

BASIC TEXTS FOR GAELIC HISTORY

2

CÁIN ADOMNÁIN
and
CANONES ADOMNANI

I

Edited and translated
by
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and
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DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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PREFACE

This series of pamphlets containing editions and translations of important texts for the study of the history of the Gaelic-speaking peoples (the Irish, the Manx after about A.D. 900, and the Gaelic Scots) has been launched to give greater currency to materials prepared for class-use in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic of the University of Cambridge. These are intended as unpretentious editions, giving no more apparatus than is absolutely essential and leaving commentary to be delivered in class. Since a high proportion of these texts is otherwise difficult of access, in editions which are out of print or out of date or without Modern English translations (or suffering from all these defects), it is hoped that this series will prove serviceable also to a wider scholarly community. The series-editor would be grateful to receive any suggestions for improvement of the editions or for additions to the series.

David N. Dumville
Summer 2002

INTRODUCTION

The two texts published in this pamphlet have two features in common. They are both attributed to Adomnán, and they are both legislative texts. The authorship of *Cáin Adomnáin*, ‘The Decree-law of Adomnán’, is quite explicitly stated, and Adomnán is referred to throughout. It is clear that this Adomnán is the abbot of Iona, coarb of St Columba (Colum Cille), who ruled from 679 to 704.¹ External testimony to his promotion of a *cáin* validates this attribution in principle.² On the other hand, the attribution of *Canones Adomnani* rests solely on the rubrics found in the manuscripts of the work,³ and these do not specify which Adomnán was the author. The attribution of authorship of *Cáin* and *Canones* to Adomnán of Iona has at one time or another been challenged, but – as we shall explain, below⁴ – there seem to be sufficient grounds for reasonable confidence that these texts are associable with this Adomnán.

¹For introductory accounts of Adomnán, see *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, edd. & transl. Alan Orr Anderson & M.O. Anderson (2nd edn, Oxford 1991), pp. xxxix-xlii; *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St Columba*, transl. Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth 1995), pp. 43-65; T. O’Loughlin, ‘Adomnán: a man of many parts’, in *Adomnán at Birr, AD 697. Essays in Commemoration of the Law of the Innocents*, ed. Thomas O’Loughlin (Dublin 2001), pp. 41-51; T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000), pp. 282-343, has much which is relevant. On the coarb see J. Barry, ‘The appointment of coarb and erenagh’, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th series, 93 (1960) 361-5, and ‘The status of coarbs and erenaghs’, *ibid.*, 5th series, 94 (1960) 147-53; and Colmán Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland, A.D. 650 to 1000* (Maynooth 1999), pp. 63-104, 455-8. For the evidence from one particularly important church, see H. Pettiau, ‘The officials of the church of Armagh in the early and central Middle Ages, to A.D. 1200’, in *Armagh – History and Society*, edd. A.J. Hughes & W. Nolan (Dublin 2001), pp. 121-86.

²See *The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. David N. Dumville (Cambridge 2002), pp. 64/5 (697.3); cf. pp. 78/9 (727.5).

³See below, pp. xiv-xviii, 3.

⁴See pp. xviii-xxii, xxxii-xxxvii.

Adomnán himself, like most of those who headed the Columban family of churches, was a member of a pre-eminent Irish royal kindred, Uí Néill in Tuaiscirt, the Northern Uí Néill.⁵ Uí Néill as a whole claimed descent from a fifth-century eponym, Niall noígiállach, Niall of the Nine Hostages.⁶ In Adomnán's lifetime, and specifically from 637,⁷ a vigorous propaganda-campaign was being waged by and on behalf of the decidedly impertinent claims of Uí Néill to be overkings of all Ireland.⁸ Adomnán himself contributed to this campaign in his 'Life of St Columba', published in 697×704.⁹ Columba (†597) was a member of Cenél Conaill, one of the principal families of the Northern Uí Néill. Adomnán too was part of Cenél Conaill; and his mother belonged to a lesser family, Cenél nÉndai, of the Southern Uí Néill.¹⁰

Adomnán's name was borne by a number of churchmen of the seventh and eighth centuries. It is a Gaelic name in religion, formed of three elements: *Ad-*, an intensive prefix; *omun*, a noun meaning 'fear'; and *-án*, a diminutive suffix. As an assemblage, it means 'Great little fear': it may indeed be a monastic name, *omun* being religious fear, as defined in

⁵On Uí Néill and their northern branches see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 441-521; cf. pp. 15-36.

⁶Niall is likely to have been a historical figure, but his chronology was adjusted almost beyond recovery already in the early Middle Ages, probably because of the development of the legend of St Patrick. For discussion, see David N. Dumville *et al.*, *Saint Patrick, A.D. 493-1993* (Woodbridge 1993), pp. 45-50, and Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 441-68 (the first full discussion of fifth-century northern Irish chronology).

⁷Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-kings* (2nd edn, Dublin 2001), pp. 112-14, 256-7; cf. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 494-8, 571.

⁸See *The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 46/7 (642.1). For discussion, see Francis John Byrne, *The Rise of the Uí Néill and the High-kingship of Ireland* (Dublin [1970]).

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 494, has denied (ingeniously but unconvincingly) that Adomnán was a propagandist for Uí Néill.

¹⁰*Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Pádraig Ó Riain (Dublin 1985), p. 54 (§340); cf. p. 172 (§722.21) and p. 186 (§733).

Apgitir chrábaid.¹¹ Diminutives, often with hypocoristic force, are widely attested in the christian religious names of the Gaelic world – and indeed of the Insular Celtic world as a whole.¹² There is no reason to think that our Adomnán was the first to bear this name; and, in as much as he came to be culted as a saint, it was natural that others should be named after him. His cult is particularly associated with the church of Raymachy or Raymochy (Old-Irish *Rath Maige Oenaig*), later Raphoe (Old-Irish *Rathboth*), Co. Donegal, in the territory of his family, Cenél mBóguini: in 731 a bishop of that church was called Adomnán.¹³ The Northumbrian English writer Bede (†735), in his ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English People’, published in 731, gave an account of an Adomnán, a (presumably Gaelic) ascetic at Coldingham (Berwickshire), a Northumbrian double-monastery which was destroyed by fire, perhaps in the 680s.¹⁴

¹¹K. Meyer, ‘Zur keltischen Wortkunde. VII. §131. Ir. *Adomnan* n. pr. m.’, *Sitzungsberichte der koeniglich-preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1917) 624, reporting the non-diminutive form *Adomnae* and another diminutive, *Adomnin*. There is no connexion with *Adam*. Cf. P. Grosjean, ‘Notes d’hagiographie celtique, 48. Les noms d’Adomnán et de Bréndán’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 78 (1960) 375-81. On the larger system of pet-forms in Gaelic names, see K. Meyer, ‘Zur keltischen Wortkunde. II. §33. Die Koseformen irischer Personennamen’, *Sitzungsberichte der koeniglich-preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1912) 1147-50. See further P. Russell, ‘Patterns of hypocorism in early Irish hagiography’, in *Studies in Irish Hagiography. Saints and Scholars*, edd. John Carey et al. (Dublin 2001), pp. 237-49. For religious *omun*, see V. Hull, ‘Apgitir chrábaid: The Alphabet of Piety’, *Celtica* 8 (1968) 44-89.

¹²On Insular Celtic ecclesiastical hypocorism, see R. Thurneysen, ‘Zur Namentypus Abret. *To-Woedoc*, Air. *Do-Dimoc*’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 19 (1931-3) 354-67; H. Lewis, ‘The honorific prefixes *to-* and *mo-*’, *ibid.*, 20 (1933-6) 138-43; H.D. Emanuel, ‘A double-name formula in Welsh “saints’ Lives”’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 21 (1964-6) 133-5.

¹³*The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 82/3 (731.8b). For further mentions of Raphoe, see *Annala Uladh – Annals of Ulster*, edd. & transl. William M. Hennessy & B. MacCarthy (4 vols, Dublin 1887-1901), IV.306.

¹⁴IV.25 (23): *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, edd. & transl. Bertram Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969), pp. 420-7. The origin of this Adomnán is an interesting question: he

Adomnán of Iona was probably born in the later 620s. It is not known when he became a monk or when he joined the community of Iona. One may suppose that he held senior positions in the Columban Church in the 660s and 670s before becoming the heir of the saint, and therefore abbot of Iona, in 679, probably in his early fifties.¹⁵ In his major literary work, the tripartite *Vita Sancti Columbae*, Adomnán referred to his interaction with his predecessor as abbot of Iona, Fáilbe (669-79).¹⁶ Adomnán may have been the house's annalist in the 670s and even later.¹⁷

A great deal of work has been devoted over the last twenty years to Adomnán's two principal literary works, the 'Life of St Columba'¹⁸ and his earlier *De locis sanctis*, a treatise on the biblical holy places.¹⁹ This scholarship has built on the new editions (with facing

can perhaps be held to have been a long-term resident of Northumbria. Otherwise, his story would require him to be a resident of British Dál Riata.

¹⁵Cf. P. Ó Riain, 'Adomnán's age at death: fact or symbol?', *Studia Celtica Japonica*, new series, 5 (1992) 7-17.

¹⁶Socii Bollandiani, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina Antiquae et Mediae Aetatis* (2 vols, Bruxelles 1898-1901), I.284-5, no. 1886; Michael Lapidge & R. Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature, 400-1200* (Dublin 1985), p. 86, no. 305; Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout 1997), p. 25, no. 49; Eligius Dekkers & A. Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (3rd edn, Steenbrugge 1995), p. 370, no. 1134. On the specific point see I.1: *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, edd. & transl. Anderson & Anderson, pp. 14-17. For discussion, see Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry. The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford 1988), pp. 47-8; *Adomnán of Iona*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 44-6.

¹⁷Cf. Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London 1972), p. 118.

¹⁸See especially J.-M. Picard, 'The purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae*', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 160-77, and 'Bede, Adomnán and the writing of history', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 50-70.

¹⁹T. O'Loughlin, 'The exegetical purpose of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 24 (1992) 37-53; 'The library of Iona in the late seventh century: the evidence from Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*', *Ériu* 45 (1994) 33-52; 'Adomnán the illustrious', *Innes Review* 46 (1995) 1-14; 'The view from Iona: Adomnán's mental maps', *Peritia* 10 (1996) 98-122; 'Living in the Ocean: the significance of the Patristic understanding of *oceanus* for writings from Iona', in *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Dublin 1997), pp. 11-23; 'Res, tempus, locus,

translations) of these texts, published in 1958 and 1961.²⁰ More recently, a new bilingual edition of the Life (1991) and a separate translation (1995) have made that text yet more readily accessible.²¹ Adomnán's knowledge and use of Latin have been studied,²² as have his reading, his methods of exegesis, his knowledge of the bible, his purposes in writing, and the literary skills which he deployed.²³ The result has been a great increase in knowledge and appreciation of Adomnán's qualities. A major study has placed Adomnán in his historical context, both generally in Gaelic history and specifically in regard to the Columban Church.²⁴ Historians of early Anglo-Saxon England have had regard to Adomnán's relationships with Northumbrian politics, both secular and ecclesiastical, noting his interaction with King Aldfrith and with Ceolfrith, abbot of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, his two (or three) visits to

persona: Adomnán's exegetical method, *Innes Review* 48 (1997) 95-111; 'Adomnán and Arculf: the case of an expert witness', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 7 (1997) 127-46; 'The Salzburg fragment of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*', *Manuscripta* 41 (1997) 32-7; 'Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*: a textual emendation and an additional source identification', *Ériu* 48 (1997) 37-40; 'Palestine in the aftermath of the Arab conquest: the earliest Latin account', *Studies in Church History* 36 (2000) 78-89; 'The diffusion of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*', *Ériu* 51 (2000) 93-106; 'The tombs of the saints: their significance for Adomnán', in *Studies in Irish Hagiography*, edd. Carey et al., pp. 1-14.

²⁰ *Adamnan's De locis sanctis*, edd. & transll. Denis Meehan & L. Bieler (Dublin 1958); *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, edd. & transll. Alan Orr Anderson & M.O. Anderson (Edinburgh 1961).

²¹ *Adomnán's Life*, edd. & transll. Anderson & Anderson (see n. 1, above); *Adomnán of Iona*, transl. Sharpe. Cf. T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'The new edition of Adomnán's *Life of Columba*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 26 (1993) 65-73.

²² J.-M. Picard, 'The Schaffhausen Adomnán – a unique witness to Hiberno-Latin', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 216-49; 'The metrical prose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*: an un[us]ual system', in *Ireland and Europe: the Early Church*, edd. Próinséas Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Stuttgart 1984), pp. 258-71; A. Harvey, 'Retrieving the pronunciation of early Insular Celtic scribes', *Celtica* 21 (1990) 178-90 and 22 (1991) 48-63; J.-M. Picard, 'Les celticismes des hagiographes irlandais du VIIe siècle', *Études celtiques* 29 (1992) 355-73.

²³ For work on *Cáin Adomnáin*, see below, pp. xxiv-xxxvii.

²⁴ Herbert, *Iona* (see n. 16, above).

Northumbria, and his role in the Insular paschal controversy.²⁵ In sum, Adomnán has emerged more clearly than ever as an ecclesiastic of significant learning, as a politician, as an administrator, and as an international figure.

All this has raised questions about his early ecclesiastical training. He may have resided at Iona for merely a few years or rather for many years before becoming abbot in 679 and thus achieving prominence in our sources.²⁶ Wherever he studied, that house (or those houses) must have possessed significant library-resources, and Adomnán must have proved adept in both scholarly and practical matters. Since the conventions of Iona's house-chronicle seem to have excluded record of the activities of lesser officials than abbots (and sometimes bishops) of Iona and of the priors of its dependent houses across Britain and Ireland,²⁷ no formal historical notices of Adomnán's first five decades exist.

Some uncertainties in his career as an author remain. Aside from the doubts – already mentioned²⁸ – about the authorship of *Canones Adomnani*, it remains unclear whether or not he was the author of a commentary on the minor works of the Classical Latin poet Vergil.²⁹

²⁵D.A. Bullough, 'Columba, Adomnan and the achievement of Iona', *Scottish Historical Review* 43 (1964) 111-30 and 44 (1965) 17-33, and 'The missions to the English and Picts and their heritage (to c. 800)', in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. Heinz Löwe (2 vols, Stuttgart 1982), I.80-98; H. Moisl, 'The Bernician royal dynasty and the Irish in the seventh century', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 103-26; E. James, 'Bede and the tonsure question', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 85-98; J. Campbell, 'The debt of the early English Church to Ireland', in *Ireland and Christendom. The Bible and the Missions*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Stuttgart 1987), pp. 332-46; D.N. Dumville, 'Derry, Iona, England, and the governance of the Columban Church', in *Derry and Londonderry – History and Society*, ed. Gerard O'Brien (Dublin 1999), pp. 91-114.

²⁶*Adomnan's Life*, ed. & transll. Anderson & Anderson (see n. 20, above), p. 93; Herbert, *Iona*, p. 47.

²⁷Dumville, 'Derry', pp. 99-104.

²⁸See above, p. v.

²⁹James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical. An Introduction and Guide* (New York 1929; rev. imp., by L. Bieler, 1966), pp. 286-7 (no. 113). For some (often confused) probing of this material, see David Charles Campbell Daintree, 'Explanatio in Bucolica: a New Edition of an Early Medieval Scholar's Notes on the *Eclogues* of Vergil' (unpublished M.Litt.

A vernacular poem on a reliquary is attributed to him, but whether or not to accept that ascription remains a matter of debate.³⁰ This last point serves to remind us that Iona was a

dissertation, University of Cambridge 1983). Cf. M.W. Herren, 'Literary and glossarial evidence for the study of Classical mythology in Ireland, A.D. 600-800', in *Text and Gloss: Studies in Insular Learning and Literature presented to Joseph Donovan Pheifer*, edd. Helen Conrad O'Briain et al. (Dublin 1999), pp. 49-67.

³⁰L. Gwynn, 'The Reliquary of Adomnán', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th series, 4 (1914) 457-62, and (ed. & transl.) 'The Reliquary of Adamnan', *Archivium Hibernicum* 4 (1915) 199-214; J. Carney (ed. & transl.), 'A macuccáin, sruith in tiag', *Celtica* 15 (1983) 25-41, and 'The dating of early Irish verse texts, 500-1100', *Éigse* 19 (1982/3) 177-216. This poem is found in 'The Book of Leinster' (second half of the twelfth century), facs. p. 370d – see *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, edd. R.I. Best et al. (6 vols, Dublin 1954-83), VI.1684-6 – and in London, British Library, MS. Harley 5280, folio 42r (early sixteenth century). For the latter see Robin Flower, *apud* Standish Hayes O'Grady et al., *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum* (3 vols, London 1926-53), II.312-13. In neither of these manuscripts is there any other associated text concerned with Adomnán. Both Gwynn and Carney also claimed to have taken account of the evidence of an early seventeenth-century manuscript in Brussels. Gwynn used a nineteenth-century transcript in Dublin. Carney identified the manuscript as Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale, MS. 4190-4200 (3409), folios 31v-32r (in fact 31r/v), which he described as a copy made by Brother Michél Ó Cléirigh, O.F.M., from 'The Book of Leinster' in 1629. However, the Royal Library contains two copies of this poem. In MS. 4190-4200 (3409), this poem introduces a collection of texts about Adomnán which occupy folios 31-46 and were drawn from a number of different sources in 1628/9: a note on 31v is reported as saying that the poem was transcribed from an old, blackened parchment manuscript, which would not be an accurate description of this part of 'The Book of Leinster'. In MS. 2324-2340 (3410), folios 76r-83r, we find another collection of texts (made in 1627) concerning Adomnán, here comprising *Cáin Adomnáin* and (on 83r) the poem on the reliquary. *Cáin Adomnáin* was drawn ultimately from an 'old book of Raphoe' (see below, pp. xxxvii-xxxix): could that have been the source for this copy of the poem too? In any event, both Brussels copies need to be taken into account next time the poem is studied. Both have the prose introduction found in 'The Book of Leinster' but not in MS. Harley 5280. See J. van den Gheyn et al., *Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique* (13 vols, Bruxelles 1901-48), V.382, 386-7. On MS. 4190-4200 (3409), see also *Betha Adamnain: The Irish Life of Adamnán*, edd. & transll. Máire Herbert & P. Ó Riain (London 1988), p. vii.

centre of both Latin and vernacular poetic composition in Adomnán's lifetime.³¹ The texts presented in this pamphlet may be taken as representatives of the more discutable texts of that period and also as indicators of how important legal studies probably were at Iona. We should remember that one of the alleged compilers of the great Gaelic canon-law collection of the early Middle Ages,³² Cú Chuimne (†747), was a monk of Iona.³³ That text is in Latin, but *Cáin Adomnáin*, as a law-text affecting the whole population, is in the vernacular.³⁴ It is worth remembering also that 'The Chronicle of Iona' was effectively a bilingual work.³⁵

³¹See *Iona. The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery*, edd. & transl. Thomas Owen Clancy & G. Márkus (Edinburgh 1995).

³²*Collectio canonum hibernensis*: see *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, ed. Herrmann Wasserschleben (2nd edn, Leipzig 1885). There is no translation.

³³For discussion of the alleged role of Ruben and Cú Chuimne, see D.N. Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany, and England: transmission and use of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*', in *Irlande et Bretagne. Vingt siècles d'histoire*, edd. Catherine Laurent & H. Davis (Rennes 1994), pp. 88-95; T.M. Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer* (Cambridge 1999), p. 19, and 'The construction of the *Hibernensis*', *Peritia* 12 (1998) 209-37. There is a fundamentally misguided discussion by B. Jaski, 'Cú Chuimne, Ruben and the compilation of the *Collectio canonum hibernensis*', *Peritia* 14 (2000) 51-69. On Cú Chuimne see further *The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 92/3 (747.5). In Recension 2, a poem attributed to his foster-mother has been added: *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, I, edd. & transl. Seán Mac Airt & G. Mac Niocaill (Dublin 1983), pp. 200/1; cf. J.V. Kelleher, *An Teangadóir* (Toronto) 2 (1954/5) 39, and Kathleen Hughes, 'The Church and the world in early christian Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies* 13 (1962/3) 99-113, at p. 109, reprinted in her book *Church and Society in Ireland, A.D. 400-1200* (London 1987), essay VIII.

³⁴On early mediaeval Irish law and its literature, see Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin 1988); Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*.

³⁵Cf. David N. Dumville, 'Latin and Irish in the *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 431-1050', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe. Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, edd. Dorothy Whitelock et al. (Cambridge 1982), pp. 320-41, reprinted in his book *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot 1990), essay XVII.

Finally, it should be said that there are rich materials for a study of the literary history of Adomnán in Gaelic vernacular texts. That is beyond the scope of this introduction, but it is a subject well deserving of investigation.

CANONES ADOMNANI

This brief Latin text is legislative and regulatory. It makes a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘bestial men’ or ‘unclean men’.³⁶ It was certainly directed to an ecclesiastical audience – that it is in Latin effectively ensured that – and quite possibly a monastic one. The writer’s concern is with clean and unclean food, with what is carrion, with the importance of an animal’s having been bled. The spirit of the work is accordingly conditioned by the Old Testament and in particular its legal books.³⁷ (There are places in Adomnán’s ‘Life of St Columba’ where the same concern with Old-Testament law can be found.)³⁸ The text was

³⁶For *bestiales homines*, see §§4 and 18; for *imundi homines*, see §11.

³⁷For the Old Testament in mediaeval life and thought, see especially Raymund Kottje, *Studien zum Einfluss des alten Testaments auf Recht und Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters (6.-8. Jahrhundert)* (Bonn 1964) – p. 12 on *Canones Adomnani* – and Johan Chydenius, *Medieval Institutions and the Old Testament* (Helsinki 1965). See also R. Kottje, ‘Der *Liber ex lege Moysis*’, in *Ireland and Christendom*, edd. Ní Chatháin & Richter, pp. 59-69 – for a systematic analysis of the still unpublished text of this *Liber*, see Leslie Hardinge, *The Celtic Church in Britain* (London 1972), pp. 209-16 (cf. 50-1, 99-100, 161-3, 169-70, 173-7, 197-9, 202-3) –, and D. Ó Corráin, ‘Irish vernacular law and the Old Testament’, in *Ireland and Christendom*, edd. Ní Chatháin & Richter, pp. 284-307. More recently, there has been a flood of publications: for example, R. Meens, ‘Pollution in the early Middle Ages: the case of the food regulations in penitentials’, *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995) 3-19; M.W. Herren, ‘The “judaizing tendencies” of the early Irish Church’, *Filologia mediolatina* 3 (1996) 73-80; B. Jaski, ‘Early medieval Irish kingship and the Old Testament’, *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998) 329-44; R. Meens, ‘The uses of the Old Testament in early medieval canon law. The *Collectio vetus gallica* and the *Collectio hibernensis*’, in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, edd. Yitzhak Hen & M. Innes (Cambridge 2000), pp. 67-77.

³⁸For example, I.1: see *Adomnán’s Life*, edd. & transl. Anderson & Anderson, pp. 16/17 and n. 14.

therefore conceived as a guide to the principles of Jewish alimentary regulation and as a statement of solutions of particular problems.

In places the text is corrupt because badly transmitted. This has much to do with the distance in time and space between the presumed date and location of composition of the text and those of the manuscripts. We know of six witnesses to the text of *Canones Adomnani*. All are Breton.³⁹ They range in suggested date from the ninth century to the eleventh. We have given them the sigla A, Ba (Bieler's B²), Bc (Bieler's B³), Bp (Bieler's B¹), C, H, O, P.

A Orléans, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 221 (193)

This was written by a Breton scribe Iunobrus whose colophon is on p. 212. It contains glosses in Old Breton.⁴⁰ It presents a substantial linguistic and palaeographical problem: suggested dates range from about 800 to the first half of the eleventh century.⁴¹ The manuscript's principal content is Recension A of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*.⁴² Its early modern provenance is Fleury (Saint-Benoît-sur-

³⁹For the Breton dimension of the transmission of early mediaeval Insular Latin texts, see Henry Bradshaw, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge 1889), pp. 410-20, 452-88; cf. Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany, and England'.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 89 (notes on p. 94); Léon Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire des gloses en Vieux Breton* (Paris 1964), p. 4 (no. 3), attributing the glosses to the mid-ninth century. Charles Cuissard, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France, Départements*, XII, Orléans (Paris 1891), pp. 114-15, dated it *saec.* ix/x. Cf. Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, pp. 412, 414 (no. 10), 482, 487 (no. 6).

⁴¹For the date '*saec.* viii/ix' see W.M. Lindsay, *Notae Latinae* (Cambridge 1915), p. 470, and *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Ludwig Bieler & D.A. Binchy (Dublin 1963), p. 12; Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh 1953), p. 65, and *A Historical Phonology of Breton* (Dublin 1967), p. xxxv; J.-L. Deuffic, 'La production manuscrite des scriptoria bretons (VIIIe-XIe siècles)', in *Landévennec et le monachisme breton dans le haut moyen âge*, ed. Marc Simon (Landévennec 1986), pp. 289-321, at p. 304 (no. 58). See also *Catalogue des manuscrits en écriture latine portant des indications de date, de lieu ou de copiste*, edd. Charles Samaran & R. Marichal (7 vols in 14, Paris 1959-84), VII, pt 1, p. 491, for the date *saec.* ix¹.

⁴²*Die irische Kanonensammlung*, ed. Wasserschleben.

Loire).⁴³ The manuscript contains *Canones Adomnani*, §§1-7, followed by an unrelated paragraph, on p. 212.

B Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. latin 3182

This was written by a Breton scribe Maeloc and contains glosses in Old Breton.⁴⁴ Its mediaeval provenance is Fécamp (Normandy).⁴⁵ Suggested dates range from the early tenth to the eleventh century: the earliest is the most probable. It is a manuscript of some 356 pages (178 folios) containing a wide range of canon-law texts and with a strong Insular bias.⁴⁶ It derives from three collections attested in other Breton manuscripts, notably those which contain our A, C, and P.

Ba This (pp. 1-164) is a collection like that of A. *Canones Adomnani*, §§1-7, followed by the same unrelated paragraph as in A, occur on p. 164.

Bc This (pp. 184-356) is a collection like that of C. *Canones Adomnani*, §§19-20, occur on p. 283, introduced by a special rubric.

⁴³*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, p. 12; Marco Mostert, *The Library of Fleury. A Provisional List of Manuscripts* (Hilversum 1989), p. 155 (no. BF 697), dating the manuscript *saec.* ix *in.* after Bischoff.

⁴⁴Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, p. 6 (no. 27). For a reproduction of p. 281 see *Medieval Handbooks of Penance. A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents*, transll. John T. McNeill & H.M. Gamer (New York 1938), opposite p. 62. See further Deuffic, 'La production', p. 309 (no. 77).

⁴⁵*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, p. 12; cf. Geneviève Nortier, *Les Bibliothèques médiévales des abbayes bénédictines de Normandie* (2nd edn, Paris 1971), pp. 26 and 205 (eleventh-century date; given to Fécamp in the twelfth century); Philippe Lauer *et al.*, *Bibliothèque nationale, Catalogue general des manuscrits latins* (Paris 1939-), IV.304-17, dated the manuscript *saec.* ix/x.

⁴⁶See the table in *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 21-2. The late date (eleventh century) derives from Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, pp. 414 (no. 4), 473-4, 487 (no. 7).

- Bp** This (pp. 164-83) is a collection like that of P, folios 127v-139v. A full text of *Canones Adomnani*, albeit without the title found in P, occurs on pp. 173-5.⁴⁷
- C** Cambrai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS. 625 (576)
- This is a Breton manuscript written in the late ninth century.⁴⁸ It is now incomplete at the end, breaking off in a copy of *Pactus legis salicae*. The principal content of the manuscript is *Collectio Dionysio-Hadriana. Canones Adomnani*, §§19-20, introduced by a special rubric,⁴⁹ occur on folio 54v. The manuscript's mediaeval provenance is Cambrai Cathedral.⁵⁰
- H** Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Hatton 42 (S.C. 4117), part 1 (= folios 1-141)
- This is a Breton manuscript of perhaps the middle of the ninth century, whose principal content is Recension B of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*. It contains

⁴⁷When this was first encountered by scholars (see below, n. 72), it was attributed to Theodore of Canterbury, because his *Iudicia (Capitula Dacheriana)* immediately preceded it in the manuscript.

⁴⁸Denis Muzerelle *et al.*, *Manuscrits datés des bibliothèques de France*, I, Cambrai (Paris 2000), p. 84, have dated the manuscript to the second half of the ninth century; for a more precise suggestion, see Bernhard Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)* (Wiesbaden 1998-), I.177 (no. 805): 'Bretagne, IX Jh., gegen Ende'; *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 13, 22; Auguste Molinier, *Catalogue général des manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France, Départements*, XVII, Cambrai (Paris 1891), pp. 242-4. Cf. Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, p. 415 (no. 13), who thought it French, not Breton, presumably because of the absence of Old-Breton glosses. For a Breton name on 20r, see L. Lemoine, 'Contribution à la reconstitution des scriptoria bretons du haut moyen âge', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Bulletin du Cange* 59 (2001) 261-8, at p. 262.

⁴⁹See below, p. 15, n. 201.

⁵⁰Molinier, *Catalogue*, XVII.244; *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, p. 13.

glosses in Old Breton.⁵¹ Its tenth-century provenance is southern England.⁵² *Canones Adomnani* occur on folios 132v-133v.

O London, British Library, MS. Cotton Otho E.xiii

This is a Breton manuscript of the early tenth century. It contains glosses in Old Breton.⁵³ It was damaged in the Cottonian-Library fire in 1731. The principal content is Recension C of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*.⁵⁴ Already in the tenth century the manuscript had come to England, where its provenance was St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury.⁵⁵ From this an English origin about A.D. 1000 was once mistakenly deduced, a pair of errors which have been much repeated.⁵⁶ *Canones Adomnani* occur on folios 141v-143v.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, giving the date 'saec. ix²' following R.W. Hunt *et al.*, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford* (7 vols in 8, Oxford 1895-1953; rev. imp., München 1980), II, pt 2, pp. 848-9. Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, p. 414 (no. 11), 471-2, 487 (no. 3), had dated it saec. ix/x. For an earlier date, saec. ix¹/₃, probably deriving from Bernhard Bischoff, see Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts. A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments written or owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ 2001), p. 100, no. 629. For the Breton glosses, see Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, p. 5 (no. 15); cf. Deuffic, 'La production', pp. 307-8 (no. 69). On glossing, see further *The Cambridge Juvencus Manuscript glossed in Latin, Old Welsh, and Old Irish. Text and Commentary*, ed. Helen McKee (Aberystwyth 2000), pp. 20-3.

⁵²Gneuss, *Handlist*, p. 100; cf. D.N. Dumville, 'Wulftric cild', *Notes and Queries* 238 (new series, 40) (1993) 5-9.

⁵³For the date see *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 14, 24, 25-6. For the glosses, see Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, p. 6 (no. 21). Cf. Deuffic, 'La production', p. 301 (no. 42).

⁵⁴On the text of the *Hibernensis*, cf. Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany, and England', p. 89 (and n. 50 on pp. 94-5).

⁵⁵N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain. A List of Surviving Books* (2nd edn, London 1964), p. 43; cf. *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, ed. Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge 1903), pp. 265 and 517 (no. 641).

⁵⁶Cf. H. Gneuss, 'A preliminary list of manuscripts written or owned in England up to 1100', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981) 1-60, at p. 25, no. 361, and the corrected entry in *Handlist*, p. 67, no. 361, giving a date of origin as 'saec. ix/x or x in.'. The date of origin in saec. x/xi derives from

P Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. latin 12021

This is a Breton manuscript of the early tenth century. It contains glosses in Old Breton.⁵⁷ Its principal content is Recension A of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*. According to a colophon on folio 139r, it was written by a scribe Arbedoc for Abbot Hael-Hucar. Its mediaeval provenance was Corbie Abbey in Picardy.⁵⁸ In the seventeenth century this book belonged to the Maurist abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris.⁵⁹ *Canones Adomnani* occur on folios 132v-133v.

It is likely (but has not yet been demonstrated) that these witnesses derive from a single archetype, perhaps itself a Breton manuscript. The state of the text suggests that the archetype already stood at some remove from the original.

Only Bp, H, O, and P are complete texts of *Canones Adomnani*. A and Ba represent only §§1-7; Bc and C represent only §§19-20. The latter are perhaps an extract attached to a larger canon-collection based on *Paenitentiale Bigottianum* but which has not, as far as we know, been studied fully.⁶⁰

The question of authorship has already been raised as an aspect of a more general problem concerning texts attributed to Adomnán.⁶¹ Closer consideration of *Canones Adomnani* themselves points up some further problems. The author (if indeed singular) includes himself among 'we' in a number of canons: §§1, 10, 12, 16, 20 (twice). On the other hand, towards the end of the text (§§16-20) we find third-person references to an

Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, pp. 414 (no. 7), 475-6, 487 (no. 8), who however was the first to identify it as Breton.

⁵⁷*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, p. 14; on the glosses, see Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, p. 5 (no. 11). Cf. Deuffic, 'La production', pp. 311-12 (no. 86). Bradshaw, *Collected Papers*, pp. 414 (no. 3), 473, 487 (no. 5), dated it *saec.* ix or ix/x.

⁵⁸*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, p. 14.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶¹See above, pp. v-xiii.

authority-figure: ‘the same man explained’ (§16), ‘the same man firmly holds’ (§17), ‘In like manner he forbids’ (§19), ‘Likewise he also forbids’ (§20). It is to be noted that the statements including ‘we’ overlap (in §§16, 20) with those involving explicit references to an authority-figure. The third-person references have been taken as indicators that at the very least Adomnán cannot have been the direct author of the text: his disciples might be thought of as transmitting his views.⁶² Within the Insular context we could compare the texts transmitting the views of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury 668-90,⁶³ or the culdees’ consuetudinal texts reporting especially the practices and opinions of the monastery of Tallaght (Co. Dublin) in the time of its founder, Bishop Mael Ruain (†792).⁶⁴

The references to an authority follow a clause (§14) which twice mentions God (*Dominus*) as prohibiting certain practices and ends by quoting the Law (*Lex*). It should be considered whether the continuing indications of authority (*idem interpretaatus est; idem confirmat; simili modo prohibet; similiter et ... uetat*) refer likewise to the Law and thus to God.

Another approach may be to consider whether the text is a unity. §§16-20, containing the third-person references, conclude *Canones Adomnani* as transmitted. One might argue that this is a supplement to an original collection comprising §§1-15. The obvious problem is the continuity of use of ‘we’, in §§16 and 20, from the first three quarters of the text. An argument for division of the text therefore seems hard to sustain. It is perhaps better to

⁶²*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 253-4; cf. p. 9.

⁶³*Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, edd. & transll. Bernhard Bischoff & M. Lapidge (Cambridge 1994); cf. *Archbishop Theodore. Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Cambridge 1995); *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen*, ed. Paul Willem Finsterwalder (Weimar 1929).

⁶⁴E.J. Gwynn & W.J. Purton (edd. & transll.), ‘The Monastery of Tallaght’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 29C (1911/12) 115-79; *The Rule of Tallaght*, ed. & transl. Edward Gwynn (Dublin 1927). For recent discussion, see David N. Dumville, *Ireland’s Desert Fathers, the Culdees. An Introduction* (Cambridge 2003).

consider that the third-person statements have been misunderstood: at the very least, they need more study.

The sources of *Canones Adomnani*, as far as they have been identified, are all books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Ecclesiasticus.⁶⁵ The reference to *Lex metrica scriptione scripta* (§14), where Genesis IX.4 is the obvious comparandum, raises questions about the nature of our author's knowledge of the form of biblical text. Ludwig Bieler's comment is worth quoting:⁶⁶

The words *lex metrica scriptione scripta* can mean only one thing: that the passage referred to was written in verse in the Hebrew Old Testament. The fact that certain portions of the Old Testament were versified was known from St. Jerome However, ... none of the biblical passages in which this law is laid down is written in verse. The first reference to it, Gen. ix. 4, does stand in close vicinity to a versified passage (Gen. ix. 6); confusion of the two verses might thus account for the slightly inaccurate statement of our canon. On what authority an Irish writer of the period could have stated that a particular verse of the Old Testament was metrical we do not know. The knowledge of Hebrew in the Irish schools appears to have been slight; it was derived mainly from such secondary sources as the *Interpretationes* and *Commentarii* of St. Jerome; and a Latin, or even a Greek, text of Genesis distinguishing between verse and prose sections of the original would, to my knowledge, be unparalleled.

In the context of recent suggestions that Hebrew may have been much better known to scholars in the early mediaeval Insular Churches,⁶⁷ it is worth pondering whether *Canones Adomnani* may offer evidence in support of that view and point to Iona (and even to Adomnán) as a locus of the study of Hebrew.

⁶⁵The Old-Testament sources identified by Bieler are as follows: Exodus XXI.29 and 36 (for §7), Leviticus XI.36 (for §9); Genesis IX.4, Leviticus XVII.10-14, and Deuteronomy XII.16 and 23 (for §14); Genesis IX.4 and Leviticus V.2 and XVII.15 (also for §14); Ecclesiasticus XXXIV.23 (for §15); Leviticus XVII.14 and Deuteronomy XII.16 and 23 (for §20); Leviticus VII.24 (also for §20). See *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 176, 178, 180.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 253 (n. 2 on *Canones Adomnani*).

⁶⁷D. Howlett, 'Israelite learning in Insular Latin', *Peritia* 11 (1997) 117-52, and 'More Israelite learning in Insular Latin', *Peritia* 13 (1999) 135-41.

The text may be searched for suggestions as to where it was written. That the first clause is concerned with marine creatures cast up dead on the shore might hint that the writer's and audience's environment was coastal, even insular. One could embrace Iona thus! That §1 is consistent with the doctrine preached in §3 seems far from clear, however. If creatures which have died in water, not losing their blood in dying, are to be rejected as carrion, how can dead sea-creatures, 'the nature of whose death we do not know', be taken for food? The criterion enunciated in §1 is 'good faith', *sana fide*. That recurs in §6: a pig which has consumed carrion may itself be eaten *sana fide* once it has passed this from its system. There is suspicion of more than a hint of casuistry once these passages have been compared. We should also note §10, 'Anything which is contaminated by a cow is to be taken with a clear conscience (*sana conscientia*)': an argument in justification is by reference to 'the delicate conscience of the brethren' (*infirmas fratrum conscientias*) compromised with a requirement for cooking before eating. Again, much remains to be done in seeking to understand the thought of the author(s).

A last question pertains both to sources and to the ecclesiastical milieu in which this text took shape. One of the most troublesome passages in *Canones Adomnani* is found in §16, a section on remarriage.⁶⁸ 'Unde nescimus illam auctoritatem quam *legimus in questionibus Romanorum* utrum idoneis testibus an falsis ornatam fuisse'. Who were these *Romani* and what were their *quaestiones* read by our author(s)? In the context of a work

⁶⁸For various Gaelic ecclesiastical views on marriage and divorce, see D. Ó Corráin, 'Women in early Irish society', in *Women in Irish Society. The Historical Dimension*, edd. Margaret MacCurtain & D. Ó Corráin (Dublin 1978), pp. 1-13; 'Irish law and canon law', in *Ireland and Europe. The Early Church*, edd. Ní Chatháin & Richter, pp. 157-66. See further T. O'Loughlin, 'Marriage and sexuality in the *Hibernensis*', *Peritia* 11 (1997) 188-206; A. Tatsuki, 'The Early Irish Church and marriage: an analysis of the *Hibernensis*', *Peritia* 15 (2001) 195-207.

attributed to Adomnán, scholars have naturally thought of the parties to the paschal controversy with all its further ramifications.⁶⁹ Bieler's comment is apposite:⁷⁰

I have translated, to the best of my ability, the Latin text as printed, but I gravely doubt whether the latter is correct. Should we perhaps read: 'Unde n<o>scimus illam auctoritatem quam legimus in questionibus Romanorum "Utrum idoneis testibus an falsis" orta<m> fuisse'?

In the text and translation printed below, we have retained the readings of Bieler's edition in respect of this sentence. However, there is much to be said for his conjectural reinterpretation, which can be translated thus: 'On that account we recognise the verdict which we read in "Questions of the Romans", *Utrum idoneis testibus an falsis*, "Whether by acceptable or by false witnesses", to have arisen'. In other words, this is a reference to and acceptance of a section of *Questiones Romanorum* quoted by its opening words.⁷¹

Canones Adomnani have been printed a number of times – first (and partially: §§1-7, 19-20, from Ba and Bc) by the Maurist scholars Edmond Martène and U. Durand in 1717; secondly, in 1723 in his and others' revision of Luc d'Achéry's *Spicilegium*, where they were taken from the titleless P and attributed to Archbishop Theodore;⁷² Mansi reprinted the texts

⁶⁹On *Romani* in the context of the Insular paschal controversy, see P. Grosjean, 'Recherches sur les débuts de la controverse paschale chez les Celtes', *Analecta Bollandiana* 64 (1946) 200-44; Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, pp. 103-33 (cf. 47-9); P. Ó Néill, 'Romani influences on seventh-century Hiberno-Latin literature', in *Ireland and Europe. The Early Church*, edd. Ni Chatháin & Richter, pp. 280-90. Cf., however, R. Sharpe, 'An Irish textual critic and the *Carmen paschale* of Sedulius: Colmán's letter to Feradach', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 2 (1992) 44-54.

⁷⁰*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transll. Bieler & Binchy, p. 254 (n. 6 on *Canones Adomnani*). We have changed the punctuation and the editorial conventions of the second quoted sentence.

⁷¹Was this work a source of *Collectio canonum hibernensis*?

⁷²*Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, edd. Edmundus Martène & U. Durand (5 vols, Paris 1717), IV, cols 18-19 (*Incipiunt Canones Adomnani*: §§1-7 and *Equus*), and col. 11 (*Item Adomnani*: §§19-20); *Spicilegium sive Collectio Veterum Scriptorum qui in Galliae Bibliothecis delituerant*, ed. Luc d'Achéry (2nd edn, revised by S. Baluze et al., 3 vols, Paris 1723), I.490-1 (the whole text, but as Theodore, §§CXLIX-CLXVIII). In the first edition of this work, *Veterum aliquot Scriptorum qui in Galliae Bibliothecis, maxime Benedictinorum latuerant, Spicilegium*, ed. Luc d'Achéry (13 vols, Paris

of 1717 and 1723 in 1766;⁷³ thirdly, in the first critical edition (from Bp and P), by Herrmann Wassersleben in 1851;⁷⁴ Migne reprinted texts from Martène and Mansi in 1850 and 1851;⁷⁵ Joseph Robertson in 1866⁷⁶ and A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs in 1873⁷⁷ gave half-heartedly constructed texts; Ludwig Bieler in 1963 presented the first edition and translation based on all the known witnesses.⁷⁸ The only previous translation is that of J.T. McNeill and H.M. Gamer, published in 1938.⁷⁹

The present text and translation are unpretentious derivatives of Bieler's. We have introduced changes where we felt that these would improve accuracy, clarity, and general

1665-77), we can find no sign of *Canones Adomnani*: Theodore's text was presented at IX.52-62, but only as far as §CXX.

⁷³*Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, ed. Joannes Dominicus Mansi (36 vols in 38, Firenze &c. 1759-1911), XII, cols 154-5 (*Canones Adomnani* §§1-7 and *Equus*), who gave his sources as those named in n. 72, above.

⁷⁴*Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, ed. F.W.H. Wassersleben (Halle a.S. 1851), pp. 120-3.

⁷⁵*Patrologiæ Latine Cursus Completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne (221 vols, Paris 1844-64), LXXXVIII, cols 815-16 (from Mansi, as n. 73, above), and XCVI, cols 1319, 1324-5 (from Martène & Durand, as n. 72, above). On Migne's methods, see R. Howard Bloch, *God's Plagiarist, being an Account of the Fabulous Industry and Irregular Commerce of the Abbé Migne* (Chicago, IL 1994).

⁷⁶*Concilia Scotiae. Ecclesiae Scotticanae Statuta tam Provincialia quam Synodalia quae supersunt, MCCXXV-MDLIX*, ed. Joseph Robertson (2 vols, Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club 1866), I.xv-xvi (introduction) and II.229-30 (texts), 310-11 (notes). He gave §§1-7 and *Equus*, followed by *Item Adomnani* (§§19-20). Robertson pointed out (*ibid.*, II.310) that Ioannes Colganus, *Acta Sanctorum Veteris et Maioris Scotiae, seu Hiberniae Sanctorum Insulae*, I (Leuven 1645), p. 382, while saying that he had a copy of *Cáin Adomnáin* (see below, nn. 148-52), confused that text with *Canones Adomnani*. Cf. below, n. 153? Colganus was followed in his error by another outstanding scholar: *The Life of St. Columba, Founder of Hy; written by Adamnan, Ninth Abbot of that Monastery*, ed. William Reeves (Dublin 1857), p. 178(-9), n. h.

⁷⁷*Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, edd. Arthur West Haddan & W. Stubbs (3 vols, Oxford 1869-78), II.111-14.

⁷⁸*The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy, pp. 9, 12-16, 20-4, 25-6, 176-81, 253-4.

⁷⁹*Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, transl. McNeill & Gamer, pp. 130-4.

usability. Deviations from manuscript-authority have been more prominently signalled. There is a much larger number of alterations of the translation. The most substantial change is a radical reorganisation of Bieler's apparatus of variant readings, which is impenetrable and at times almost unintelligible because of its form, and the introduction of new sigla for the three B-texts,⁸⁰ since in that respect Bieler's chosen sigla offend against the usual principles of textual criticism. Given the nature of the present exercise, we have not attempted to return to the manuscripts. However, that would be a worthwhile exercise, in view of probable lacunae and errors which seem detectable in Bieler's apparatus.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Bieler's work has served the scholarly community well and we have been happy that we could make it the starting point for our own modest efforts.

CÁIN ADOMNÁIN

Only part of the text which travels under this name has been reproduced here. For reasons which will be explained below, §§1-27 have been omitted.⁸²

Unlike *Canones Adomnani*, *Cáin Adomnáin* is (with the exception of §33) written in Irish. In that respect it corresponds with other texts whose titles begin with the same word

⁸⁰See above, pp. xv-xvi.

⁸¹Matter seems to be lacking from the bottom of pages 177 and 178 of *The Irish Penitentials*, edd. & transl. Bieler & Binchy.

⁸²See below, pp. xxxii-xxxvii. For the whole text, see *Cáin Adomnáin. An Old-Irish Treatise on the Law of Adamnan*, ed. & transl. Kuno Meyer (Oxford 1905), with his corrigenda in 'Notes on the Oxford edition of *Cáin Adomnáin*', *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie* 3 (1905-7) 108. For an important corrigendum, see V. Hull, 'Miscellanea hibernica', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 30 (1967) 7-11, at pp. 9-10. There is a complete translation in *Adomnán's 'Law of the Innocents'*, *Cáin Adomnáin. A Seventh Century Law for the Protection of Non-Combatants*, transl. Gilbert Márkus (Glasgow 1997).

and are of the same general type: *Cáin Fhuithirbe*⁸³ and *Cáin Domnaig*,⁸⁴ for example. A *cáin* (plural *cánai*, later *cána*) was a law of a particular type.⁸⁵ It is unusual – among the large body of early mediaeval Irish vernacular legal texts⁸⁶ – in that records of promulgation of *cánai* are preserved in mediaeval Irish chronicles, where usually *cáin* but sometimes Latin *lex* is used to describe what was being enacted.⁸⁷ The *cáin* is almost always associated with the name of a particular person, normally an ecclesiastic but commonly also a long-dead saint. Thus we read of the promulgation of *Lex Patricii* (*Cáin Phátraic*) in the eighth century, for example.⁸⁸ St Patrick lived and died in the fifth century. Such laws therefore had ecclesiastical sponsors whose names were attached to them.

The promulgation seems to have been a very public and perhaps very political act. When the chronicles give us more information, we are told of a territory over which *cána* took effect and sometimes of a king who was responsible for the promulgation. It is clear,

⁸³This is preserved only in fragments: L. Breatnach, 'The ecclesiastical element in the Old-Irish legal tract *Cáin Fhuithirbe*', *Peritia* 5 (1986) 36-52; cf. S. Ó Coileáin, 'Mag Fúithirbe revisited', *Éigse* 23 (1989) 16-26.

⁸⁴V. Hull (ed. & transl.), 'Cáin Domnaig', *Ériu* 20 (1966) 151-77; J.G. O'Keeffe (ed. & transl.), 'Cáin Domnaig, I. – The Epistle concerning Sunday', *Ériu* 2 (1905) 189-214; Donald MacLean, *The Law of the Lord's Day in the Celtic Church* (Edinburgh 1926); D. Whitelock, 'Bishop Ecgrid, Pehtrud and Niall', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, edd. Whitelock et al., pp. 47-68.

⁸⁵Kelly, *A Guide*, pp. 21-2, 281-2, 305, 324, 330; Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 43-62.

⁸⁶*Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, ed. D.A. Binchy (6 vols, Dublin 1978); *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, edd. & transl. W. Neilson Hancock et al. (6 vols, Dublin 1865-1901); Kelly, *A Guide; Dictionary of the Irish Language, based mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials. Compact Edition*, gen. ed. E.G. Quin (Dublin 1983), pp. 95-6, s.v. *cáin* (C:30-2). See also *Crith Gablach*, ed. D.A. Binchy (Dublin 1941), pp. 20-1 (§38) and 79.

⁸⁷Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, pp. 149-53, 167-9, 179, 191-2, 197-8, 206, 243-4, 248 (and cf. 108-9), and *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 80-2, 129; Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 43-62.

⁸⁸See below, p. xxix.

therefore, that a *cáin* of this sort required a saintly sponsor (whether dead or alive) and a king willing to give it effect where he ruled.

Another Irish word used in this context is *rechtge*, often translated ‘ordinance’.⁸⁹ In an early eighth-century law-tract on status, definition is provided of the competences of kings. In an emergency (carefully defined in the tract), he might issue such an ordinance.⁹⁰ What is the relationship of such power, perhaps of long standing in Gaelic society (but perhaps not: there is no clear evidence on the point), with the ordinances issued in the names of holy men and women?

Such *cánaí* as we have been discussing are recorded in the chronicles for a period of about a century and a half, 697-842.⁹¹ The earliest is that attributed to Adomnán and described as *lex innocentium*, ‘law of innocents’.⁹² There is some evidence that *Cáin Adomnáin* was not the first such, for the fragmentarily attested *Cáin Fhuithirbe* may have been promulgated in 681, if the circumstances of its origin have been correctly understood.⁹³ *Cáin Adomnáin* is, however, the best attested, for the texts of most recorded *cánaí* have perished. It was first promulgated in 697 at a great council. That much we know from the chronicle-evidence and from a passing reference in Adomnán’s *Vita Sancti Columbae*,

⁸⁹*Dictionary*, gen. ed. Quin, pp. 502-3, s.v. *rechtge* (R:28-9). Cf. Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, p. 49, n. 113, and pp. 53-62.

⁹⁰*Crith Gablach*, ed. Binchy, pp. 20-1 (§38) and 104.

⁹¹Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, pp. 149, 206 (cf. pp. 243-4, 248, on later revivals), and *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 82; David N. Dumville, *Councils and Synods of the Gaelic Early and Central Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1997), pp. 31-2 (cf. pp. 35-7, 47, on later revivals); Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 43-8 (cf. pp. 53-61 on later revivals).

⁹²*The Annals of Ulster, Recension I, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 64/5 (697.3).

⁹³*Breatnach*, ‘The ecclesiastical element’; cf. Ó Coileáin, ‘Mag Fuithirbe’.

II.45.⁹⁴ According to the text of *Cáin Adomnáin* (§28) that council was held at Birr (Co. Offaly), the site of an important church.⁹⁵ Birr stood on the boundary between the provinces of Mide and Mumu (Munster)⁹⁶ and therefore between the two great regions, political and cultural, into which earlier mediaeval Ireland was held to have been divided.⁹⁷ According to the text, it also affected *Albu*, Britain.⁹⁸

The hidden background to *Cáin Adomnáin* must have included a very considerable amount of negotiation, which clearly brought great political success. We cannot suppose that Adomnán brought on board everyone whom he approached. His proposals are likely to have been controversial and to have been seen as revolutionary. The grand promulgation's date is unlikely to have been accidental – it was in the year of the hundredth anniversary of St Columba's death.⁹⁹ The Columban churches were in political difficulties at the time,

⁹⁴AU 697.3 (see n. 92, above); *Adomnán's Life*, edd. & transll. Anderson & Anderson, pp. 176/7 (cf. pp. xli-xlii); *Adomnán of Iona*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 202-3 (cf. pp. 346-7 [n. 341], and pp. 50-2, 63, 77, and especially 329 [n. 266]).

⁹⁵For commemoration in 1997, see *Adomnán at Birr*, ed. O'Loughlin.

⁹⁶Alfred P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster* (Blackrock 1982), pp. 29, 84-100; Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 169, 221, 225; Dumville, *Councils*, p. 30; Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, p. 49, and *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 554. The patron-saint of Birr was St Brendan, on whom see *Adomnán of Iona*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 352-3 (n. 354). He was viewed with great favour in the Columban tradition: see Adomnán, *Vita Sancti Columbae*, III.3 and 11 (*Adomnán's Life*, edd. & transll. Anderson & Anderson, pp. 184-7, 196-9; *Adomnán of Iona*, transl. Sharpe, pp. 207-8, 214); Dumville, *Councils*, p. 30, n. 93; cf. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 283-4 (cf. 181, 251, 279-80, 566). See also M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Birr and the Law of the Innocents', in *Adomnán at Birr*, ed. O'Loughlin, pp. 13-32, at 13-14.

⁹⁷Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 202-29 (cf. p. 169). Cf. Eoin MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin 1921), p. 61, and Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin 1946), pp. 191-2.

⁹⁸On the meaning and history of this name, see D.N. Dumville, 'Britain and Ireland in *Táin Bó Fraich*', *Études celtiques* 32 (1996) 175-87.

⁹⁹But not, it seems, on 9 June, the saint's feast-day: we know from *Vita Sancti Columbae*, II.45 (n. 94, above), that Adomnán was travelling to reach Iona for that festival. Cf. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Birr', pp. 14-15.

because of the Easter-controversy:¹⁰⁰ promotion of the *cáin* may have been a means of regaining political and moral initiative.

The text of the *cáin* names in §28 ninety-one public figures – forty ecclesiastics, who open the list, and fifty-one royals, who follow – who are described there as enjoining it as a perpetual law on the men of Ireland and Britain. This list is headed by the bishop of Armagh and closed by the overking of Picts.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, this opening assertion must be held to overstate what happened.

Albu can refer only to the two overkingdoms of Dál Riata (which straddled the North Channel but had more territory in Britain than in Ireland)¹⁰² and the Picts.¹⁰³ In both of these Adomnán, as head of the community of St Columba, had great influence.¹⁰⁴ At least two Dalriadic royals are in the list of those who enjoined the law on the peoples of Ireland and Britain.¹⁰⁵

The very large number of those who supported the *cáin* (ninety leading ecclesiastics and royals from the Gaelic world) indicate that it would have had wide territorial

¹⁰⁰Herbert, *Iona*, pp. 40-62, 142-8; Dumville, 'Derry', pp. 91-9, 106-7; for both contextualisation and detail, see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, chapters 7-10.

¹⁰¹For full discussion of the list, see M. Ni Dhonnchadha, 'The guarantor list of *Cáin Adomnáin*, 697', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 178-215.

¹⁰²On Dál Riata, see D.N. Dumville, 'Ireland and North Britain in the earlier Middle Ages: contexts for *Miniugud senchasa fher nAlban*', in *Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000*, edd. Colm Ó Baoill & N.R. McGuire (Aberdeen 2002), pp. 185-211.

¹⁰³On the Picts, see Isabel Henderson, *The Picts* (London 1967); *The Problem of the Picts*, ed. F.T. Wainwright (2nd edn, Perth 1980); Marjorie O. Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (2nd edn, Edinburgh 1980); Sally M. Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots* (London 1996).

¹⁰⁴See, in addition to the references already given, G. Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', in *Spes Scotorum, Hope of Scots. Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland*, edd. Dauvit Broun & T.O. Clancy (Edinburgh 1999), pp. 115-38.

¹⁰⁵Ni Dhonnchadha, 'The guarantor list', pp. 208-10 (no. 77) and 212 (no. 85). Cf. *Adomnán's Life*, edd. & transl. Anderson & Anderson, pp. xli-xlii.

promulgation. The signatories represent all parts of the Gaelic world. But whether this amounted to coverage of all Ireland or all Gaeldom would depend on how far the individual overkings' writs ran.

That it was a perpetual law is also unlikely in the extreme. In the chronicles we find an individual *cáin* being promulgated more than once, even in the same area. In 'The Annals of Ulster' for 737 we read *Lex Patricii tenuit Hiberniam*, 'The *cáin* of [St] Patrick was in force in Ireland':¹⁰⁶ this appears to be associated with a *rigdál*, 'a royal conference',¹⁰⁷ between the two overkings, of the north and the south of Ireland.¹⁰⁸ Yet this was not the last promulgation of *Cáin Phátraic*.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, in the same chronicle, in the annal for 727, we read 'Adomnani reliquie transferuntur in Hiberniam, et Lex renouatur', 'The relics of [St] Adomnán are transferred to Ireland, and the Law is promulgated anew'.¹¹⁰

We must deduce, then, that it was characteristic of this kind of *cáin* that it lasted only for a period of time, but how long that might be is not easy to grasp.¹¹¹ perhaps it held good

¹⁰⁶*The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 86/7 (737.9).

¹⁰⁷On the *rigdál* see John Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada* (Edinburgh 1974), pp. 154-5, 162-70; Byrne, *Irish Kings*, pp. 41, 209-10; Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 50-5, and *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 279-80.

¹⁰⁸*The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 86/7 (737.8). Amid much comment, see B. Ó Cuív, 'Literary creation and Irish historical tradition', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 49 (1963) 233-62, at p. 244, and Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 48, 50-2.

¹⁰⁹For example, *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, edd. & transl. Mac Airt & Mac Niocaill, pp. 220/1 (767.10). For a full list of records of the enactment of *Cáin Phátraic*, see Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, p. 45.

¹¹⁰*The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 78/9 (727.5); for their return, three years later, see *ibid.*, pp. 80/1 (730.3).

¹¹¹One might take it that a period of thirty years was implied by the sequences 697-727 and 737-67. Cf. Dumville, *Councils*, pp. 30-2. But, for fuller discussion, see Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 46-7, 48, 50-2, 55-6, 58-60. The circumstances of renewal remain problematic.

only during the reign of the king who promulgated it in his territory. A limited life is implied in the very text of *Cáin Adomnáin*: in §47 we read, ‘Mani-eir<re> bidbaid sáraigetar Cáin, as-ren fine a llánfiachu iar méitt a chinad ocus do-berr a ndílsi ocus a n-indarbu iarsin co cend rechtghi’, ‘If offenders who violate the Law are not apprehendable, the kindred pay their full fines according to the gravity of its offence(s), and, after that, forfeiture of legal rights and banishment are imposed on them until the completion of the Law’. Here, *cáin* and *rechtge* appear to mean the same; alternatively, one might argue that *rechtge* means the period of the Law’s application, in a particular reign.¹¹²

However, the statement about the perpetuity of *Cáin Adomnáin* which introduces the list of promoters or guarantors of the Law does find its substance repeated in the body of the legal tract. §39 states that ‘ní-díbdai Cáin Adomnáin nach a muntire’, ‘the Law of Adomnán and of his community shall not become extinct’. In its opening (§34) we are told, ‘For-tá forus inna cána-sæ Adomnáin bithcáin for clérchu ocus banscála ocus maccu encu co-mbat ingníma fri guin duine ocus co-mbat inbuiithi fri tuaith ocus con-festar <a n-immérgi>’. Here we see a different formulation of the idea of perpetuity: it is perpetual for the categories of persons whom it protects, clerics and women and ‘innocent youths’.¹¹³ There is a conundrum here which requires explication.

We can now attempt to answer some of the opening questions about the nature of a religious *cáin* or *rechtge*. It was a decree-law, promoted by (and no doubt written at) an ecclesiastical house but requiring promulgation by royal authority. Whatever the ecclesiastical promoters might desire, it would have a limited period of validity since it was issued by virtue of emergency-powers. Its geographical scope of effectiveness would extend

¹¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 9, 43 (n. 100), 52-4, 58-62. Cf. Dumville, *Councils*, pp. 35-6.

¹¹³The *maic ennaic* represented a category of males who lost this status when they first had another person’s blood on their hands. On the adjective, see *Dictionary*, gen. ed. Quin, p. 275, s.v. *ennac* (E:142-3). For the *mac emac* in another *cáin*, see Hull, ‘Cáin Domnaig’, pp. 152, 164/5 (§5).

over the territories where the writ(s) of its royal promoter(s) ran. It is not known whether ecclesiastical communities could enforce it on the inhabitants of their own properties or any others of their dependants without its being legislated by a king.

How could a king who promulgated such a *cáin* assert that such emergency-legislation was needed? We must suppose that an ingenious ecclesiastical mind saw the possibility of declaring a moral emergency and offering ready-made social legislation to meet it.¹¹⁴ It might once have seemed that Abbot Adomnán was the person who formulated that revolutionary concept, but now he appears to have had a predecessor in the author of *Cáin Fhuithirbe*. In any case, the idea caught on, and *cánai* multiplied significantly over the course of the eighth century. The First Viking-Age put paid to the social reformers' definition of emergency: promulgations do not seem to have outlived the first half of the ninth century.¹¹⁵ While they lasted, *cánai* must have proved a useful source of revenue (and perhaps prestige) for the ecclesiastical communities which promoted them. We know less about the benefits for kings, but perhaps their gains included being seen as legislators – and particularly legislators for social peace.

One *cáin* which might have proved controversial among the laity, to judge by reactions to such legislation elsewhere in mediaeval Europe, is the sabbatarian law known as

¹¹⁴The great example of this is of course represented by the events of 1096: Kenney, *The Sources*, pp. 749-53; Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin 1975), pp. 64-7 (nos 55-7); Dumville, *Councils*, pp. 36-8, 41-2; A.M. O'Leary, 'Mog Ruith and apocalypticism in eleventh-century Ireland', *CSANA Yearbook* 1 (2001) 51-60. There were, however, much earlier precedents: see *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, edd. & transll. Mac Airt & Mac Niocaill, pp. 224/5 (772.6; cf. 772.4, whose second sentence is identical with 799.8, *ibid.*, pp. 254/5) and 240/1 (786.3c: 'Uisio terribilis hi Cluain M. Nóis et pocnitentia magna per totam Hiberniam'). Etchingham, *Church Organisation*, pp. 207-9, seems to have failed to grasp the point about the origin of the ecclesiastical *cáin*.

¹¹⁵See above, n. 91 (also on later revivals).

Cáin Domnaig.¹¹⁶ This may have been promoted by the culdees,¹¹⁷ but it is not clear when it was first formulated and enacted.¹¹⁸ Apart from *Cáin Adomnáin* it is the only such *cáin*-text known to survive in full. In fact, the complex text which travels under that name bears remarkable similarities to *Cáin Adomnáin* in that it has attracted other later – and narrative explicatory – matter into its company.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶See above, n. 84.

¹¹⁷See the discussion by A. Hamlin, ‘*Dignatio diei Dominici*: an element in the iconography of Irish crosses?’, in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, edd. Whitelock *et al.*, pp. 69-75 + plates I-III, with reference to the ninth-century *Epistil Ísu* which was prefixed to *Cáin Domnaig* (cf. n. 84, above).

¹¹⁸According to Hull, ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, pp. 156-8, the language of the text indicates a probable date of composition in the first half of the eighth century but a reference in the text (§3, pp. 164/5) to *Cáin Phátraic* requires a date not earlier than 734×737. On the other hand, a reference (§11, pp. 170/1) to violation of this *cáin* bringing foreign peoples (*cenéla echtranna*) who will seize violators ‘to bear them in bondage into pagan lands (*i tire geinte*)’ strongly suggests vikings. Likewise a chronicle-reference suggests a late ninth-century date: *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, edd. & transl. Mac Airt & Mac Niocaill, pp. 342/3 (887.3), ‘Eipistil do thiachtain lasin ailithir docum nÉrenn co Cáin Domnaigh ocus co forcetaibh maithibh ailibh’, ‘A letter, with the Law of Sunday and other good instructions, came to Ireland with the pilgrim’. *Chronicum Scotorum*, ed. & transl. William M. Hennessy (London 1866), pp. 170/1 (887.2), contains a variant version of this entry which has reference to a leaf (or a folio?): ‘Int ailithir gusin duilleg do radadh do nimh do thiachtain docum Éirinn co Cáin Domnaigh ocus forcetaibh maitibh’, ‘The Pilgrim, with the leaf which was given from Heaven, came to Ireland with *Cáin Domnaig* and good precepts’. We meet this same idea *ibid.*, pp. 206-9 (947.2): ‘Annus mirabilium, id est attarla an duilleann do nimh et attudchaidh an Cele Dé don fairrge andes do procept do Gaoidelaibh’, ‘A year of prodigies, i.e. in which the Leaf came from Heaven and the Céle Dé was wont to come across the sea from the south to instruct the Irish’. This then links with two other entries (811.2, pp. 126/7; 921.8, pp. 192/3) in which a Céle Dé comes across the sea to impart instruction to, or make law for, the Irish. Nevertheless, Hull advanced various contorted arguments to enable his linguistic dating to be sustained.

¹¹⁹See above, n. 84.

STRUCTURE

The text of *Cáin Adomnáin* was divided by John Ryan (in the only exclusive analysis which the text received for many years after its publication in 1905) into four parts:¹²⁰ I, §§1-27; II, §§28-32; III, §33; IV, §§34-53. We take each in turn, briefly.

Part I provides an *accessus*, a structured basic introduction, to the text, beginning with the conventional late Antique formula (much appreciated in mediaeval writing) of the ages of the world.¹²¹ It is designed to explain why the *cáin* was devised by Adomnán. For whatever reasons, its author chose to focus determinedly on only one part of the Law's purpose and provisions. *Cáin Adomnáin* defines a category of *innocentes* who should be deemed non-combatants in the relentlessly warlike society of early mediaeval Gaeldom.¹²² This category comprehended three groups, however: clerics, women, and young males who had not yet come of age. For the writer of §§1-27 women were the sole issue. He or she promoted the dutiful relationship of Adomnán with his very forceful mother as the crucible in which his *Cáin* was formed. A highly coloured narrative conveyed this with much elaboration, giving an equally enthusiastic account of negotiations which led to the promulgation of this Law. Not the least of those negotiations was with an angel of God (as

¹²⁰'The Cáin Adomnáin', *apud* R. Thurneysen *et al.*, *Studies in Early Irish Law* (Dublin 1936), pp. 269-76, at p. 269. This seems to have been the only serious attention given to the text by a historian before the 1960s.

¹²¹*Cáin Adomnáin*, ed. & transl. Meyer, pp. 2/3 (§1). Cf. Auguste Luneau, *L'histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église. La doctrine des âges du monde* (Paris 1964).

¹²²We should not suppose that Adomnán was without experience in this regard. His Life of St Columba presents a variety of incidents which exemplify the need for creation of the concept of the non-combatant. Sharpe (*Adomnán of Iona*, p. 329, n. 266), commenting on II.25, has drawn attention to a striking example. For general discussion of the provisions of *Cáin Adomnáin*, see M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The *Lex innocentium*: Adomnán's law for women, clerics and youths, 697 A.D.', *Historical Studies* [Irish Conference of Historians] 19 (1993) 58-69.

too between angel and saint in the hagiography of Patrick):¹²³ as the details were concluded, Adomnán ensured that he would be able to take eighty-three women to Heaven each week, as well as every woman who bore the name of his mother, Rónnat, and every woman who would choose Adomnán's *reilec* (his place of burial) for herself.¹²⁴

John Ryan dated Part I to the years around 900.¹²⁵ More recently, however, Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, who has been preparing a new edition, has placed it a century later, around 1000, thus declaring it to be a Middle-Irish text.¹²⁶ In this, it is out of step with the other vernacular parts of the composite text, which are Old-Irish in character.

Part II begins in a conventional form akin to a rubric: 'Iss ead inso forus Cána Adomnán Iæ', 'This is the enactment of the Law of Adomnán of Iona'. It is §28 which tells us that the formal enactment took place at Birr, a unique record which has been almost universally accepted by modern scholars.¹²⁷ The main content of §28 is the remarkable list of ninety-one public figures (a minimum-number, if the text is to be credited) by whose orders the Law was promulgated. It is not known whether all were present, but the reliability of the list has been determined to the extent that a substantial majority can be shown to have been alive in 697.¹²⁸ What is unsatisfactory about the list resides in the titles which have been

¹²³See *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, edd. & transl. Ludwig Bieler & F. Kelly (Dublin 1979), pp. 116-19 (Muirchú), 184-91 (*Liber Angeli*). On the angel in Patrician (and more generally in Gaelic) hagiography, see Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients. Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, NY 1997).

¹²⁴§25: *Cáin Adomnáin*, ed. & transl. Meyer, pp. 14/15.

¹²⁵'The Cáin Adomnáin', p. 269. Cf. V. Hull, 'Miscellanea', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 21 (1938-40) 319-38, at pp. 335-8.

¹²⁶M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Law of Adomnán: a translation', in *Adomnán at Birr*, ed. O'Loughlin, pp. 53-68, at p. 53.

¹²⁷K. Harrison, 'Episodes in the history of Easter cycles in Ireland', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, edd. Whitelock *et al.*, pp. 307-19, at p. 309 and n. 12, strongly hinted that he did not accept the date 697.

¹²⁸Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Law', pp. 54-5, and 'The guarantor list', pp. 214-15.

given to the named participants. It now seems likely that the ‘signatories’ – rather after the manner of a charter’s witness-list – were simply named. At a later (and perhaps much later) date, titles were provided.¹²⁹ This would have been a research-project worthy of the authors of ‘The Chronicle of Clonmacnoise’!¹³⁰

§29 asserts that all the promulgators had sworn to uphold this Law *co brádh*, ‘till the Day of Judgment’. The question of the Law’s ‘perpetuity’ we have already discussed.¹³¹ §§30-31 report various beseechings of God. Part II ends (§32) with a report of a ritual of malediction involving selected psalms and corresponding saints, to be chanted and invoked over twenty successive days. In Irish literature such ritual seems to be particularly associated with St Adomnán. In the so-called ‘Fragmentary Annals of Ireland’ he is shown in a conflict with King Finshnechta in which maledictory psalms were invoked.¹³² And in a Middle-Irish poem on the maledictory psalms we find essentially the same matter as in §32 of *Cáin Adomnáin*.¹³³ Part II in its present form was attributed by one of the present writers twenty years ago to the ninth century.¹³⁴

Part III (§33) is a Latin text with its own opening and closing rubrics. It presents an angel’s speech of command to Adomnán. It represents Adomnán as having obtained this

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹³⁰For their efforts, see Kathryn Grabowski & D. Dumville, *Chronicles and Annals of Mediaeval Ireland and Wales. The Clonmacnoise-group Texts* (Woodbridge 1984), chapter II. Cf. Dumville, ‘Ireland and North Britain’, pp. 191, 208.

¹³¹See above, pp. xxviii-xxxii.

¹³²*Annals of Ireland – Three Fragments, copied from Ancient Sources by Dubhaltach Mac Fírhisigh*, ed. & transl. John O’Donovan (Dublin 1860), pp. 78-85; *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, ed. & transl. Joan Newlon Radner (Dublin 1978), pp. 22-33 (§67: A.D. 677). Clearly there were stories about Adomnán in circulation in the Southern Uí Néill territories. Cf. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, pp. 118-21.

¹³³P. O’Neill (ed. & transl.), ‘A Middle Irish poem on the maledictory psalms’, *The Journal of Celtic Studies* 3 (1981/2) 40-58. See now D.M. Wiley, ‘The maledictory psalms’, *Peritia* 15 (2001) 261-79.

¹³⁴O’Neill, ‘A Middle Irish poem’, p. 42, mistakenly attributing this view to Ryan, ‘The Cáin Adomnáin’, p. 269.

Law from God after fourteen years. There has been some speculation that this number referred to the thirteen-year period between Adomnán's accession to the abbacy and his journey to Ireland in 692.¹³⁵ In 'The Annals of Ulster', here derived from 'The Chronicle of Iona', we read that in 692 'Adomnán sets out for Ireland in the fourteenth year after the repose of Fáilbe'.¹³⁶ This section has therefore been thought to derive from Iona, perhaps in the eighth century.¹³⁷ However, it should be noted that, like Part I, Part III presents *Cáin Adomnáin* as wholly concerned with protecting women.¹³⁸ One might rather suspect that this is the gloss which was put on the Law at the church of Raphoe, which came to regard itself as the seat of the legacy of St Adomnán.¹³⁹ Alternatively, since the mid-tenth-century *Betha Adamnáin*, written at Kells (Co. Meath), also treats the saint's *cáin* as being about women,¹⁴⁰ that might have been the place of origin of §33.¹⁴¹ Whether the Latin language of this section should be held to preclude a date later than the ninth century is a moot point. In any case, one may doubt whether Adomnán's heirs in eighth-century Iona would have been so mistaken about the character of his Law as to have been able to write §33.

What may have been the original *Cáin Adomnáin* – however corrupted over centuries of transmission and perhaps deliberately altered from time to time – constitutes Part IV

¹³⁵Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Law', p. 56.

¹³⁶*The Annals of Ulster, Recension 1, A.D. 431-766*, ed. & transl. Dumville, pp. 62/3 (692.1).

¹³⁷Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Law', p. 56: she has canvassed the possibility that this was associated with the renewal of *Cáin Adomnáin* in 727.

¹³⁸See above, p. xxxiii.

¹³⁹See above, p. vii. Cf. pp. xxxvii-xxxix, below.

¹⁴⁰*Betha Adamnáin*, edd. & transl. Herbert & Ó Riain, pp. 48-51 (§3).

¹⁴¹On the continuing claim of Iona and then Kells to St Adomnán, see Herbert, *Iona*, pp. 80-1 (cf. 60-1, 71, 117). Cf. D.N. Dumville, 'Mael Brigte mac Tornáin, pluralist coarb (†927)', *The Journal of Celtic Studies* 4 (2003).

(§§34-53). It is written in legal language and bears comparison with the extensive textbook-literature of early mediaeval Irish law.¹⁴²

If Adomnán may indeed be deemed the author of any part of this text, then that is Part IV. He may have had the appropriate legal training, or he may have relied on a specialist member of the community to construct the precise formulation of the Law. As with §28, it begins (§34) with a statement like a rubric: ‘Iss ead inso forus cána Adomnáin for Hérinn ocus Albain’, ‘This is the enactment of Adomnán’s Law on Ireland and Britain’. One may wonder whether the early stress on the perpetuity of the Law is likely to be an original feature.¹⁴³ Throughout Part IV the text is called *Cáin Adomnáin*, and Adomnán himself is repeatedly mentioned: is that a feature which we should expect in these circumstances or should it arouse suspicion that the text is the work of a later generation, perhaps when the Law was renewed?¹⁴⁴

MANUSCRIPTS

This composite text has been transmitted to us in two manuscripts remote by several centuries from the year of the first promulgation of the *Cáin*. On the other hand, one of the copies does derive ultimately from ‘an old book’ of Adomnán’s church of Raphoe.

The earlier of the two manuscripts is of uncertain origin. It is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson B.512 (S.C. 11859), a composite codex written in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Folios 101-22, 1-36, and 45-52 constitute Part I, written by at least

¹⁴²Ryan, ‘The *Cáin Adomnáin*’; Kelly, *A Guide*, pp. 234-5, for some extremely important observations.

¹⁴³See above, pp. xxviii-xxxii.

¹⁴⁴Cf. n. 137, above.

six scribes, perhaps in Meath.¹⁴⁵ Its copy (the siglum used here is R) of *Cáin Adomnáin* occupies folios 48r1-51va9,¹⁴⁶ where it breaks off, incomplete, at the end of §49. The exemplar was therefore incomplete. The text is followed by the aforementioned Middle-Irish poem on the maledictory psalms (folio 51va10-43).¹⁴⁷ A space left blank where another text finishes incomplete at the end of folio 47vb may suggest that the contents of folios 48-51 (and perhaps beyond) derived from a separate exemplar.

The later copy (the siglum used here is B) is now preserved in Bruxelles, Bibliothèque royale, MS. 2324-2340 (3410).¹⁴⁸ This was written by Brother Michél Ó Cléirigh, O.F.M., at the Franciscan house of Bundrowse (Co. Donegal) in 1627. This text occupies folios 76r-82v.¹⁴⁹ The introductory rubric reads ‘Incipit Cáin Adamnáin ar sliect senlibuir Rátha Bothæ’.¹⁵⁰ The concluding sentence is a scribal colophon telling us that Brother Michél completed this copy on 31 March, 1627, transcribing an exemplar made by his cousin Cúmhghan mac Tuathail Ó Cléirigh.¹⁵¹ This then is the neat reference-copy made from Cúmhghan’s transcript executed *in situ* at Raphoe from what he deemed to be an old book. It is followed on 83r by the poem on Adomnán’s reliquary and on 83v by a short poem in the

¹⁴⁵Brian Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries*, I (Dublin 2001), pp. 223-54 (no. 38); see especially pp. 223-32.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, I.243; the foliation (45r1-51v1) given by Meyer, *Cáin Adamnáin*, p. vii, is incorrect.

¹⁴⁷See above, n. 133.

¹⁴⁸Van den Gheyn *et al.*, *Catalogue*, V.384-9, at pp. 386-7.

¹⁴⁹The foliation given by Meyer, *Cáin Adamnáin*, p. vii, is incorrect: he in fact offered a pagination, ‘pp. 76a-85b’. *Cáin Adomnáin* is preceded in the manuscript (folios 75-76) by a poem on Cormac mac Cuilennáin (source not stated in the catalogue), before which stand three blank pages.

¹⁵⁰*Cáin Adamnáin*, ed. & transl. Meyer, p. vii.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, and p. 32, n. 11.

name of Adomnán and explicitly attributed by the scribe to the same source.¹⁵² It does not contain *Canones Adomnani*, as Kuno Meyer mistakenly reported in 1905.¹⁵³

Kuno Meyer thought that the copy in MS. Rawlinson B.512 also derived from the 'old book of Raphoe' from which Cúmhughan would later copy.¹⁵⁴ This is illogical, however, for the exemplar from which R was copied was already incomplete. There is nothing to show that R derives from a copy having any affiliation with Raphoe. Its origin in Meath might rather point to Kells as the source.¹⁵⁵

EDITION AND TRANSLATION

The sole published edition of the entire text was the *editio princeps* by Kuno Meyer.¹⁵⁶ This, dating from 1905, was a critical edition based on both known manuscripts and was accompanied by a translation. However, ill health had prevented Meyer from writing an introduction.¹⁵⁷ The present edition is essentially derivative of Meyer's pioneering work. In recent years two new translations of *Cáin Adomnáin* have been published: of the whole, in 1997, by Gilbert Márkus,¹⁵⁸ and of §§28-53, in 2001, by Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha whose

¹⁵²See above, n. 30, on the former. The latter is followed (84r, before some blank pages intervene) by a verse-prayer to Jesus, attributed to St Ciarán, but it seems to be from another source-manuscript, one brought from Dublin (Van den Gheyn *et al.*, *Catalogue*, V.387 and n. 2); cf. M. O'Daly (ed. & transl.), 'An rim, a rí richid ráin', *Éigse* 2 (1940) 183-6.

¹⁵³*Cáin Adomnáin*, ed. & transl. Meyer, pp. vii-viii (and p. viii, n. 1, quoting an apparently imaginary opening rubric).

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. vii. This was repeated in 1936 by Ryan, 'The Cáin Adomnáin', p. 269. In 2001, the same claim was apparently intended by M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Birr', p. 16, but for 'Bodleian' (*uel sim.*) she wrote 'Brussels': she added that 'a study of its [R's] forms and orthography shows that it too must go back to the "Old Book of Raphoe"'.

¹⁵⁵On Kells, see above, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

¹⁵⁶*Cáin Adomnáin*, ed. & transl. Meyer.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. viii.

¹⁵⁸*Adomnán's 'Law of the Innocents'*, transl. Márkus.

comprehensive re-edition of the work is eagerly awaited.¹⁵⁹ Both new translations have been consulted during the preparation of this pamphlet.

The aim of the present edition is modest – to provide a readily available text with facing translation. Given this modest intention, Meyer’s edition has provided our essential resource. We have not returned to the manuscripts, although there is some reason to think that Meyer’s reporting of their texts is not wholly accurate; furthermore, Máirin Ní Dhonnchadha’s translation suggests that some more radical textual changes will be reported in her new edition. Here we have sought to present the Irish text in a form more in conformity with the analyses of normative grammars, to give (where we were able) an improved translation, and to present both text and apparatus in a more transparent form. We hope that this will be of service to students and teachers alike.

¹⁵⁹Ní Dhonnchadha, ‘The Law’.

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