. 363-393.

10. R. FAITH, *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship*, London, 1997; BLAIR, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* cit. (note 2).

11. A. THACKER, *Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England*, in J. BLAIR and R. SHARPE, eds., *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, Leicester, 1992, pp. 137-170; BLAIR, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* cit. (note 2), p. 255; FOOT, *Monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England* cit. (note 2), pp. 173, 255. For details see FLECHNER, *Investigating 'peasant conversion' in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England* cit. (note 8).

12. R. CRAMP, *Monastic sites*, in D. WILSON, ed., *Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, London, 1976, pp. 201-252; R. CRAMP *et al.*, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, 2 vols, Swindon, 2005-2006, II, p. 88.

In Wales peasant dependants are virtually invisible in our sources, although there are some pertinent references in the Llandaff Charters to slaves being handed ever to the church or land with its tentants being transferred. Nevertheless, in order to enable what is already a complicated comparison between the Irish and Anglo-Saxon evidence, I chose to keep references to the Welsh evidence to a minimun [13].

<center>LEGAL STATUS AND THE EFFECTS OF LAND TRANSFERS</center>

Studies of early medieval legal status, and especially of general questions relating to freedom and unfreedom, tend to be among the least conclusive even by the standards of a historiography accustomed to chronic scarcity and ambiguity of evidence [14]. The main difficulty, as is often the case, is how to bridge the gap between social ideals propagated by normative sources and actual social differences, which were determined by a complex combination of variables like formal legal position, one's capacity for participation in the political process (if such existed), economic status, and – the most subjective of all – a perceived understanding of status. Historians face a further challenge when studying periods of great social and economic change, during which such variables cannot be expected to have remained static. And, indeed, they were anything but static in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England between the seventh and ninth centuries, a period that saw significant political, economic, and religious change, of which the church was both cause and beneficiary [15].

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13. In the Llandaff Charters each of the following is mentioned only once: *faber, cocus*, and *monachus*. See Davies, *A Welsh Microcosm* cit. (note 4), pp. 127-128. For slaves and tenants, see Ibid., pp. 43-49.

14. On the practical and conceptual difficulties of approaching distinctions (sometimes very nuanced) of freedom and unfreedom in the early medieval period see N. Brady, *Labor and agriculture in early medieval Ireland: evidence from the sources*, in A. J. Frantzen and D. Moffat, eds., *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery, and Labor in Medieval England*, Glasgow, 1994, pp. 125-145, esp. pp. 125-128; W. Davies, *On servile status in the early middle ages*, in M. L. Bush, ed., *Serfdom and Slavery. Studies in Legal Bondage*, London, 1996, pp. 225-246; A. Rio, *Freedom and unfreedom in early medieval Francia. The evidence of the legal formulae*, Past and Present CXCII (2006), pp. 7-40; D. Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800-1200*, Leiden, 2009, pp. 36-54; A. Rio, *'Half-free' categories in the early middle ages: fine status distinctions before professional lawyers*, in P. Dresch and J. Scheele, eds., *Legalism: Rules and Categories*, Oxford, 2015, pp. 129-152.

15. For insular churches in this period of economic and political flux, see Blair, *The Church*

But how did peasant dependants of churches fare? Did they flourish economically and socially or did they become more dependant and less free? To put it more technically: how was their legal status affected?

To begin a discussion of legal status one would naturally turn to normative texts. The earliest surviving Anglo-Saxon royal legislation, the Kentish laws, contain only two pertinent references to the legal status of what appear to be ecclesiastical peasant dependants of servile status: [16]

Gif man gedes [17] *þeuwne esne in heora gemange tihte, his dryhten hine his ane aþe geclaensie, gif he huslgenga sie* « if a person should bring a charge against an unfree servant of a fellowship in their midst, let his lord clear him by his oath alone, if he [the lord] is a communicant ».

Gif folcesmannes esne tihte ciricanmannes esne, oþþe ciricanmannes esne tihte folcesmannes esne, his dryhten hine ane his aþe geclensige « if a layman's servant brings a charge against a churchman's servant, or a churchman's servant brings a charge against a layman's servant, his lord should clear him by his oath alone ».

These clauses saliently distinguish between *esnes* 'people of servile status' who served clerics, and others who served laymen. In both cases it is clear that the lords, be they lay or ecclesiastical, have legal oversight over the servile individuals. However, from the fact that these servile people could litigate, they must have had a degree of legal capacity in their own right, albeit moderated by their lords. They may nevertheless have been of lower status than the *subiecti* of the monastic *familiae* which the Council of Clofesho of 747 ruled ought not be oppressed by minsters or

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in Anglo-Saxon Society cit. (note 2), pp. 79-134; W. DAVIES, *Economic change in early medieval Ireland: the case for growth*, in *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi* cit. (note 3), pp. 111-133. Also pertinent is the debate over the model of the economically flourishing 'monastic town' in Ireland, first proposed C. DOHERTY, *The monastic town in early medieval Ireland*, in H. B. CLARKE and A. SIMMS, eds., *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe*, BAR International Series 255, Oxford, 1985, pp. 45-75. For criticism see M. VALANTE, *Reassessing the Irish monastic Town*, *Irish Historical Studies* XXXI (1998), pp. 1–18, and C. ETCHINGHAM, *The Irish 'Monastic Town': Is This a Valid Concept?,* Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures VIII (Cambridge, 2010).

16. The Laws of Whitred (*c.* 695) §§18, 19, ed. and trans. L. OLIVER, *The Beginnings of English Law*, Toronto, 2002, pp. 152–163, at pp. 160–161.

17. L. OLIVER, *The Beginnings of English Law*, Toronto, 2002, p. 161 note a, suggests that a possible emendation (with no significant implications for the meaning) would be *Gedes* 'of God', but this would be grammatically incongruous with the plural noun *heora*.

treated as slaves [18]. Seemingly of even lower status were those whom Domesday Book refers to as slaves on ecclesiastical estates, and whose presence we are sometimes able to quantify. For example, four abbeys in Worcestershire – Pershore, Evesham, Westminster and Worcester – owned between them forty percent of slaves from that county according to Domesday Book [19]. One may speculate that from the perspective of the Domesday surveyors, such people were no better than chattel slaves. On the circumstances in which individuals could become servants of the church in the first place we may turn to the sayings of the seventh-century Archbishop Theodore (d. 690) of Canterbury, which rule that punishment for criminal activity could result in loss of free status: [20]

Episcopus uel abbas hominem sceleratum seruum possunt habere si pretium redimendi non habet « a bishop or abbot may own a criminal as a slave if he lacks the means to redeem himself ».

Irish penitentials also make provisions for the incarceration of criminals – in particular murderers, thieves and perjurers – at church sites with a concomitant loss of legal status resulting from their being declared exiles [21]. But there is no explicit reference in the penitentials to servile labour that such people owed. For this we must turn to the vernacular law tracts, which, like the early Anglo-Saxon laws, describe a form of penitential servitude on ecclesiastical estates which was a consequence of ransom from the gallows [22]. Servile penitents of this kind could be part of a special penitential community that provisioned a monastery, like the community on Tiree in the Hebrides which provisioned Iona [23].

It was clearly not a requisite for the non-monastic personnel of churches to be servile. Quite the contrary: when a plot of land was

18. Clofesho §4, eds. HADDAN and STUBBS, *Councils* cit. (note 6), pp. 360, 364.

19. D. PELTERET, *Slavery in Anglo-Saxon England*, in J. D. WOODS and D. A. E. PELTERET, eds., *The Anglo-Saxons: Synthesis and Achievement*, Waterloo (Ontario), 1985, pp. 117-134, at p. 131.

20. Canons of Theodore, version U, II.2.5, ed. FINSTERWALDER, *Die Canones Theodori* cit. (note 6), p. 313.

21. Two examples: the Penitential of Finnian §23 and Cummean I.12, ed. L. BIELER, *The Irish Penitentials*, Dublin, 1975, pp. 80, 112.

22. These are *Córus Béscnai* and a legal portion in O'Davoren's Glossary, on which see F. KELLY, *Early Irish Farming*, Dublin, 1997, p. 253.

23. R. SHARPE, *Adomnán of Iona. Life of St Columba*, London, 1995, p. 282 note 115, p. 303 note 182.

transferred to the church – and the people already living and working on it, free and servile peasants alike, were granted away with it – the result could be an increase in the legal status of the servile and their rendering as free. Such was the case when, according to Bede, King Æthelwalh of Sussex granted eighty-seven hides at Selsey (Sussex) to bishop Wilfrid for the foundation of a minster. The land came with two hundred and fifty slaves whom Wilfrid is said to have baptised and freed [24]. In a discussion of this episode Faith asks, « did Wilfrid perhaps set up his converts on smallholdings to work for the Northumbrian monks he had brought with him », and Blair also wonders, « did they become a workforce of monastic tenants? » [25] If the newly-converted slaves became smallholders, they may have been liable to pay dues on their land, like the church dues imposed on the free cottagers of the – admittedly later – *Rectitudines singularum personarum* [26].

Apart from the unfree and the freed personnel, a monastery – in Ireland at least – could house *manaig* who were not only free, but had assets in the form of landed property, livestock, or movable wealth. They – if one is to go by the Irish normative sources – occupied the full range of the spectrum of free legal status, owing different things to the church, from food rents, to a burial charge, to labour services if they were of particularly lowly rank [27]. Among the high status *manaig* were wealthy aristocrats who would have entered a monastery to atone for their sins primarily by making charitable contributions [28].

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24. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum,* IV.13, ed. and trans. B. COLGRAVE and R. A. B. MYNORS, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford, 1969, at pp. 374-377. The existing charter of Ceadwalla in favour of Wilfrid at Selsey (S 232) has been shown to be a forgery. See S. E. KELLY, ed., *Charters of Selsey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters VI, Oxford, 1998, pp. 3-13.

25. FAITH, *The English Peasantry* cit. (note 10), p. 62; BLAIR, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* cit. (note 2), p. 255 note 40.

26. Probably dating from pre-conquest eleventh-century England. Translated by D. C. DOUGLAS and G. W. GREENAWAY, *English Historical Documents II,* 1042–1189, 2nd ed., London, 1981, pp. 973-977 (§172).

27. On the legal status of *manaig* and its complexities, see ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 363-393. Aspects of the discussion that follows are dealt with in the context of conversion to Christianity by W. DAVIES and R. FLECHNER, *Conversion to Christianity and economic change: consequence or coincidence?*, in R. FLECHNER and M. Ní MHAONAIGH, eds., *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles I*, Turnhout, 2016, pp. 377-398.

28. There are several examples, but two of the most compelling are clauses in the

However, what all free *manaig* – be they ordinary peasants or lofty aristocratic penitents – are said to have had in common is a reciprocal relationship with their church, a relationship framed by analogy to a contractual agreement between a lay lord and his client [29]. Such agreements were the most common way of formalising relationships between persons of free status in Ireland: a lord would provide stock to the client, who, in turn, would owe the lord food rents and sometimes labour services. Among the best, but by no means the only, texts to enlighten us on matters concerning the relationship between *manaig* and their churches are the *Collectio Hibernensis* and *Córus Béscnai*, both dated broadly *c.* 700 [30]. However, the *Hibernensis*, written in Latin and commonly classified as canon law, differs from *Córus Béscnai* and other Irish vernacular normative texts in its wholesale omission of this lord/ client trope and its preference for a more pastoral idiom, on which more later [31]. In this respect the *Hibernensis* sets itself apart from all vernacular texts on status and rank, including texts concerning *manaig*, which abound in elaborate distinctions of rank, frequently framed in terms of reciprocal contracts [32]. An example of the contrast between *Córus Béscnai* and the *Hibernensis* is the allocation of different charges for burial in church ground, a form of burial that appears to have been the preserve of social elites who could afford it [33]. The rates of *imna* 'payment'

penitentials of Finnian and Columbanus in which the penitents relinquish their property, relocate to a monastery, and perform manumission. See, respectively, Finnian §22 and Columbanus §20, ed. BIELER, *The Irish Penitentials* cit. (note 21), pp. 80, 104.

29. KELLY, *Early Irish Farming* cit. (note 22), pp. 452-455.

30. *Collectio Hibernensis*, ed. H. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1885; *Córus Béscnai*, ed. by D. A. BINCHY, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols, Dublin, 1978, p. 520 line 1-p. 536 line 27, p. 903 line 37-p. 905 line 9; p. 1812 line 33-p. 1821 line 27. A translation, though considered dated, is *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, ed. and trans. John O Donovan, *et al.*, 6 vols, Dublin, 1865-1901, III, pp. 3-79.

31. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The pastoral role of the church in the early Irish laws*, in J. BLAIR and R. SHARPE, eds., *Pastoral Care before the Parish*, Leicester, 1992, pp. 63-80, at pp. 70-71; W. DAVIES, *Clerics as rulers: some implications of the terminology of ecclesiastical authority in early medieval Ireland*, in N. Brooks, ed., *Latin and the Vernacular in Early Medieval Britain*, Leicester, 1982, pp. 81-97.

32. The standard reference works are Fergus KELLY, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin, 1988, pp. 26-38, 68-98; KELLY, *Early Irish Farming* cit. (note 22), pp. 423-428, 438-462.

33. For burial in contemporary written sources, and especially the *Hibernensis*, see E. O'BRIEN, *Literary insights into the basis of some burial practices in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh and eighth centuries*, in C. E. KARKOV and H. DAMICO, eds., *Aedificia Nova: Studies in Honor of Rosemary Cramp*, Kalamazoo, MI, 2008, pp. 283–299. For burial charges in *Córus*

for *adnacul* 'burial' were adjusted according to the deceased *manach*'s or layperson's *díre*, an Old Irish word usually translated 'honour-price', which was roughly the Irish equivalent of *wergeld* [34].

But the *Hibernensis*, unlike *Córus Béscnai*, does not link burial charge with honour-price, nor does it ever differentiate between *manaig* based on their honour-price. This omission is significant because – in effect – it ostensibly glosses over the rates of honour-price that *manaig* were meant to have had. Why the *Hibernensis* would be unconcerned with honour-price is suggested by a jurisprudential commentary in the contemporary text *Brétha Crólige*: [35]

Comdire cach fri araile i nnos chana itir rig 7 amrig, itir saor 7 daer, itir lobur 7 tren... ar is a fenechus rosuidiged dire lethard do gradaib tuaithe i mmessaib crolige « There is an equal *díre* to each and every person according to the tradition of *cáin*, from king to subject, from free to unfree, from weak to strong... for it is in the customary law that a differentiated *díre* was established for the lay grades in respect of compensation for grievous injury » [36].

The interpretation of this passage depends largely on the way in which one chooses to render '*cáin*' and '*díre*'. Jean-Michel Picard translates '*cáin*' broadly as 'droit eclésiastique', corresponding to the classification 'ecclesiastical legislation' which is applied to *cáin*-type laws in Fergus Kelly's standard *Guide to Early Irish Law* [37]. He interprets '*díre*' (as in

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Béscnai (ed. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 532 lines 1, 4-5, 8-12), see Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 270-277.

34. Ed. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 532 lines 1, 4-5, 8-12; trans. O Donovan, *Ancient Laws of Ireland* cit. (note 30), III, p. 43. Other Old Irish expressions translated as 'honour-price' are *lóg n-enech* and *eneclann*.

35. Like all vernacular texts, *Brétha Crólige* was also written by clerics even though it is not exclusively concerned with ecclesiastical matters. For background on the so-called vernacular law tracts, see D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach and A. Breen, *The laws of the Irish*, *Peritia*, III (1984), pp. 382-438.

36. My translation was aided by the French translation of J.-M. Picard in his *Christianisation et hiérarchie dans la société irlandaise des VIIe et VIIIe siècles*, in F. Bougard, D. Iogna-Prat and R. Le Jan, eds., *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'Occident médiéval (400-1100)*, Turnhout, 2008, pp. 23-37.

37. Picard, *Christianisation et hiérarchie* cit. (note 36); Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* cit. (note 32), pp. 281-282. These include *Cáin Domnaig*, *Cáin Adomnáin*, and *Cáin Phátraic*. For a 'softer' classification of *Cáin Fuithibre* simply as a law written 'under the direction of the church', see L. Breatnach, *The ecclesiastical element in the Old-Irish legal tract* Cáin Fhuithibre, *Peritia*, V (1986), pp. 36-52, at p. 52.

Córus Béscnai, above) to mean honour-price. Etchingham argues that '*cáin*' and '*díre*' ought rather to be understood in a more specific sense in this case. He takes the former to mean 'enacted law', namely a law enacted by king or ecclesiastic, as distinct from customary law which is not known to have been enacted by authority [38]. Although the word *cáin* itself can have a broad semantic range and be found in the titles of a number of law tracts, *cánai* of the enacted variety often have salient ecclesiastical associations, of which the best examples are *Cáin Domnaig* (a law forbidding work on Sunday), *Cáin Adomnáin* (ecclesiastical initiative, joint royal-ecclesiastical promulgation; renewed by invoking saint's relics), and *Cáin Phátraic* (joint royal-ecclesiastical promulgation) [39]. For '*díre*' Etchingham suggests the translation 'fine' or 'that which is payable'. According to his interpretation, « *Bretha Crólige* is by no means saying that the church did not distinguish honour-price and therefore status, but merely that fines under *cáin*-law were not status-sensitive ». If one seeks a middle ground between these two distinct interpretations, then the least that one can say is that *cáin*, with its frequent ecclesiastical associations, is clearly contrasted here with customary law (*fénechas*) by virtue of the fact that it does not differentiate between individuals based on legal status. The implication is, however, that it treats everyone equally, from king to lowly subject (*itir ríg 7 amrigitir*), as if they all had the same honour-price. This suggests that certain elements within the church in Ireland had an egalitarian conception of legal status, contrary to the intricate schemes of status which permeate the so-called secular laws (although, admittedly, this parity perhaps only applied for specific purposes like paying fines for bodily harm).

As for the *Hibernensis* despite circumventing the institution of honour-price altogether, it nevertheless differentiates between *manaig* by other criteria, based solely on their economic standing. Burial is, again, a useful context in which to observe this: [40]

38. ETCHINGHAM: personal comment. For '*cáin*' as law enacted by king or ecclesiastic see *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, Dublin, 1913-1976.

39. On *cánai* see CHARLES-EDWARDS, *Early Christian Ireland*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 559-569, esp. p. 565: « The annals reveal who, in the eighth century, were the principal exponents of the new *cáin* – the edict belonging to a patron saint, often given further power by his relics and normally promulgated by churchman and king in concert ».

40. *Hibernensis* 18.6, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), p. 57. And see discussion in ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 386-388.

Si quis commendauerit animam suam et corpus et omnia, quae habet, Deo et principi, id est abbati suo, et si postea exierit ad alterum abbatem, et commendauerit illi animam suam et omnia, quae possidet, cuius erunt haec omnia? Prioris utique abbtis omnia sua. . . nouissimo uero abbati relinquetur et corpus eius et uestimentum et equus et uacca, uel si tanti honoris fuerit, duo equi cum curru et ornamentum sui lectuli et uas, de quo biberat « If anyone [*sc.* a *monachus*] commended his soul and body and all that he possesses to God and his *princeps*, namely his abbot, and if thereafter he departed to another abbot and commended his soul and all that he possesses to him, to whom shall all these belong? Without doubt all his property belongs to the first abbot. . . but the recent abbot shall have his body, clothing, horse, and cow, or if he has been of high standing, two horses with a chariot and the accoutrements of his bed and the vessel from which he drank ».

According to this passage, a *monachus* appears to have been able to dissolve his contract with one abbot and enter into a contractual agreement with another by pledging his property to him. This suggests a certain degree of legal freedom obtained, presumably, from owning moveables and perhaps land, though this is not explicitly mentioned. The economic status of *manaig* is explored in other chapters of the *Hibernensis* in which we find contradictory statements (a common feature of the *Hibernensis*). Thus, in 39.5 were are told that *non oportet monachum habere proprium* « a *monachus* ought not have property » and in 39.8 it is said that *debet monachus dare abbati acquisita* « a *monachus* ought to hand over to his abbot any acquisitions » [41]. However, in 41.6, 41.7 we learn that certain *monachi* must have held on to property because *monachus nihil commendare potest nisi permissu abbatis* « a *monachus* cannot bequeath anything without the abbot's permission », and this is followed by a chapter heading *de monacho pauca commendante sed permissu abbatis* « concerning a *monachus* beqeathing a few things, but only with his abbot's permission » [42].

Only rarely is the *Hibernensis* explicit about the presence of propertyless persons who were, as a consequence, unfree. The clearest example of this are the oblates given to the church without an endowment who are destined to become *serui* [43]. Apart from *serui*, other *monachi* whose freedom could be curtailed occur in a ruling of a *Synodus Hibernensis* according to which a *monachus* ought to be buried in the church to which he belongs: [44]

41. Ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), pp. 150, 151.
42. Ibid., pp. 160, 161.
43. *Hibernensis* 42.24. Ibid., pp. 168.
44. *Hibernensis* 18.3.Ibid., p. 57.

monachus cum in uita sua libertatem praeter iussionem abbatis non habuerit, quanto magis in morte « since a *monachus* has not had any freedom in life beyond the abbot's command, how much more so in death ».

Overall the *Hibernensis* lends the impression that *manaig* ought to be thought of as property-owning to a greater or lesser degree and free, albeit their independence was checked by their contractual submission to the abbot or *princeps* (Old Irish *airchinnech*), the head of the ecclesiastical settlement who was either a religious or secular lord [45]. The *Hibernensis* is not alone in acknowledging that there were instances in which *monachi* were free. A number of seventh- and early eighth-century vernacular lists of legal dependents also regard *manaig* as freemen who could enter into a contractual relationship with the abbot or *airchinnech*, in exactly the same manner as *céili*, clients of free status, interacted with their lay lords. But other lists pair *manaig* with *mogae* 'slaves' [46]. The opposition between free and servile *manaig* is often rendered in scholarship by the contrasting expressions *sóermanach* 'free *manach*' and *dóermanach* 'unfree *manach*' [47]. Etchingham notes that whereas *sóermanach* does not occur in the main body of the law tracts, both expressions are commonplace in the glosses on the laws, leading him to infer that the binary free *manach*/unfree *manach* is « implicit in provisions of the Old Irish period » [48].

From a purely formal legalistic perspective, it is easier to envision *manaig* as unfree because they ostensibly failed to fulfill the principal criterion for free status in Ireland, which was the ownership of land in

45. On *princeps*, see Davies, *Clerics as rulers* cit. (note 31).

46. Ten lists were collated and analysed by Thomas Charles-Edwards, *The church and settlement* cit. (note 9), pp. 172–175. For the pairing of *manaig* with other categories of persons in the lists, see Binchy, ed., *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 47 line 1, p. 220 lines 1-2, p. 351 lines 24-25, p. 522 line 1, p. 536 lines 23-24, p. 593 line 37. Charles-Edwards proposes that the contradiction between a *mug*-like and *céile*-like *manach* is not real but apparent and that the *manach* resembled the *mug* only 'in legal capacity' but 'his resemblance to *céile* lay elsewhere'. It is noteworthy that *manaig* are never associated with both *mogae* and *céili* in the same list, but in different lists. For Etchingham's critique of Charles-Edwards see Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 364-380.

47. For example, Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* cit. (note 7), pp. 136-144; Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* cit. (note 22), pp. 452-425; Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 377-378.

48. Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 375-376, 378 (citation).

the form of a portion of kin land [49]. Theoretically, since *manaig* joined themselves to the church, they would thereafter be without both kin and land. But how is it possible to square free legal status with the absence of land? [50] Would it not be the case that *manaig* who did not own land would be equated, as Etchingham says, with the lowest categories of legal dependants or unfree clients? [51] I have already suggested elsewhere that some ecclesiastical authors in Ireland – like those who equated free *céili* with *manaig* – might have tried to reform vernacular conceptions of legal status by abolishing ownership of land as a requisite for free status [52]. By doing this they would have reassured newcomers to the church that becoming *manaig* would not entail a loss of status. Newcomers would have been further reassured by texts like the *Hibernensis* which, as we have seen, suggests that some *manaig* would continue to have recourse to property even though, nominally at least, it would come under the control of the church.

But is there evidence of actual practice which could confirm that the church or elements within it contributed to changing conceptions of freedom and unfreedom in Ireland or elsewhere? The kind of evidence that one would ideally want to have for gauging practice would come in the form of records that reveal the consequences of transfers of land together with its free or unfree peasant dwellers, like in the example of

49. This is not stated explicitly but can be inferred, for example, from stipulations restricting the legal capacity of landless people: *Uraicecht Becc* states that a freeman who sells his land becomes unfree (ed. BINCHY, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 638, line 10), and *Berrad Airechta* stipulates that a landless person is not entitled to make a contract independently (ed. BINCHY, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 593 lines 35-38, trans. by R. STACEY, in *Lawyers and Laymen*, Cardiff, 1986, p. 215 §37). Control of land is nevertheless not absolute, except in the case of a king or a head of a kin group. Restrictions apply especially to one's ability to alienate land. For example, one's share in kin-land cannot be alienated without the permission of the head of the kindred. See KELLY, *Early Irish Farming* cit. (note 22), pp. 400-401, 423-425.

50. The assumption that I make – and which Charles-Edwards made in *The church and settlement* cit. (note 9) – is that the attested transfers of land with its peasant inhabitants to the church entailed the dispossession of these peasants. In other words, where peasants previously worked their share of the kin land, after the transfer they became tenants of the church. I acknowledge, however, that other interpretations may be possible, especially given the ostensible heterogeneity of the *manaig*'s legal and economic standing as reflected in different early Irish normative texts (see discussion in ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 363–453).

51. ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 395, 425-526.

52. DAVIES and FLECHNER, *Conversion to Christianity and economic change* cit. (note 29).

Selsey which we saw earlier. Sadly, Ireland possesses nothing on the scale of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon charters [53]. The absence of surviving formal charters – if there ever were any – is compensated for by quasi-charter records cast in hagiographical idiom which can be found in the *Additamenta* to Tírechán's *Collectanea* in the Book of Armagh [54]. In addition, in both Ireland and Britain there are works of hagiography which – notwithstanding the usual problems of reliability – purport to relate instances in which land and peasants were made over to the church. Arguably, the different types of record that survive for England and Ireland are a reflection of different patterns of land acquisition and land holding in either place. In England charters were largely issued by kings (although there are exceptions), whereas in Ireland the granting of land to the church does not appear to have been the prerogative of kings, although on occasion kings are said to have given both permission and land for founding monasteries [55]. Instead, land transfers to the church were normally made on behalf of the kin as a whole, with the permission (or on the initiative) of the head of the kin, who may have been a king [56]. Irish texts that ascribe greater power to kings in relation to church land are invariably later, usually dating from around the Norman invasion or later.

Whether land was made over by royal charter or by the solemn declaration of an Irish head of a kindred, the consequence of the transfer might have been the alienation of land to the church while at the same time allowing the kin to retain a stake in it, such as reserving the right to

53. P. SAWYER, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, London, 1968, catalogued 1875 charters of which approximately two hundred survive as originals, but the authenticity of a good number of both pre-conquest and post-conquest copies is disputed. Now available online at http://www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/sawno.html (Accessed 12 July 2016)

54. *Additamenta,* ed. and trans. L. BIELER, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, Dublin, 1979, pp. 166-178. On the charter tradition in early medieval Ireland, see W. DAVIES, *The Latin charter-tradition in western Britain, Brittany and Ireland in the early mediaeval period*, in D. WHITELOCK, R. MCKITTERICK and D. N. DUMVILLE, eds., *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen HUGHES*, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 258-280; M. HERBERT, *Before charters? Property records in pre-Anglo-Norman Ireland*, in M. T. FLANAGAN and J. A. GREEN, eds., *Charters and Charter Scholarship in Britain and Ireland*, Basingstoke, 2005, pp. 107-119.

55. E.g. *Additamenta to Tírechán's Collectanea 5.4, 8.1* ed. and trans. BIELER, *The Patrician Texts* cit. (note 54), pp. 170, 172; *Vita Colmani* §14, *Vita Lugidi* §34, ed. W. W. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice olim Salamanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, Bruxelles, 1965, pp. 214, 138.

56. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The church and settlement* cit. (note 9), pp. 167-168.

appoint the head of the church. This model of conditional land alienation will of course be familiar to students of medieval economic history as the proprietary church (*Eigenkirche*). In England it is not uncommon to find land granted by charter, or 'bookland', exempted from various forms of tax, from food rent, or from labour, but not from what are known as the 'common burdens', consisting of bridge-building, fortress-building, and military service [57]. In Ireland proprietary churches have been argued to have been the most prevalent form of religious establishment, and they allowed the kin to maintain its hereditary grip through *coarbs*, literally meaning 'heirs' to the abbatial office, such that « the outcome was hereditary abbacies or coarbships more tenacious than anywhere else in the West... these were "family monasteries" in the sense that the abbacy belonged to one or more linked lineages; not in the sense that any outside lord or lay family controlled the office and through it the monastery's resources of revenue and influence » [58]. In such cases, as Charles-Edwards put it, « an individual church may be nothing more, in terms of settlement, than a tonsured kindred » [59]. One of the most interesting expressions of familial grip on church property in Ireland is the saintly genealogy. Such a genealogy lays claim (often retrospectively) to church land on behalf of a kin group by tracing its ownership back to a saintly founder who is of the same kin. It is not uncommon to find branches being attached artificially to prominent saintly personalities – like Patrick or Brigit – and by association to the churches that venerated them. These genealogies have been expertly edited by Pádraig Ó Riain as *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* [60].

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57. W. H. STEVENSON, *Trinoda necessitas*, English Historical Review, XXIX (1914), pp. 689-703; N. BROOKS, *The development of military obligations in eighth- and ninth-century England*, in P. CLEMOES and K. HUGHES, eds., *England Before the Conquest*, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 69-84. However, privileges and immunities were not always observed, as we learn from Boniface's correspondence with King Æthelbald of Mercia, the priest Herefrith and archbishop Ecgberht of York. See, respectively, Letters 73, 74, and 75, ed. M. TANGL, *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus, M.G.H, Epist. Select.* 1, Berlin, 1916, pp. 146-157.

58. S. WOOD, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, Oxford, 2006, p. 146. On the preponderance of proprietary churches in Ireland, see D. Ó CORRÁIN, *The early Irish churches: some aspects of organisation*, in D. Ó CORRÁIN, ed., *Irish Antiquity: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor M. J. O'Kelly*, Ballincollig, 1981, pp. 327–341.

59. Citation from CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The church and settlement* cit. (note 9), p. 168.

60. P. Ó RIAIN, *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae*, Dublin, 1985.

In English minsters, however, the succession of kinsmen to the abbacy appears not to have been the norm, but it was not unheard of either. Examples are Wilfrid's appointment of his kinsman Tatberht as his successor at Ripon and the two instances in Æthelwulf's poem *De Abbatibus* in which a brother succeeded another brother [61]. In the Canons of archbishop Theodore the practice of abbatial succession among members of the same kindred is forbidden unless it is sanctioned by the *fratres* of the minster: [62] *ipse non potest aliquem ordinare de suis propinquis. . . sine uoluntate fratrum* « he may not ordain another from his own kin. . . without the consent of the *fratres* ».

The preponderance of proprietary churches in Ireland and the totality of control which families exerted over them, sets them apart from the type of institution that historians normally style 'proprietary church'. Another difference between an Irish 'proprietary church' and a proprietary church in England or elsewhere in the west of Europe, appears to have been that Irish 'converted' kindreds did not only establish stand-alone churches, but some can also be seen to have pledged themselves in part or as a whole to the religious life by affiliating themselves to networks formed around major churches like Armagh or Clonmacnoise [63]. Indeed, it is this sort of affiliation which some regard as the typical manifestation of proprietary church in Ireland [64]. The only monastic federation-like network in England, Wilfrid's *familia*, differed from Irish networks in one major respect: so far as we know it did not thrive on grants of land from individual kin groups [65].

We encounter land transfers to an Irish ecclesiastical network in the *Additamenta* and *Collectanea* in the Book of Armagh. For example, one grantor is said to have given to Armagh's network land *cum omni progenie*

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61. Stephanus, Life of Wilfrid §63, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, Cambridge, 1927, p. 136. Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, ed. and trans. A. Campbell, Oxford, 1967, pp. 27-33, lines 321–394. Examples from Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England* cit. (note 2), 125.

62. Canons of Theodore, version **U**, II.6.4, ed. Finsterwalder, *Die Canones Theodori* cit. (note 6), p. 320.

63. Of the kind that K. Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* cit. (note 7), p. 88, used to refer to as 'monastic federations'. This expression would be considered outdated nowadays for asserting a false divide between monastic and episcopal modes of organisation.

64. D. Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200*, London, 1995, p. 162.

65. S. Foot, *Wilfrid's monastic empire*, in N. J. Higham, ed., *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint. Papers from the 1300th Anniversary Conferences*, Donington, 2013, pp. 27-39.

sua « with all his household » (*Addit.* 1.6), another granted a *campus cum seruis in eo sibi famulantibus* « land together with the slaves serving them there » (*Addit.* 5.2), and others granted sons together with their inheritance (*Addit.* 10.1, *Collect.* 15.2) [66]. These examples reflect three types of grants: (i) of land with an entire kindred, (ii) of land with people who are already servile, and (iii) of land with certain free members of the kin. In analysing these episodes Charles-Edwards drew attention to the transfer of kin land on the authority of the head of the kindred by means of an *audacht* (also *edacht, idacht*), namely the solemn declaration by the head of the kin which I mentioned earlier. Kinsfolk living on the land would continue to occupy it but as tenants of the church [67]. Other records of land transfers embedded in Irish hagiographical texts (which cannot be dated with the same precision as the *Additamenta* but are likely to be pre 900) [68], tell similar stories of grants being made by kin groups, but also by individuals (*Vita Lugidi* §31), sometimes in old age (*Vita Albei* §40; *Vita Aidi* §48) [69]. On one occasion it is a retiring bishop who gives away land (*Vita Fintani* §19) [70]. A person can offer his *corpus et animam suam et stirpem suosque agros* « body, soul, family and lands » to a saint and become a *monachus* (*Vita Cainnechi* §13) [71]. Interestingly, in the Life of Cainnech such a *monachus* is set apart from the saint's own *fratres* (*Vita Cainnechi* §13), suggesting a certain degree of segregation within the community [72]. An important ninth- or early tenth-century text, the Tripartite Life of St Patrick, mentions three peasants (*senchléithi*), who were already servile, being granted away with the land on which they were settled [73]. Other grants from the Tripartite Life show that when arable lands were given, they could consist either of strips separated from a contiguous whole that was held by a kin group, or of dispersed units separated from one another by some distance [74].

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66. *Additamenta,* ed. and trans. L. BIELER, *The Patrician Texts* cit. (note 54), pp. 168, 170, 172; Tírechán, *Collectanea,* ed. and trans. L. BIELER, *The Patrician Texts* cit. (note 54), p. 134.

67. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The Church and settlement* cit. (note 9), p. 171.

68. See note 128, below.

69. Ed. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 137, 126-127, 180.

70. Ibid., pp. 150-151.

71. Ibid., p. 185.

72. Ibidem.

73. The grantor was Cináed king of Tara. See W. STOKES, ed., *The Tripartite Life of Patrick with Other Documents Relating to that Saint,* 2 vols, London. 1887, I, pp. 74-76.

74. Ed. STOKES, I, pp. 80, 192, 196; discussed by DOHERTY, *Some aspects of hagiography* cit. (note 9), pp. 308-309.

Proprietary churches are often considered by historians in the context of the secularisation of monasteries, a well-attested phenomenon in both Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England. The frustration that some ecclesiastics experienced with secularisation is articulated forcefully in Bede's famous phrase that certain Northumbrian minsters have become *liberi exinde a diuino simul et humano seruitio suis tantum inibi desideriis. . . deseruiunt* « free from divine and human services and serve only their own desires there » [75]. A similar sentiment is echoed in Ireland by the disdain that reforming authors of the *Céli Dé* expressed towards *senchella* 'old churches' because *is becc rand aos túate 7 lucht na sencheld mór* « the laity and the people of the great old churches are of little worth » [76].

A way of curbing excesses of lay patrons was to give the community a stake in governing the church. Such was the case with the Theodoran text we saw earlier, in which abbatial succession among kinsmen was permitted only if the *fratres* consented to it. A similar collective stake in the governing of a monastery is prescribed in the Irish *Hibernensis* which says that the head of the church, the *princeps*, must secure the consent of his *monachi* before alienating church land [77]. Should the *princeps* defy his monks, he might even risk a revolt by the entire *muintir* 'community', as indeed happened at Clonmacnoise [78]. Both the *Hibernensis* and Theodore, therefore, give us a normative (possibly idealised) perspective on the involvement of communities in governing an ecclesiastical estate. One would like to know, however, how exclusive the community's involvement was meant to be: did it extend only to monks in the strict sense or could it include certain peasant dependants? In the English example there is nothing to suggest that anyone apart from monks would be intended. But in Ireland, given the preponderance of kin-based religious institutions, one wonders whether the *monachi* whose consent the *Hibernensis* requires, were in fact members of a single kin comprising the

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75. Bede's Letter to Ecgberht §12, eds. and trans. C. GROCOCK and I. N. WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, Oxford, 2013, pp. 146, 147.

76. Monastery of Tallaght §26, eds. and trans. E. J. GWYNN and W. J. PURTON, *The Monastery of Tallagh, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* XXIX C (1911), pp. 115-170, at p. 137, and see §4 (p. 128) for a comment on the people of such churches neglecting their duties. The target could be places that experienced excessive secularisation, but also churches that remained unreformed (the two could be one and the same).

77. *Hibernensis* 37.15, 41.1, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), pp. 135, 157-158.

78. Monastery of Tallaght §85, ed. GWYNN and PURTON, *Monstery* cit. (note 76), p. 162.

muintir which formed the proprietary church, a possibility also raised by Etchingham in regard to similar such communities mentioned in hagiography, where each community could be a *fine manach* 'kin of manaig' [79]. An interesting contrast comes from Wales, where hereditary possession of churches has also been argued to have been practiced [80]. There, however, we find church heads, styled in the Llandaff Charters *heredes* 'heirs', disposing of church land with no mention of others being involved in the decision [81].

In conclusion, the foregoing discussion supports two theoretical models for church/kin relationship, each with implications for the rate of freedom or servility that peasant dependants had. The first model is that of ecclesiastical settlement as an alternative to kin. Such an institution would subsume individuals or groups from different kindreds, depriving them from ownership of land and gradually eroding their kin identity. The second model is of a proprietary church that reinforces kin identity through exclusive ownership by the kin, allowing individuals to retain a higher degree of free status than those of the first model. Neither model, however, existed in pure form. Rather, we find complex combinations of elements from both. Admittedly, we can say much more about such combinations in Ireland, where the normative evidence is more abundant and more detailed. One can also make the argument that the need to devise creative strategies for land-holding would have been more pressing in Ireland but less in England, where the king would almost invariably be expected to be the one granting land subject to clearly-defined stipulations, and where a hereditary family grip on minsters was discouraged, at least by the normative sources. The fluid boundaries between

79. See ETCHINGHAM, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), p. 227 and p. 438, where he suggests that 'the submitting kin-group remained an identifiable element within the wider community serving the saint or church in question'. More generally, the *Hibernensis* is opposed to the alienation of property and even supports marriage between first cousins as a means of retaining property within the kin. See, for example, *Hibernensis* 32.19, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), pp. 115-116, and the discussion by D. Ó CORRÁIN, *Women and the law in early Ireland*, in M. O'DOWD and S. WICHERT, eds., *Chattel, Servant or Citizen: Women's Status in Church, State, and Society*, Belfast, 1995, pp. 45–57, at p. 54.

80. DAVIES, *A Welsh Microcosm* cit. (note 4), p. 129: « Churches and monasteries were property as well as religious institutions and were therefore often in the possession of the laity; as such they would presumably have been subject to the formal rules of inheritance, usually passing from father to sons ».

81. DAVIES, *A Welsh Microcosm* cit. (note 4), p. 129.

kin and ecclesiastical settlement in Ireland can also explain why certain ecclesiastical authors seem to imply that the ownership of land was not a factor in determining legal status: if it were a factor in determining legal status then Irish proprietary churches would threaten the identity of the kin as well as of the status of its individual members who would be deprived of their freedom on account of their loss of land (model 1). Ultimately, in both Ireland and England, a range of free and unfree people had to live together on the same ecclesiastical estate. How they did this and how conspicuous the economic distinctions between them were, is the subject of the second part of this essay.

<div align="center">SPATIAL DIVISION, PROVISIONING AND LABOUR</div>

As we turn from normative pronouncements to the realities of labour and habitation on an estate, we are, yet again, faced with an evidential deficit. From the insular world we have nothing like the Carolingian polyptiques of the ninth century which record the inhabitants and assets of major monasteries, or the lists of tenants and slaves at Italian monasteries like Farfa and Bobbio [82]. Clearly, the peasant dependants of Ireland and Britain did not command as much interest from contemporary record keepers. In addition, charter evidence for Ireland is practically non-existent, except for the quasi-charter material that we encountered earlier from the *Additamenta* to Tírechán's *Collectanea* in the Book of Armagh. However, as before, occasional references to land and its occupants in hagiography offer some compensation for the shortage of other documentary material. The usual caveat about the tendentiousness of such texts also applies here, although the more incidental the references to peasants are, the more reliable they are likely to be. In Anglo-Saxon England, as already noted, narrative texts, including hagiography, are not as

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82. Recent analyses of a polyptique (of the estate of St Victor de Marseilles) and of the Italian lists are, respectively: R. FAITH, *Farms and families in ninth-century Provence*, in *Early Medieval Europe*, XVIII (2010), pp. 175-201; L. FELLER, *Liberté et servitude en Italie centrale (VIIe -VIIIe siècle)*, in *Les Formes de la Servitude de la Fin de l'Antiquité au Monde Moderne*, Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome: Moyen Age, CXII (2000), pp. 511-533. Online editions and translations of twelve (of about thirty) Carolingian polyptiques with commentary are available from the 'Carolingian Polyptiques' website, at https://www.le.ac.uk/hi/polyptyques/index.html (Accessed 17 June 2016)

revealing, with only sporadic mentions of peasant dependants. One may also turn to archaeology for evidence of practice, examining especially evidence of agricultural remains (e.g. animal bones, grain, pollen), agricultural technology or settlement archaeology. However, the archaeological literature for neither England nor Ireland offers a comprehensive survey of agriculture on ecclesiastical estates or the provisioning of estates from other sites [83]. One is left to make do with accounts of individual excavated sites but without any facility to gauge patterns across large swathes of land and a multitude of estates. These accounts, sporadic though they are, have their use as a means for testing hypotheses and verifying the testimonies of written sources, and in particular hagiography. The hypotheses that I would like to put to the test here concern the realities of peasant life on an ecclesiastical estate and our very understanding of what an ecclesiastical estate was. The place to begin, therefore, is by considering what historians of Britain and Ireland mean when they say 'ecclesiastical estate'.

The term 'estate', which calls to mind later medieval and (at least in England) more standardised units of agricultural management, may give a false impression of uniformity where there was none. In modern historiographical parlance 'ecclesiastical estate' is used in a range of different senses, encompassing anything from a monastic community with lands under its own control and peasants formally attached to it, to a much wider entity which also includes independent peasants who provisioned the monastic community (and perhaps other communities) from their own lands. Here I will favour a broad definition of estate, as a territorial unit comprising both individuals whose primary identification would be with the church (through economic criteria, legal criteria, or any arbitrary subjective criterion) and those whose identity would be more independent of the church, for example free peasants who might provision both the church and other lay lords at the same time. I shall distinguish between the 'core' of an estate, namely the centre in which a church, a religious group, or (in the case of a secularised settlement) a quasi-religious group was situated, and a 'periphery' in which religious personnel were not expected to reside. Both core and periphery would have their share of peasant inhabitants.

83. This lacuna in the historiography has been lamented most recently by G. Thomas, *Life before the minster: the social dynamics of monastic foundation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent*, in *The Antiquaries Journal*, XCIII (2013), pp. 109-145, at p. 109.

It is a commonplace of historiography to associate core and periphery with different categories of peasant dwellers, separated spatially, but also distinguished by their legal status and sometimes by the type of agriculture they practiced (for example, cereal closer to the core and pastoral further away from it) [84]. The premise for this hypothetical division is the widespread assumption that those inhabiting the circles nearest the core were exploited more heavily and were therefore less free (or entirely unfree) than those living further afield who were practicing an agriculture that was not entirely dependent on the needs of the ecclesiastical estate. Students of the medieval British Isles would be familiar with this division principally through the distinction between 'inland' and 'warland', a contemporary distinction that has been known to scholarship for some time, but gained currency in the historiography of the last two decades thanks to the work of Rosamond Faith [85]. Defined from the outside, 'inland' was land from which no service was due to a lord, namely allodial land. But defined from within the estate, 'inland' was what Faith calls a « directly exploited core area » on the estate [86].

It is widely accepted that inland in Anglo-Saxon England emerged as a consequence of the impact that the church had on settlement patterns [87]. As the 'inland hypothesis' goes, the church, which represented a fixed, rather than itinerant form of lordship, relied more heavily on its own local land resources and labour which it exploited directly and intensively. Examples cited by Faith include Sherborne (Dorset) and Glastonbury (Glos.). Sherborne was supplied from an area commonly referred to as Stockland (both an actual site and a recurrent placename-

84. For a recent reiteration of this hypothesis see T. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The archaeology of ecclesiastical estates in early medieval Ireland: a case study of the kingdom of Fir Maige*, Peritia, XXIV-XXV (2013-14), pp. 266-312, at p. 268.

85. FAITH, *The English Peasantry* cit. (note 10), pp. 15-152. For the influence of her interpretation of the 'inalnd'/'warland' model see, for example, C. WICKHAM, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800*, Oxford, 2005, p. 323, and S. BAXTER, *Lordship and labour*, in J. CRICK and E. VAN HOUTS, eds., *A social history of England, 900-1200*, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 98-114, at p. 100. For an early contemporary contrast between 'inland' and 'warland' see the references to tenth-century divisions in the early twelfth-century Burton Cartulary, tarns. Douglas and Greenaway, *English Historical Documents* cit. (note 26), pp. 985-997 (§176).

86. FAITH, *The English Peasantry* cit. (note 10), p. 16.

87. On the ecclesiastical origins see BLAIR, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* cit. (note 2), pp. 252-253. But he also makes a caveat to the effect that we know virtually nothing about aristocratic estates in the early period and whether they followed a similar template.

element whose etymology is debated), consisting of villages adjacent to the minster in which the minster's tenants resided. A charter by Æthelred for the minster from 998 mentions 100 *agelli* in Sherborne's 'stockland', which was described in Domesday Book as being *geld* free, a status interpreted by Faith as being a vestige of inland [88]. The circumstances of Glastonbury appear to be similar, but unlike Sherborne there is no available topographical evidence consisting of tell-tale placenames like 'stockland' [89].

The argument for a higher rate of exploitation nearer the core of the estate has also been made for Ireland. Charles-Edwards argues on the evidence of Adomnán's Life of Columba – which offers testimony on the economic regimes of both Iona and Clonmacnoise – that major monasteries in the eighth century would have been heavily dependent on the lands adjacent to them, which they would have exploited more intensively [90]. Unlike the residents of this Irish form of 'inland', the inhabitants of lands that were further from the core would be tapped as rent-paying tenants. Charles-Edwards concludes that « it is probably approximately true to say that in seventh-century Ireland dispersed settlement was the expression of free status, nucleated settlement was the expression of servile or semi-servile status » [91]. He goes on to suggest that there would also have been a difference between the way in which peasants of the 'nucleated-settlement' and peasants of the 'dispersed-settlement' would have constructed their identity, such that « for the servile and semi-servile population the critical economic relationship was to the lord rather than to the kindred » [92]. The lord in this case was, of course, the church (broadly defined). In contrast, the peasants of the 'dispersed-settlement' – who were free rent-payers settled further away from the core of the estate – did not provide direct labour services and owed loyalty primarily to the kin which endowed them with land [93]. Nevertheless, despite retaining their kin identity, they appear to be among those whom our sources designate *manaig*. But it is worth

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88. Faith's contention that, as a rule of thumb, inland can be inferred from areas designated as '*geld* free' in Domesday Book has recently been challenged by D. PRATT, *Demesne exemption from royal taxation in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England*, English Historical Review, CXXVIII (2013), pp. 1-34.

89. FAITH, *The English Peasantry* cit. (note 10), pp. 19-24.

90. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *The church and settlement* cit. (note 9), p. 169.

91. Ibid., p. 170.

92. Ibidem

93. Ibid., p. 174.

reiterating that they were free *manaig*. Long-term risks that a church could face from relying too heavily on peasants who enjoyed a relatively high degree of independence are highlighted by an Old Irish gloss on the law tract *Di Dligiud Raith 7 Somaíne la Flaith*[94]. The glossator distinguishes between *túathmanaig*, who have a contractual relationship with the church, and *fírmanaig*, who are said not to be bound by contract. Etchingham translates *túathmanaig* 'lay *manaig*' and *fírmanaig* 'true *manaig*'[95]. Another possible literal translation for the latter is '*manaig* with a vow' or '*manaig* with a pledge'[96]. Yet another way of rendering the expression *fírmanaig* is '*manaig* of servility', in accordance with a text from the Martyrology of Óengus (*c.* 800) which reads *cech fírmanach. . . gníd amal cech mog* « every *fírmanach*. . . let him work like any slave »[97]. The glossator of *Di Dligiud Raith*, in a rather opaque passage, appears to urge churches to dissolve their contracts with *túathmanaig* if their presence is deemed to threaten the *fírmanaig* in one way or another. According to Etchingham's interpretation, « such conflict might arise where economic circumstances favoured the maximum allocation of a church's assets to rent-payers rather than the deployment of direct labour on a large scale »[98]. He cites the harsh verdict of *Bretha Nemed Toísech* in the matter of the depletion of a church's assets, which is said to lead to its loss of status[99]. But even without *Bretha Nemed*'s admonition it is easy to imagine how such a shift in the power balance could of itself transform the character of the estate.

94. *Di Dligiud Raith 7 Somaíne la Flaith*, ed. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 433 lines 25-27, p. 918 lines 12-17. And see discussion in Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 431-433.

95. Ibid., p. 432.

96. For these interpretations of *fír*, see Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* cit. (note 32), p. 312.

97. This is an interpolated text attributed to Fothad na Canóine. See *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé* 4.12, ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, London, 1905, pp. 4, 5. Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), pp. 418-419, suggests that representing servile labourers as fully-fledged monks was a hagiographical trope intended to euphemise servitude. However he disagrees with the interpretation 'servile *manaig*' on linguistic grounds (personal comment).

98. Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), p. 433.

99. *Bretha Nemed Toísech* §6, ed. and trans. L. Breatnach, *The first third of Bretha Nemed Toísech*, *Ériu*, XXII (1989), pp. 1-40, at p. 10; ed. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* cit. (note 30), p. 2211 lines 27-33.

Texts like *Bretha Nemed*, *Di Dligiud Raith*, and the passage from the Martyrology of Óengus make no attempt to conceal the sometimes harsh reality of exploitation and competition for resources on an ecclesiastical estate. Intriguingly, *Bretha Nemed* and *Di Dligiud Raith* raise the possibility that peasants living in the periphery may grow in strength at the expense of those who lived and laboured within the religious core. This raises an interesting challenge to our model of the insular ecclesiastical estate which now has to take into account the contingency that control was not always exerted from the centre over the periphery, but also the other way around. As we continue to explore the different forces operating on the ecclesiastical estate and the complexities of economic life on it, we now turn from the theory of the estate to practice, insofar as it may be gleaned from archaeological and hagiographical evidence. Let me begin with the former.

In England, archaeology affords evidence of different agricultural regimes at minsters. Although wide patterns are impossible to gauge due to the patchy nature of the evidence and absence of wide-ranging surveys, there are certain trends that have been argued to be more typical of the minster economy than of the economy of other settlements. Foremost among them is the cultivation of cereals at minster sites, attested by pollen analysis and agricultural technology, especially mills. Mills are believed to have spread in England from minsters, such as Wareham (Dorset) and Barking (Essex), where the earliest mills were excavated (dated late seventh and early eighth century) [100]. Some minsters are thought to have turned to cereal production after abandoning cattle rearing. At Yarnton (Oxon.), for example, bread wheat became the main crop by the ninth century following a gradual increase in cereal production [101]. This change in farming regime has been argued to have taken place in the eighth century in order to satisfy the needs of ecclesiastical lordship. As this hypothesis goes, Yarnton was transferred together with its peasants to the nearby minster of Eynsham, which, being a permanent

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100. A recent excavation from which large-scale cereal production has been inferred is at the Northumbrian minster of Hoddom (Dumfries). See C. E. Lowe, *New light on the Anglian "minster" at Hoddom*, in *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd ser., LXVI (1991), pp. 11-35. On milling technology spreading from minsters, see Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* cit. (note 2), p. 256.

101. G. Hey, *Yarnton: Saxon and Medieval Settlement and Landscape*, Oxford, 2004, p. 81 (in a contribution by Chris Stevens and Mark Robinson).

non–itinerant lord, imposed heavier demands on the peasants of Yarnton [102]. At Lyminge, which transitioned from being a secular place to becoming a minster, a shift towards cereal agriculture has also been noted, but there is no evidence to enlighten us about the peasants who cultivated the crops [103]. Mixed agriculture – cereal and cattle – can be observed in West Fen Road, a settlement from the second quarter of the eighth century which grew on the western edge of the core of the minster at Ely. It is speculated that the peasants of this settlement, whose material culture was rather simple, were supplying the minster with meat and grain. The settlement may in fact have been estasblished for this purpose [104]. Possibly, we see here evidence of inland in its 'classic' form, with servile or semi–servile peasants.

On other minsters we find an economy based more around cattle, although cereals are nevertheless attested. For example, the consumption of cattle at Whithorn (in Galloway) was considerable and the minster relied on provisioning from 'warland', as demonstrated by finds of bones from older animals, a tell-tale sign of a consumption site [105]. In contrast, Wearmouth and Jarrow seem to have relied heavily on cattle that was reared locally (there is also evidence of sheep, goat and pig) [106]. Sadly neither the archaeological nor the written evidence concerning Wearmouth and Jarrow can shed light on the relationship between the minster and its tenants, who have been speculated to have ranged from free landholders to *ceorls* to slaves [107]. At Hartlepool (Northumb.), there is again evidence of in-house raising of livestock: sheep, cattle, pigs, and domesticated fowl. Christopher Loveluck notes the contrast with Whithorn, which was provisioned from other places, perhaps because it had a bigger endowment to begin with [108].

102. Ibid., p. 90; FLEMING, *Land use and people*, in J. CRICK and E. VAN HOUTS, eds., *A Social History of England 900–1200*, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 15-37, at p. 27.

103. THOMAS, *Life before the minster* cit. (note 83), pp. 109-145.

104. R. MORTIMER, R. REGAN, S. LUCY, *The Saxon and Medieval Settlement at West Fen Road, Ely: The Ashwell Site*, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 144-148.

105. F. McCORMICK and E. MURPHY, *The animal bones*, in P. HILL, ed., *Whithorn and St Niniam: The Excavation of a Monastic Town 1984-91*, Stroud, 1997, pp. 605-613, at p. 608.

106. B. NODDLE, *Faunal remains*, in R. Cramp *et al.*, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, 2 vols, Swindon, 2005-2006, II, pp. 546-552, at pp. 552-553.

107. On the absence of evidence and speculation, see R. CRAMP *et al.*, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, 2 vols, Swindon, 2005-2006, I, p. 341.

108. C. LOVELUCK, *Anglo Saxon Hartlepool and the foundations of English Christian identity*, in R.

The sites that have been reviewed so far show a mix of external provisioning and in-house production as well as diversity in the types of agriculture practiced. There is no neat inland/warland division that applies to all of them, nor is there consistency in the rearing of cattle or the cultivation of cereals either in the immediate vicinity of the minster or further afield. Nevertheless, in some cases (like the dependence between Eynsham and Yarnton or Ely and West Fen Road) we may be able to identify a more servile workforce engaged in cultivating cereals.

In Ireland the argument has also been made for a preponderance of cereal agriculture on ecclesiastical estates, though one ought to be careful not to draw too stark a contrast with royal and other secular estates [109]. A pronounced presence of cereal agriculture on religious sites is attested, just as in Anglo-Saxon England, by farming implements and mills, of which approximately one hundred pre tenth-century specimens survive. Among them are the earliest horizontal and vertical water mills in medieval Europe, such as in Nendrum (Co. Down; AD 619) and Littleisland (Co. Cork; AD 630) [110]. Some, like Nendrum, are definitely

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DANIELS, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Hartlepool and the Foundations of English Christianity. An Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Monastery*, Hartlepool, 2007, pp. 186-208, at pp. 206-207. On Whithorn he cites F. McCORMICK and E. MURPHY, *The animal bones*, in P. HILL, ed., *Whithorn and St Niniam: The Excavation of a Monastic Town 1984–91*, Stroud, 1997, pp. 605-613, at p. 608. But there is no evidence that cattle were raised at Hartlepool to provide parchment for manuscripts as has been suggested for Lindisfarne by D. O'SULLIVAN, *Space, silence and shortage on Lindisfarne. The archaeology of asceticism*, in H. HAMEROW and A. MACGREGOR, eds., *Image and Power in the Archaeology of Medieval Britain. Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 33-52.

109. Some of the central contributions from recent years to what may be called the 'cereal versus pastoral debate' are: V. HALL, *The vegetation history of monastic and secular sites in the midlands of Ireland over the last two millennia*, *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany*, XV (2005), pp. 1-12; M. COMBER, *The Economy of the Ringfort and Contemporary Settlement in Early Medieval Ireland*, BAR International Series, MDCCLXXIII, Oxford, 2008; F. KELLY, *The relative importance of cereals and livestock in the medieval Irish economy: the evidence of the law-texts*, in *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell' alto medioevo* cit. (note 3), pp. 93-108; F. McCORMICK, *et al.*, *The Archaeology of Livestock and Cereal Production in Early Medieval Ireland, AD 400–1100*, Early Medieval Archaeology Project Report 5.1 (2011). Published online at http://www.emap.ie/documents/EMAP__Report__5__Archaeology__of__Livestock__and__Cereal__ Production__WEB.pdf (Accessed 2 July 2013); M. STOUT, *The distribution of early medieval ecclesiastical sites in Ireland'*, in P. J. DUFFY and W. NOLAN, eds., *At the Anvil: Essays Presented to Professor William J. Smyth*, Dublin, 2012, pp. 53-80; T. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Ecclesiastical and secular settlements in early medieval Ireland: densities, distributions, interactions*, in N. EDWARDS, M. Ní MHAONAIGH and R. FLECHNER, eds., *Transforming Landscapes in the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles II*, Turnhout, 2017 (forthcoming).

110. N. BRADY, *Mills and milling in medieval Ireland: looking beyond design*, in S. A. WALTON, ed.,

ecclesiastical, while other early mills, like those found at Raystown (Co. Meath), have no known ecclesiastical associations. Spatial divisions corresponding to zones of social inequality have also been posited for Irish ecclesiastical estates. The most recent archaeological survey to consider questions of spatial divisions on an ecclesiastical estate, by Tomás Ó Carragáin – which draws on previous work by himself and Paul MacCotter as part of the Making Christian Landscapes project – concentrated on the territory of the petty kingdom of Fir Maige in Munster [111]. This territory was divided into fifteen sub-territories, fourteen of which were *túatha* 'local districts' and one an ecclesiastical estate [112]. Ó Carragáin observes that within the sub-territory of Brigown, which was granted to the church, the settlements within its core, comprising many of the lesser church sites, tended to have relatively large enclosures. He tentatively suggested that they were « relatively populous » and that their inhabitants « may have farmed relatively large areas. In contrast, in the small area of the estate [*sc.* of Brigown] separated from Brigown by the Kilworth Mountains, there is a greater density of closely-spaced ringforts/enclosures, suggesting perhaps rent-paying *manaig* who had the right to divide the land they farmed between branches of the family » [113]. Another adjacent ecclesiastical sub-territory (styled 'estate' by Ó Carragáin), Molaga, shows a higher density of ringforts in the south-west, near Aghacross, than in the north-east, near the ecclesiastical centre of Labbamolaga. The study concludes that in « Labbamolaga there may have been an emphasis on direct labour by monks and servile

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Wind and Water in the Middle Ages. Fluid Technologies from Antiquity to the Renaissance, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, CCCXXII, Tempe AZ, 2006, pp. 39-68; C. RYNNE, *Recent archaeological research on early medieval water-mills in Ireland*, International Molinology, LXXIV (2007), pp. 32-34; C. RYNNE, *Water-power as a factor of industrial location in early medieval Ireland: the environment of the early Irish water mill*, Industrial Archaeology Review, XXXI (2009), pp. 85-95. But, nevertheless, quern stones occur more frequently and are attested in a large number of ecclesiastical sites. See BRADY, *Mills and milling* cit. (note 110), pp. 45-46; T. R. KERR, ed., *The Archaeology of Early Christianity in the North of Ireland*, BAR British Series, CDLX, Oxford, 2008, p. 162.

111. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The archaeology of ecclesiastical estates* cit. (note 84). See also P. MACCOTTER, *Túath, manor and parish: kingdom of Fir Maige, cantred of Fermoy*, Peritia, XXII-XXIII (2011-12), pp. 224-74.

112. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The archaeology of ecclesiastical estates* cit. (note 84), pp. 268-269.

113. Ibid., p. 280. The evidence for the territorial divisions of Fir Maige comes from a topographical description from the first half of the twelfth century, called *Críchad in Caílli*, ed. and trans. P. POWER, *Crichad an Chaoilli: Being the Topography of Ancient Fermoy*, Cork, 1932.

manaig », who practiced a mixed agriculture of tillage and animal husbandry, while in Aghacross « perhaps more of the tenants were rent-paying *manaig* with greater rights over the land they farmed » [114].

From cereals we continue to cattle and mixed pastoral-cereal economies. At Clonmacnoise (Co. Offaly) excavators concluded that that monastery was a consumer rather than a cultivator of cattle, since animal bones found on site invariably belonged to older animals [115]. Approximately fifty kilometers to the east, in County Westmeath, faunal assemblages from two ecclesiastical sites, Ballykilmore and Clonfad, have been compared with the faunal assemblage from a ringfort at Rochfort Demesne, commonly classified as a secular site (associated with the Cland Cholmáin kings who ruled Mide) [116]. Both ecclesiastical sites are understood to be sites of consumption, again, on the evidence of the preponderance of cattle bones from older animals. At Rochfort Demesne, on the other hand, the bones recovered were from younger animals. Sheep and pig were also imported into the ecclesiastical sites rather than raised on them, but poultry seems to have been grown on site. As for arable agriculture: cereals, and especially barley, were cultivated at both Clonfad and Ballykilmore. At Clonmacnoise cereal agriculture was also practiced, as evidenced by an extensive area of cultivation furrows [117]. In Clonfad some of the cattle bones show signs that the animals were used for ploughing, the quintessential activity of arable cereal agriculture. Cereal production, however, was not unique to the ecclesiastical sites, and in fact both Clonfad and Rochfort Demesne had bread wheat (a superior cereal by medieval northern European standards).

We may speculate about a correlation between the preponderance of provisioning of churches (broadly defined) with cattle from other

114. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The archaeology of ecclesiastical estates* cit. (note 84), p. 288.

115. A. O'SULLIVAN, F. McCORMICK, T. KERR and L. HARNEY, *Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930–2004*. Early Medieval Archaeology Project Report 2.1, Dublin and Belfast, 2008, p. 195. The report cites J. SODERBERG, *Wild cattle: red deer in the religious texts, iconography, and archaeology of early medieval Ireland*, International Journal of Historical Archaeology, VIII (2004), pp. 167-183; F. McCORMICK and E. MURRAY, *Excavations at Knowth 3: Knowth and the Zooarchaeology of Early Christian Ireland*, Dublin, 2007, pp. 209-217.

116. P. STEVENS, *Diet and environment in the early medieval period*, in P. STEVENS and J. CHANNING, eds., *Settlement and Commmunity in the Fir Tulach Kingdom: Archaeological Excavation on the M16 and N52 Round Schemes*, Dublin, 2012, pp. 135-178.

117. D. MURPHY, *Excavations of an early monastic enclosure at Clonmacnoise*, in H. KING, ed., *Clonmacnoise*, 2 vols, Dublin, 1998-2003, II, pp. 1-34, at pp. 2-4.

sites and the social standing associated with cattle rearing in Ireland. According to the Irish laws, the rearing of cattle was the preserve of clients of free status who had the capacity to freely make contracts which enabled them to receive the animals from their lords in the first place [118]. It does not follow that such pastoral farmers must be associated with ringforts (often interpreted as secular settlements), but the requirement to have free status may explain why the cattle consumed at places like Clonmacnoise, Clonfad, and Ballykilmore, was not acquired from the lands immediately adjacent to the monasteries, lands that might have been inhabited by people who were unfree or 'less' free in respect of their capacity to make contracts.

An exception to the provisioning of Irish monasteries with cattle from the outside is Iona. Before it was abandoned in 806 at the height of hostile Viking activity, it appears to have reared its own cattle for dairy and beef [119]. However, the in-house raising of cattle may have been a necessity, owing to the monastery's location on an island to which it would be difficult to transport cattle regularly [120]. Evidence of cereal pollen on Iona is a clear indication that a mixed agriculture was practiced in the monastery's immediate vicinity, although some cereals might have been delivered to the monastery by sea from its dependency on Tiree, in a reversal of the pattern of cereals being grown nearer the core and cattle further from it [121].

The archaeology can be compared with the testimonies of written sources. I shall begin by examining three episodes from Anglo-Saxon narrative sources which – as repeatedly noted – are less informative about the realities of peasant life than the Irish sources. The first episode is from Bede's History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the second is repeated in the two Lives of St Cuthbert (the anonymous verse

118. CHARLES-EDWARDS, *Early Christian Ireland* cit. (note 39), pp. 72-75. The clients were of free legal status by virtue of their ownership of land.

119. F. McCORMICK, *The animal bones from ditch 1*, in J. W. BARBER, *Excavations on Iona*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, CXI (1981), pp. 313-318, at p. 314.

120. Although other provisions were brought by ship. See F. Edmonds, *The practicalities of communication between Northumbrian and Irish Churches, c. 635-735*, in J. GRAHAM-CAMPBELL and M. RYAN, eds., *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, Oxford, 2009, pp. 129-147.

121. SHARPE, *Adomnán of Iona* cit. (note 23), p. 21; S. BOHNCKE, *The pollen diagram from Ditch 1*, in J. W. BARBER, *Excavations on Iona*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, CXI (1981), pp. 282-380, at pp. 346–348. On ferrying cereals, see SHARPE, *Adomnán of Iona* cit. (note 23), p. 303 note 182.

Life and Bede's prose Life) and the third is from Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. The History of the Abbots presents us with a portrait of abbot Eosterwine of Wearmouth as a meek individual:

tantum mansit humilis, fratrumque simillimus aliorum, ut uentilare cum eis et triturare, oues uitulasque mulgere, in pristino, in horto, in coquina, in cunctis monasterii operibus iocundus et obediens gauderet exerceri « he remained so lowly, and so very like the other brothers, that he rejoiced to work cheerfully and obediently at winnowing and threshing with them, at milking the ewes and the cows, in the bakehouse, in the garden, in the kitchen, and in all the work of the monastery » [122].

And a little later we read that when he travelled to other minsters and saw the *fratres* working, he would join them, for example by holding the plough handle and guiding it (*aratri gressum stiba regendo*) [123]. Since no distinction is made between labouring *fratres* and the *fratres* who are said in the same chapter to have lived and dined communally, then the implication is that they were all one and the same. Therefore, we ostensibly have here an account of the monks themselves doing agricultural work. However, the reliability of the descriptions of labouring *fratres* is called into question by the fact that the phrase « *in pristino, in horto, in coquina, in cunctis monasterii operibus iocundus et obediens* » is borrowed from clause 46 of the Rule of St Benedict. Might this be an idealised picture of monastic life modelled on the rule on which Wearmouth was supposedly founded? [124] If so, then Bede's depiction of fully-fledged monks working happily alongside an abbot may mask a reality in which the working hands really belonged to peasant tenants. The depiction of senior grades performing labour may in fact be a topos of superiors setting an example for the fulfillment of the rule. We also encounter it in the Anonymous Life of Ceolfrith, who is said to have upheld the rule's ideal of labour by working as a *pistor* 'baker' while he was prior of Melrose [125]. When textual testimonies are more likely to be reliable is when *fratres* are mentioned

122. History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow §8, eds. and trans. GROCOCK and WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), pp. 40-41.

123. History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow §9, eds. and trans. GROCOCK and WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), pp. 42-43.

124. History of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow §§11, 16, eds. and trans. GROCOCK and WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), pp. 48-49, 62-63.

125. Anonymous Life of Ceolfrith §4, eds. and trans. GROCOCK and WOOD, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), p. 82.

incidentally and not as the protagonists of didactic edifying narratives. Two such examples of *fratres* who were clearly peasants are Hadwald, who is said in the Lives of St Cuthbert to have been a shepherd who died by falling from a tree, and the famous Caedmon, a *frater* who is described in Bede's Ecclesiastical History as minding the cattle at Whitby [126]. Caedmon was subordinate to a *uilicus* 'reeve', who appears to have managed the minster's workforce on behalf of abbess Hilda [127]. This is a rare attestation of direct management of a minster's workforce.

For Ireland we are fortunate to have a substantial corpus of early medieval hagiography in Latin, in addition to the Patrician dossier from the Book of Armagh and the Tripartite Life which have already been examined for their testimony on land transfers to churches. The earliest Lives in this corpus – collectively known as the O'Donohue group of Lives – have been argued by Richard Sharpe to have been copied from a single lost manuscript dating no later than the ninth century [128]. These texts are of great interest for their unequivocal language of monastic identity and their richly detailed depictions of the mundanities of monastic living. The Lives confirm that the communities which they refer to as *monasteria* were indeed fully fledged monasteries, complete with monastic rules, abbots, communal living, and a routine of prayer. The Life of

126. Bede, *HE* IV.24, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 414-416.

127. Anonymous Life of Cuthbert 4.10, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, Cambridge, 1940, pp. 126-128; Bede's Life of Cuthbert §34, ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of St. Cuthbert*, pp. 262-264.

128. This is Sharpe's Φ. See his *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Oxford, 1991, pp. 333-334. Although the hypothesis has been challenged over the years and may benefit from refinement, its central tenets still hold. For some of the challenges, see: C. Breatnach, *The significance of the orthography of Irish proper names in the Codex Salmanticensis*, *Ériu*, LV (2005), pp. 85-101; P. Ó Riain, *The O'Donohue Lives of the Salamancan Codex: The earliest collection of Irish saints' Lives?*, in S. Sheehan, J. Findon and W. Follett, eds., *Gablánach in Scélaigecht: Celtic Studies in Honour of Ann Dooley*, Dublin, 2013, pp. 38-52. It has always struck me as odd that the critics who preferred to assign the O'Donohue group to the twelfth century on linguistic grounds were prepared to accept that none of the lives even so much as hint (say, by accident or slip) at historical events or phenomena that were prevalent post 900, such as the Viking presence, towns, international trade, or the growth of kingdoms. If there was a deliberate omission or purge of such detail it would necessitate not only a remarkable conspiracy of silence but also an acute and detailed historical understanding of social and political developments, an understanding that would have been beyond the reach of twelfth-century contemporaries unless we assume that they worked by the same analytic methods as modern historians and had access to reliable sources.

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Fintán describes a *regula ualde stricta* « very strict monastic rule » (*Vita Fintani* §4) and St Lugaid is said to have instigated a monastic rule that observed the common threefold division of prayer, study and labour (*Vita Lugidi* §64), a division made famous by the Rule of St Bendict, but also known from Irish rules, as we learn from the prescriptive *Céli Dé* literature [129]. The religious communities on ecclesiastical estates could number *quinquaginta ter uiri* « three-fifties men » (*Vita Ruadani* §11) or fifty men (*Vita Lugidi* §18), though these may be mere hagiographical aetiologies. For comparison, one may recall the well-known reference to six-hundred *fratres* at Wearmouth and Jarrow in Bede's *Historia Abbatum*, a number so high that they are assumed to have been, for the most part, peasant dependants [130]. How this figure stood in proportion to the core of religious *monachi* who took monastic vows can be seen by a comparison with the number of founding monks at Jarrow, seventeen, given in the same text [131].

Despite the clarity with which Irish hagiography identifies the institutions that it is concerned with, the language used to refer to the inhabitants of the estates is, more often than not, ambiguous, and rarely allows us to distinguish monastic tenants from monks in the strict sense. In the examples that follow we are nevertheless able to make educated guesses as to the identity of the *monachi* or *fratres*, some of whom we are given the opportunity to observe from as early as the moment in which they entered the monastery. There are those who enter as oblates, for example to a nunnery (*Vita Ailbei* §36), while others can be seen to be given as oblates to Ultán's *ciuitas* (*Vita Albei* §§37, 47) [132]. Lugaid himself was an oblate (*Vita Lugidi* §15) at Comgall's Bangor (*Vita Lugidi* §18) [133]. These oblates cover the entire spectrum from highborn children

129. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 147, 144; Monastery of Tallaght §69, ed. Gwynn and Purton, *Monstery* cit. (note 76), p. 156.

130. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 163, 134; Bede, *Historia Abbatum* §17, eds. and trans. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), p. 64.

131. Bede, *Historia Abbatum* §7, eds. and trans. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), p. 38. But in another account the figure given is twenty-two. See the Anonyous Life of Ceolfrith §11, eds. and trans. Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* cit. (note 75), p. 88.

132. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 126, 127, 129. Although the Latin *alumnus*, literally meaning 'fosterling', would also have had echoes of the important social and political Irish institution of *altramm* 'fosterage'.

133. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), p. 134.

dedicated to monasteries by kings and destined to a life of no (or less) labour (*Vita Cainnechi* §41) to oblates who were apparently destined to become tenants, such as the three young brothers who become *monachi* in the Life of Lugaid (*Vita Lugidi* §55) [134]. But the ranks of *monachi* are not confined to those who have been brought up in a monastery: brigands could also become *monachi* (*Vita Lugidi* §44) but not, one may suspect, in a strict religious sense that would require them, for example, to have at least a basic grasp of literacy [135].

In both the lower and uppermost rungs of the monastic settlements we find *ministri* 'attendants' (*Vita Finani* §§10, 36; *Vita Lugidi* §18) [136]. This expression also occurs in the *Hibernensis*, where the *ministri* seem to take the role of personal attendants to the *princeps*, who was the head of the ecclesiastical settlement [137]. Another occurrence of the word in this sense is found in the Life of Lugaid, where the protagonist, despite being of noble descent, is also described as a *minister* of abbot Comgall (*Vita Lugidi* §18) [138]. The closeness to the great man which the *ministratio* implies would have enhanced Lugaid's position rather than diminished it. The same appears to be the case with Diarmait, *minister* of Columba (*Vita Columbae* 3.23) [139]. In contrast, *serui* 'slaves'/'servants' appear to have been people of more lowly servile status, for example oblates deposited in a monastery without an endowment [140]. In one instance the B-Recension of the *Hibernensis* even replaces *monachus* with *seruus* in the title of a chapter: *De monacho non debente inire iudicium cum principe* « that a *monachus* ought not enter into litigation with the *princeps* », showing that certain *monachi* had no independent legal capacity just as slaves had none [141]. The Old Irish equivalent – at least in the literature of the *Céli*

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134. Ibid., pp. 193, 142-143.

135. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

136. Ibid., pp. 154, 160, 131.

137. *Hibernensis* 32.20, 32.22, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), pp. 116-117.

138. Ed. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), 131.

139. Eds. A. O. ANDERSON and M. O. ANDERSON, *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, Oxford, 1991, p. 220.

140. *Hibernensis* 42.24, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), p. 168.

141. *Hibernensis* 21.31, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), p. 73. The B-Recension variant is taken from Bodleian Library, MS. Hatton 42, fol. 40r where the chapter is numbered 24.43.

Dé – was *gilla*, a word used for a base, often servile individual [142]. Apart from *serui* and *ministri* the monastery's inmates could comprise craftsmen (*Vita Aidi* §13) and herdsmen (*Vita Fintani* §9) [143]. Other communities had manifest gaps in their manpower and are explicitly said to have been lacking in *artifices et operatores* 'craftsmen and workmen' (*Vita Cainnechi* §35) when, presumably, such would have been expected on the premises [144].

Hagiography also contains anecdotal references to labour and the management of labour in monasteries. The protagonist of many such anecdote is the *oeconomus* 'steward', who could be a secular dynast whose status was that of *secnap* 'vice-abbot' with a claim for succeeding to the abbatial office [145]. In the Life of Colmán Élo of Lynally (Co. Offaly) we are told that the steward and the *cocus* 'cook' had oversight of organising the *fratres* who were *laborantes* 'labouring' (*Vita Colmani* §§20, 21, 26) [146]. This is another instance of direct management of labour, like we encountered before with Whitby's reeve. It is not uncommon to find inmates of a monastery toiling in the fields. They may be described as *fratres* (*Vita Fintani* §7, [147] *Vita Columbae* 1.37, 3.23 [148]) or collectively as a *familia* 'community', harvesting (*Vita Finani* §24) [149]. At one time we even meet a *poeta* who had hitherto never performed manual labour being taught how to fell trees (*Vita Lugidi* §38) [150]. Colmán Etchingham interprets such hagiographical depictions of labouring monks as being instances in which slavery is euphemised, while in actual fact « they were even less free than the most dependent *manaig*, who still owed rents to the church, and hence were not entirely propertyless » [151].

142. Rule of the *Céli Dé* §34, ed. E. Gwynn, *The rule of Tallaght*, Dublin, 1927, pp. 64-86, at p. 72; Monastery of Tallaght §37, ed. Gwynn and Purton, *Monastery* cit. (note 76), p. 142.

143. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 171, 148.

144. Ibid., p. 191.

145. F. J. Byrne, *Church and politics, c.750-c.1100*, in D. Ó Cróinín, ed., *A new History of Ireland I. Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 656-679, at pp. 661, 678. The *oeconomus* is also mentioned several times in Welsh charters. See Davies, *A Welsh Microcosm* cit. (note 4), pp. 127-128.

146. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 215, 216, 217-218.

147. Ibid., p. 147.

148. Eds. Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* cit. (note 139), pp. 68, 216.

149. Ed. Heist, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), p. 158.

150. Ibid., p. 139.

151. Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland* cit. (note 9), p. 418.

The agriculture practiced by or depended upon by individuals termed *monachi* varied. They could cultivate both cattle and crops, or they could consume dairy products brought to the monastery from elsewhere. When the provisioning was external it is not clear if the suppliers were free peasants associated with the monastery who could also be regarded as *monachi* or if they were free peasants with no formal connection to the monastery. A monastery could have its own cattle, like Iona (*Vita Columbae* 2.16) [152], Bangor (*Vita Lugidi* §48) or Rúadán's Lorrha, where fetching milk for the *ciuitas* is said to have been the responsibility of the *cocus* 'cook' (*Vita Ruadani* §8) [153]. On other occasions we find milk being brought to the nunnery at Druim Ard from another place (*Vita Aidi* §16) or from a *bucetum* 'cow pasture' (*Vita Lugidi* §21), which was either the monastery's or a common pasture land in which the monastery had a share [154]. A bishop too could have his own cows (*Vita Cainnechi* §2) [155]. Sometimes offerings of milk were refused by communities whose strict monastic rule forbade dairy (*Vita Fintani* §4) [156]. Other communities simply could not afford cows (*Vita Cainnechi* §36) [157].

Cereal production was undertaken by certain monasteries on nearby fields (*Vita Columbae* 2.44) [158], using their own plough-teams of bullocks (*Vita Albei* §38) which could be exploited as beasts of burden for a variety of tasks like pulling carts (*Vita Cainnechi* §5) [159]. All such activities seem to have fallen under the steward's supervision (*Vita Cainnechi* §5) [160]. Cereal processing and bread production could also be done in-house: there are two mentions of mills in the Life of Lugaid, the first might have served a lay community but the second appears to have been owned by the monastery and came under the supervision of the *oeconomus* 'steward' (*Vita Lugidi* §§11, 22) [161]. The Life of Columba mentions a millstone (*Vita Columbae* 3.23) and a corn drying kiln (*Vita*

152. Eds. ANDERSON and ANDERSON, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* cit. (note 139), p. 116.

153. Ed. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 141, 162.

154. Ibid., pp. 172, 135.

155. Ibid., p. 182.

156. Ibid., p. 147.

157. Ibid., p. 191.

158. Eds. ANDERSON and ANDERSON, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* cit. (note 139), p. 172.

159. Ed. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), pp. 127, 183.

160. Ibid., p. 183.

161. Ibid., p. 133.

Columbae 1.45) [162]. In the Life of Fínán of Kinitty (Co. Offaly) the bread is baked in the monastery's *tabernam panium* 'bakehouse' (*Vita Finani* §8) [163].

However much the *laborantes monachi* contributed to the monastic economy, a monastery nevertheless depended on provisioning from the outside. Such supplies are dressed in pastoral language and referred to as *eleemosynae* 'alms'/'offerings' (*Vita Colmani* §§15, 16; *Vita Aidi* §11), and they consist of foodstuffs that were given in return for pastoral ministry (*Vita Aidi* §11) [164]. Offerings of this kind are commented upon in the literature of the *Céli Dé*, mainly in the context of a debate concerning whether or not gifts from the laity are permissible, a debate which is also rehearsed in the *Hibernensis* and occasionally in hagiography (*Vita Albei* §50) [165].

In bringing to a close this discussion of economic regimes on ecclesiastical estates and their spatial division, we may first highlight the persistent ambiguity which has been the hallmark of this investigation from the outset, ambiguity between monks in the strict sense and peasant dependants. Ambiguity can sometimes be deliberate, for example when an ecclesiastical author wishes to show that monks are fulfilling the requirement of labour imposed either by the Benedictine rule or by a non-descript Irish rule. But we also see that authors can choose to be unambiguous, as with the references in Anglo-Saxon hagiography to *fratres* or senior grades performing labour who are monks in the strict sense, or to named individuals (twice) who are peasant dependants charged with minding the livestock of minsters. In Irish hagiography we were able to infer who the peasant dependants were mainly from context, and especially when we were told what their social position was upon entering the estate (e.g. penitent marauders are unlikely to have become committed monks). Further ambiguity can be seen in the use of the expression *minister* which could apply to lowly personnel but also to personal attendants of great abbots. Canon law is more deliberate than hagiography in identifying servile labour, whom it clearly designates *servi*, just as the Anglo-Saxon laws of Whitred and the Canons of Theodo-

162. Eds. ANDERSON and ANDERSON, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* cit. (note 139), pp. 220, 82.

163. Ed. HEIST, *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* cit. (note 55), p.154.

164. Ibid., pp. 214-215, 170-171.

165. Ibid., pp. 129-130; Monastery of Tallaght §§4, 7, 36, 77, ed. GWYNN and PURTON, *Monstery* cit. (note 76), pp. 128, 130, 141, 159; *Hibernensis* 2.22-24, 42.2, ed. WASSERSCHLEBEN, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* cit. (note 30), pp. 18-19, 162.

re, which we saw earlier, are clear about identifying the ecclesiastical *esne* 'servant' or *seruus*.

On the whole, the Irish narrative sources, being richer in detail, are more easily correlated with the archaeology and provide a vivid comple-ment to mute material finds such as watermills and farming implements. The agriculture practiced on ecclesiastical estates was mixed, as confirmed by both hagiography and archaeology, although certain places in Ireland are said to have avoided pastoral agriculture as a matter of ideology. Because of the sporadic nature of the evidence examined here it was impossible to identify clear and consistent patterns of estate division into zones of cereal cultivation and cattle-raising which may correspond to zones of more intensive exploitation of labour and more independent farming, respectively. However, the archaeology of the Irish ecclesiastical sites (except Iona) does suggest that they were provisioned by cattle from places that are likely to have been inhabited by peasants who were more free and had a stronger kin identity, of the kind that we met earlier in the discussion of legal status. In England there are a couple of cases (Eynsham, Ely) in which we appear to have evidence of cereals being cultivated in the inland by peasants who would have been required to labour more intensively. The Irish hagiography mentions provisioning by more independent peasants whose supplies are referred to as *eleemosynae* 'alms'/'offerings'. The terminology suggests that hagiography, like Irish canon law, was casting a reciprocal economic relationship in a pastoral idiom rather than in terms of social obligations determined by rank.

Labour on ecclesiastical estates could be organised (insofar that it was) by the *oeconomus* 'steward' in Ireland and *uilicus* 'reeve' at Whitby. The workforce available on estates might consist of as many as six-hundred *fratres* at Wearmouth-Jarrow, in comparison with the seventeen religious brethren who formed the founding community of St Paul's at Jarrow. How many of these *fratres* were labourers under the direct control of the minster and how many were independent peasants provisioning the minster from their own land is impossible to say. In Ireland, the figures given in hagiographical texts, fifty in one place and one-hundred and fifty in another, relate solely to religious brethren, and may be arbitrary.

This and other comparisons that have been undertaken here between England and Ireland, highlight important similarities between two ecclesiastical cultures which, although not unconnected, were ultimately independent of each other. The centrality of property to the contemporary ecclesiastical discourse permeates all our sources and may go some way towards explaining why the earliest Latin hagiography, much of which

was concerned with asserting property rights, emerged simultaneously in both islands in the second half of the seventh century (these are the Lives of Brigit, Patrick and Wilfrid). However, from that point on, our sources begin to diverge, with a stronger charter tradition developing in England and a more robust normative tradition in Ireland. Nevertheless, the penning of all types of text was entrusted to a clergy seeking ways of staking property claims and couching them in a legal framework. As already observed, the different types of sources that emerged in either place reflected different modes of land control: in England land was transferred to the church primarily by kings, while in Ireland the transfers were made by kin groups, usually through the solemn declaration of the head of the kin who could be (but was not always) a petty king. This may be why the legal and economic position of members of the kin who became ecclesiastical tenants, received more attention from the Irish sources. The connection between kin members and land on Irish proprietary churches is likewise more pervasive, and underlines the challenge of coexistence between kin and servile *manaig*. Ecclesiastical authors responded to this challenge by proposing creative, and sometimes highly elaborate models of a *modus uiuendi* between the different residents on the ecclesiastical estate. Hence the overall tendency to portray a harmonious existence in which all enjoyed (or could enjoy) free status. But incidental information and the occasional contradiction between texts testify to a much more complex and sometimes harsh reality of persistent tension. Anglo-Saxon sources, on the other hand, are much less apologetic about servile status. In a reality in which the conditions under which ecclesiastical peasants lived were more tightly regulated by the terms stipulated in royal charters, there seems to have been less room (and perhaps less need) to seek imaginative ways to safeguard the integrity of the kin groups to which peasant dependants belonged. Royal authority would not have left as much room for manoeuvre and is likely to have overridden any solidarity informed by kin identity. The extent to which we can see any of this played out in the scant material evidence and conjectured spatial divisions of ecclesiastical estates in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England is debatable. However, the divisions within the territories of discrete *túatha* (Brigown, Molaga) in comparison with the exploitation of a distinct body of peasants (West Fen Road) by others who inhabited the nearby minster (Ely) highlight the potential of testing theoretical models in the actual landscape and stress the need for exhaustive insular-wide surveys of spatial divisions of early medieval ecclesiastical estates.