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ABBREVIATIONS

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

PREFACE

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

Professor Paul Russell
Head of the Department of ASNC
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COLLOQUIUM REPORT

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

Session I (Chair: Robert Gallagher)
Erika Sigurdson, ‘Máldegarðarkefir and Administrative Literacy in Late Medieval Iceland’

Session II (Chair: Alice Hicklin)
Christopher Finn, ‘The Practicalities of Sea-Travel and Communication in the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Centuries’
Dominic Gibbs, ‘Pre-Christian Tracés in the Laws of King Aethelberht?’

Plenary Speaker (Chair: Jo Shortt Butler)
Dr Barbara E. Crawford, OBE, ‘The Norse Earldoms of Orkney and Caithness: Joint Earldoms and Divided Loyalties’

Session III (Chairs: Razvan Stanciu and Sarah Waidler)
Lindy Brady, ‘Spatial Ambiguity in Guthlac A’
Marie-Luise Theuerkauf, ‘Dragon Slayers and Lion Friends: Intertextual Considerations in Tochmarc Emire’
Simon Patterson, ‘The Distinction between Prophecy and Wisdom in the Islendingasögr’

Session IV (Chair: Silva Nurmiö)
Jonathan Paletta, ‘Borough Foundation and Ethnic Identity in English Towns after 1066’
Eystein Thansisch, ‘Flann Mainistrech’s Götterdämmerung as a Junction within Labor Gabalæ Érenn’
Georgia Henley, ‘Rhetoric, Translation and Historiography: the Literary Qualities of Brút y Tyrnysgyn’

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

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

¹ This preliminary section is based on Chapter 1 of B. E. Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms. Orkney and Caithness from 870–1470 AD. Joint Earldoms and Divided Loyalties* (Edinburgh, 2013).
very different north European societies and cultures. This duality emanated from the circumstances by which the earldoms were united in one individual’s possession for most of the period under discussion but remained separate units throughout their existence. They were two independent feudal honours, two earldoms subject to two different overlords, two separate entities and yet two halves of a whole unit of lordship, united by water. This is a distinctive political phenomenon difficult to match elsewhere in medieval Europe which is worthy of consideration and which has had very little consideration.

WATERWAYS AND LORDSHIP POWER CENTRES
Starting off with the all-important matter of maritime geography we have two groups of islands, Orkney and Shetland, located between Norway and the British Isles, and very marginal to these two territorial masses. However, the southern group, the Orkney Islands, are only a short distance from the north mainland of Scotland, although separated from it by the turbulent waters of the Pentland Firth. This waterway and the waters separating Orkney from the more northerly Shetland Isles were no barrier to colonists from Britain who settled these islands in prehistoric times. In the late Iron Age they were part of the kingdom of the Picts which covered the northern part of what is now called Scotland, and the name ‘Orkney’ dates from that period and is derived from the Celtic language which they, presumably, spoke. The name Shetland is Norse and different from its pre-Scandinavian name which was Innis Catt (‘The Isles of Cats’); this is the same totemic term as lies behind the origin of the first element of the Norse name Caithness (ON Katanes) for the extreme north-east portion of the Scottish mainland. The province of Caith included the whole of Caithness and Sutherland. Links had therefore already been established between the north Scottish mainland and the off-shore islands long before the Norse arrived. When the Vikings dominated the northern waters, the sea passage around the north of the British Isles was an important maritime feature which they needed to control. This was a crucial sea route for maintaining communication between different parts of the northern world. In order to control and police it, the two provinces of the Orkney Islands (where the tribe of the Orc lived) and the north Scottish mainland (the land of the Cataibh) had to be in the hands of the same warlords and Viking pirates—and eventually their political successors. This factor made the Orkney–Caithness connection quite important; if a Norse earl had ruled the islands and a Scottish earl had ruled Caithness, control of the waterway would have been disputed. It is the importance of this waterway which led to the two earldoms becoming established and continuing to co-exist for five hundred years. It helps to explain why the earldoms never separated and were never divided between different members of the earldom kindred.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


7 So called because it was the ‘southern land’ (ON Suðri) to the Norse communities in Caithness and Orkney.

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

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

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{11} The "feasting ("public assembly") was the meeting of the annual assembly of chieftains and farmers and was common to all Norse communities: Crawford, \textit{Scandinavian Scotland}, pp. 206–9.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Orkney Saga}, ed. Finnboði Guðmundsson, Íslensk fornrit 34 (Reykjavik, 1965), ch. 112 (hereafter OS); \textit{Sverris saga}, ed. Þórleifur Hauksson, Íslensk fornrit 30 (Reykjavik, 2007), ch. 75.
part of a kingdom where power was maintained by maritime access; Norway has been called a 'sea-borne realm' in the period before the mid-thirteenth century. After that there was a change from kingship based on sea to royal dominion based on land, although administrative structures in place maintained royal authority over the islands in the west.\textsuperscript{14} It was at this same period that the term skattland came into use in Norway to describe those external parts of the Norwegian kingdom which paid tax (ON skattr).\textsuperscript{15} This term is used in the 'Landlaw' of Magnús lagabètr ('lawmender') issued in 1274, which was also introduced into the skattlands as a new national Lawcode.\textsuperscript{16} This period saw the development of Norway into a medieval kingdom on the lines of the countries of western and northern Europe, and the new law of hereditary succession to the throne meant that the king was also recognized as sovereign overlord of the skattland territories. The inhabitants of skattlands were theoretically considered to be royal subjects. This new concept was brought into the Norwegian realm just at the time that the Hebrides were lost, but Iceland and Greenland submitted to royal overlordship. There was a 'state-formation process' by which the peripheral Atlantic communities were incorporated into the medieval kingdom.\textsuperscript{17} The earls were also incorporated into this political structure nominally, although they retained a semi-independence, being so far removed from the main centres of royal authority.

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

\textbf{EARL SIGURD I HINN RÍKI (‘THE MIGHTY’), FIGURE 3}

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

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} Historia Norvegiae describes the islands in the west as ‘tributory’ a century earlier but this was a looser definition of the rendering of occasional tribute rather than regular payments of skattr as implied by the term skattland. Historia Norvegiae, ed. I. Eikrem and L. B. Mortensen (Copenhagen, 2003), pp. 64–5.
\textsuperscript{17} Isen, ‘Introduction’, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{18} Crawford, Scandinavian Scotland, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{19} OS, p. 31.
\end{flushleft}
The explanation given for the death of Earl Sigurðr appears to reflect an Irish-Gaelic folk motif of the ‘avenging head’, one of several folkloric elements which it has been suggested indicate a mixed Gaelic-Norse culture in Orkney in the Middle Ages.\(^{20}\) Was Sigurðr getting his just deserts for behaving like a Celt in cutting off the heads of his defeated enemies?\(^{21}\) We can also note that Sigurðr is said to have strapped the severed heads to the victors’ saddles ‘i til ágatis sér’, and that whilst riding back home, they ‘hrósuðu signi’.\(^{22}\) Perhaps his ensuing death—of a somewhat derisory nature—was told as an example of hubris for his show of unseemly pride?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


27 Of, p. 8: ‘southwards in Moray’, author’s own translation.

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

These geographical factors may have been basic to the driving ambitions which led Sigurðr and Ærkoðr to come together and join forces in what the saga presents as a very wide-ranging strategy of conquest. The immediate consequences would have been the settlement of Norse speakers along the coasts of Caithness and Sutherland, penetrating some distance up the straths or dales which run deep into the mountainous interior. Warfare would be followed by consolidation of possession and the settlement of Norse speakers on the occupied land. The place-names of Caithness and Sutherland are the source of evidence which give us assurance on this aspect of conquest. How long this process took is not known, for the highly unlikely location: p. 27. Sigurðr would establish a coastal stronghold which he could access by ship. The Old Norse *ásunnanverðu Mæðr* may be a slightly ambivalent indication from a northern perspective that he caused a fort to be built somewhere ‘to the south’ in Moray. The Dark Age coastal stronghold at Burghead, on the north coast of Moray, would have been an ideal location and there is some archaeological evidence that it was attacked in the late ninth/early tenth century. A silver horn-mount of ninth-century date, apparently of Anglo-Saxon type, was also discovered there but this is no unequivocal evidence for the fort ever having been in Norse possession. J. Graham-Campbell and C. Batey, *Vikings in Scotland. An Archaeological Survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 105.


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

**SIGURDR II HLÖÐVISSON DIGRI (THE STOUT), FIGURE 4**

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

Although the information about Sigurðr Hlóðvisson in *Orkneyinga saga* is minimal, we do get the specific statement in *Niðál saga* that the earl’s territories in Scotland included Ross and Moray, Sutherland and the Dales, which would be not unlikely if he then expanded his authority to the Hebrides, as he is said to have done.

We have an account of the battle of *Dunagynitha* (Duncansby Head) in *Niðál saga*, in which the Scots earls Hundli, Melsnati and Melköfgr were involved. There is also the second battle of Skitten in

34 *Brenn-Njáls saga*, p. 207.
Orkneyinga saga, in which an Earl Finnleikr challenged Sigurðr to combat.\textsuperscript{35} Together these strongly suggest that there was continuing tension between the Norse earls and the native family, alongside the rulers of Moray, in north-east Caithness.

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

EXTENSION OF ROYAL POWER OVER THE EARLS (FIGURES 5 AND 6)

Once the dynasty of the rulers of Moray was finally crushed by a series of campaigns in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the Scottish kings were able to extend their authority north of the Beauty

\textsuperscript{35} It is possible that Finnleikr can be identified with Finlay, the father of Macbeth Crawford, Scandinavian Scotland, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{36} OS, pp. 25–7.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. pp. 24–5.
\textsuperscript{38} See discussion in Crawford, Scandinavian Scotland, pp. 196–7 for other examples.
\textsuperscript{39} OS, p. 27.
They were greatly aided in their ability to take military expeditions to the northern extremity of mainland Scotland by the mistakes of Earl Haraldr and his son Earl Jón, with regard to the episcopal authorities in Caithness. Caithness was therefore a province of the kingdom of Scotland which, despite the different ethnicity of the population and the different culture, was always going to be brought closer into the kingdom of which it was an integral part, when the opportunity offered. It was incorporated by a process of heavy fines, rather than by the installation of royal officials or by the confiscation of earldom lands (although the kings attempted to do that). The bond with the king of Scots was sealed by the personal submission of the earl, symbolised by an oath of fealty and a feudal ceremony of homage, and in return the earl was granted his earldom with the full freedom to run the northern province much as he liked.

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

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

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

\textsuperscript{42} Saga om Birkiveinar og Baglar. Bogfungs saga, ed. H. Magersø, Norsk Historisk Kjeldskrift-institutt. Norske Tekster 5 (Oslo, 1988), p. 121: ‘and to swear loyalty and obedience’; ‘in the end, King Ingi made them his earls over Orkney and Shetland, upon such terms as were adhered to until their death-day’, ES II, p. 381.

\textsuperscript{43} See Hirdlauen til Norges Konge og hans Håndgjenges Menn, ed. S. Imsen (Oslo, 2000).

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

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

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

Eventually the anomalous position of the joint earldom and the divided loyalties of the earls came to a crisis point when a hostile relationship between the two kings developed over the position of the Hebrides. In 1263 King Hákon Hákonarson led a naval expedition west in order to assert his authority over the Súðreyjar (‘Southern Islands/Hebrides’). The allegiance of the earl of the time, Magnus Gilbertsson, was put to the test and he found himself in an impossible situation. Whichever of his overlords he supported would bring him into deep disfavour with the other one. The Norwegian evidence tells us that he failed to support King Hákon by not following the Norwegian fleet south-west from Orkney to the Hebrides, whilst the Scottish evidence indicates that strong measures were implemented in the north, with Earl Magnus possibly being constrained by hostage-taking and imprisonment.46 Therefore the earl was considered guilty of a failure of allegiance by both kings and this resulted in a reconsideration of the terms of his appointment when he visited King Magnús lagabætur in 1267 and had to agree to many ‘special arrangements’, although we are not told in more detail what these consisted of.47 In Scotland there is evidence of fines being imposed on Caithness and on the earl by way of punishment. In a world of territorial kingdoms and state structures it was very difficult for such an anomalous situation to continue. The fact that it did survive for nearly another century must be a result of the peripheral position of the earldoms on the fringes of the national entities of Norway and Scotland. Geography and maritime geography underlie the historical reality of the joint earldoms of Orkney and Caithness.

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

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47 Hákon’s Saga; the Saga of Håkon and a Fragment of the Saga of Magnus, trans. Sir G. W. Dasent, Icelandic Sagas 4, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, RS (London, 1894), ch. 319.
theory, but it probably made very little difference to the situation on
the ground—or over the water. The activity across the Firth as

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

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

49 OS, p. 240.
50 G. W. S. Barrow, Charters of King David I: The Written Acts of David I King of
Scots, 1124–53 and of his son Henry Earl of Northumberland, 1139–52 (Woodbridge,
1999).
51 We also know that King Hákon sent a letter to the men of Caithness when he
was in Orkney with his fleet in 1263, warning them to pay a fine or else to
expect hard terms, Hákonar saga gamla, ed. Guðni Jónsson, Konunga sögur 3
Late medieval Iceland saw the growth of administrative writing: documents, witness-letters and written inventories which were kept at the episcopal sees, monasteries and large manors. While this corpus has been used as evidence for the history of late medieval Iceland, it has not yet been studied extensively in its own right, nor has it yet been approached through the framework of administrative literacy. As I will demonstrate, the study of the growth of administrative writing in late medieval Iceland allows for the examination of a site of overlapping cultural and social values. Icelandic witness letters, for instance, recorded the Norse tradition of oral contracts, providing fascinating insight into the form and ritual of the oral contract, while also supplanting them with Latinate formulae. In this article, I will begin to explore some of the issues relevant to the later Middle Ages in Iceland through a study of the development of the máldagabækur, collections of church inventories made by the bishops of Skálholt and Hólar from the early fourteenth century onwards.

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

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

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


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

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


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

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

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

9 Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, p. 82.
10 Lárentius saga, in Biskupa Sögon III, Árna Saga Biskupa, Lárentius Saga Biskupa, Sögubók Jóns Hallardósonar Biskupa, Biskupa Ætír, ed. Guðrún Ása Grímisdóttir, Íslensk Forrit 17 (Reykjavík, 1998), 214–441; Lögmannssanníð, in Islandska
own hand. In addition to original compositions, he translated a miracle-story from Latin into Icelandic. Einarr was also an important figure in early Icelandic administrative writing. Four or five documents have been identified as having been written in his own hand. Others bear the mark of his influence: a land transfer document from 1385, for example, bears the note that Einarr ‘fært sagdi fyrgreindu kaupi’. Einarr was one of the most frequent witnesses in the north of Iceland, appearing in over two dozen documents, including some of the oldest clear examples of witness-letters in Iceland. Einarr’s writing thus touched on a wide number of disparate genres: bishops’ sagas, annals, documents and exempla, as well as drafting or copying. Although his is a particularly noticeable example, it is by no means the only one, as Elizabeth Ashman Rowe’s study of the production of Flateyjarbók makes clear. In this context, the study of Icelandic administrative writing may prove a fruitful avenue of research, leading to further insights into the distinctive upsurge in writing and manuscript production in fourteenth-century Iceland. Indeed, I would argue that fourteenth-century writing and manuscript production cannot be fully understood outside of the context of administrative writing.

Finally, no study of the growth of written records can proceed without an examination of the interrelated spheres of orality and literacy and the uses and audiences of works currently preserved in written form. Iceland, like Norway, had well-established legal traditions before the arrival of writing and continued to use these legal traditions until the end of the Middle Ages and afterwards. Written contracts, charters and legal documentation thus represent, in the words of Hallvard Magerøy, a ‘literary superconstruction’. Oral formulae and juridical symbols retained their importance and the written documents worked to supplement rather than supplant the oral contract. In Old Norse studies, there has been significant interest in the relationship between the oral and the written. To date, however, this interest has stopped short of an approach which might attempt to integrate ‘literary’ writing with the varied and textually complex corpus of documentary texts produced in Iceland from c. 1300 to the end of the Middle Ages. While scholars such as Agnes Arnórsdóttir have pointed to the fourteenth century as the period in which Icelanders shifted from oral to written contracts, a comprehensive study of this process has yet to be undertaken. In fact, while recent scholarship has begun to take an interest in bureaucratic writing and pragmatic literacy in the Nordic countries, this, too, is a very new field.

**Máltagar and Máltagabækur**

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

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12 The precise number is debated. See Islandsk Orðagúðslísur til 1450 ed. Stefán Karlsson (Copenhagen, 1963), p. xxxix and documents nos. 15, 24, 26, 27 and 39; on Einarr’s full body of work, see Biskupsyggri, I, lvii; and DI III, 64, 72.
13 DI III, 382–4, ‘dictated the above-described agreement’; author’s own translation. All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.
14 DI II, 471, 484, 673, 674, 745; DI III, 55–6, 65, 71, 74, 76–7.
15 Rowe, The Development of Flateyjarbók, see above, p. 30, n. 7.
16 On this question, and with particular reference to Scandinavia, see especially the recent volume Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications, ed. S. Rankovic.
19 On Norwegian administrative writing, see J. R. Hagland, Literacy i norsk steinmellomalder (Oslo, 2005).
collections of máldagar provide an excellent corpus for study. Early in the fourteenth century, the bishops of Hólar and Skálholt began to collect the máldagar, originally kept at individual parish churches, into centralised registers called máldagabækur (sg. máldagabökk). The earliest máldagabökk was produced in the time of Auðun Þorborgsson, bishop of Hólar from 1313 to 1322, and Magnús Stefánsson in particular has suggested that this practice was imported from Norway by Bishop Auðun as part of an effort to centralise control of the Church and increase administrative and economic efficiency. This argument has yet to be fully explored and much remains unknown about the uses of the máldagabækur and about the process of collecting this information from individual parish churches.

The máldagabækur are collections of church inventories called máldagar. These commonly include a description of the land, livestock and other properties held by the church. Many also list in some detail the inner contents of the churches, naming items such as the number and quality of vestments or liturgical books, as well as the treasure and decoration inside the church. The máldagar themselves appear to be a unique form of documentation, with no clear parallels elsewhere in Christian Europe. The information contained in the máldagar is a remarkable resource and the máldagar lend themselves particularly well to economic and social histories. They have been used for studies of book collections and of building and material culture. They also formed the basis of Margaret Cormack’s well-known study of saints’ cults in Iceland. Most inventively, Benedikt Eyjófsson used the number of vestments recorded in the máldagar from the church at Reykholt to calculate the number of priests there, using a ratio of 1.6 vestments to a priest. As can be seen by this partial listing of recent research making use of the máldagar, the value of these texts for historians lies especially in their detailed information on aspects of the economic and social history of Iceland. The inventories list not only the most precious or interesting assets of the church, but also mundane and poorer-quality items, sometimes specifying the quality of individual items. Taken as an aggregate, the máldagar create a remarkably full picture of daily life, economic activity and popular piety in Iceland. What is not yet fully understood, however, are the reasons for their production, their uses and for whom they were intended.

The máldagar carry a meaning of ‘contract’ as well as ‘deed’ and one of the original purposes of the máldagar was to lay out the obligations of the patron to their church at the time of the consecration of the church. The máldagar were written and kept at individual churches, where there was an obligation to have them read aloud on a yearly basis. The oldest extant máldagi is from the church at Reykholt and the oldest portions of this document have been dated to 1155. This is an unusual document: the vast majority of the máldagar are only known from the máldagabækur, collections made by the bishops and held at the bishopric.

The máldagabækur have a rather complex textual history. The oldest extant collection is that of Bishop Auðun rauði (‘the Red’) of Hólar, first undertaken in 1318. Two subsequent collections exist from the diocese of Hólar for the fourteenth century: that of Bishop

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

23 Benedikt Eyjófsson, ‘Reykholt and Church Centres’, in Church Centres: Church Centres in Iceland from the 11th to the 13th Century and their Parallels in Other Countries, ed. Helgi Porlaksson, Snorralofa rit 2 (Reykjahl, 2005), 105-16.
25 Ísland p. 293.
26 Reykholtsmáldagi, ed. Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (Reykjahl, 2000).
27 This collection has been edited in DI II, 425-89.
Jón skallí ('the Bald') Eiríksson (1359–90), which was written sometime after 1359 and is incomplete, containing only the records of approximately fifty churches, and that of Bishop Pétr Nikulásson (1390–1415), which is dated to 1394. There are two final mál dagabækar from Hólar dating from before 1500: Bishop Ólaf Rögnvaldsson’s máldagabók from 1461 and a máldagabók known as Sigurðarregissur dating from 1525. Bishop Ólaf Rögnvaldsson’s 1461 máldagabók is the earliest of the máldagabækar of Hólar to have survived in a contemporary copy. The manuscript containing the máldagabók, AM 274 4to, dates from the second half of the fifteenth century and contains multiple hands, with later entries that have been dated to as late as 1510. Sigurðarregissur also exists in a contemporary copy, dated to 1525. The first three máldagabækar, together with Ólaf Rögnvaldsson’s 1461 máldagabók, are found in a paper manuscript produced in 1639 for Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason; he later had a second copy made in 1645. A fragmentary manuscript dating from around 1500 contains a portion of Bishop Pétr’s máldagabók which corresponds to the text of the 1394 máldagabók, but also includes a number of later interpolations. This is only an imperfect description; many aspects of the manuscript history of the máldagabækar remain unclear and, not having been edited since the nineteenth century, they are in desperate need of textual study. The máldagabækar, like the individual máldagar, were not produced at one time but instead, like the Icelandic annals, were continually added to and continued to be maintained years after the original date of compilation.

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

For the diocese of Skálholt, the textual history of the máldagabækur is even more complex. The two fourteenth-century collections are Húlardsbók, dated to the middle of the century, and the collection of Bishop Vilchin (1391–1405), dated to 1394. As Margaret Cormack has cautioned, however, the dating of these collections of máldagar cannot be made with any precision, given the poor textual evidence. Significantly less documentary material has survived from Skálholt than from Hólar, making it much more difficult to place the máldagabækur in the context of other forms of pragmatic writing, or to identify the local textual communities with the same amount of detail as is available from the north of Iceland.

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

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28 DI III, 155–78; DI III, 511–95.
29 See table below.
30 See the description in DI V, 247.
31 DI IX, 293–334.
32 DI II, 424. The first manuscript (from 1369) has the shelfmark Biskupssjálafnas Nr. 3, 4to.
33 The manuscript has the shelfmark AM 273 II, 4to; see the note to the text in DI III, 510.
35 Vilchin’s máldagabók can be found in DI IV, 27–240.
of the máldagabækur in their social and intellectual milieu will serve to elucidate some of the problems inherent in their textual transmission.

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<td>Jón Arason</td>
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Table 1. Máldagabækur from Hólar

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

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

**Máldagabækur and Ecclesiastical Administration**

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

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38 For a recent example of this use of the máldagabækur, see the collection *Church Centres*, ed. Helgi Björgvinsson.
39 Magnús Stefánsson, *Staðir og staðamál*. Earlier work criticizing negative historical assessments of Ómrur Óláks and other Norwegian bishops can also be seen as part of this project of reassessing the later Middle Ages on their own terms; Magnús Stefánsson, ‘Frá gøðakirkju til biskupskirki í íslenzkum bænningi’, in *Saga Islands: Saman oð hlihtutu bjóðhátíðarfénsí 1974*, ed. Sigurður Lindal (Reykjavik, 1974–90), III, 111–257, esp. pp. 248–53.
with lay aristocrats over control of church property, a dispute known as stóðamál.\(^{41}\) One result of stóðamál was the creation of a beneficial system in Iceland whereby the churches known as stadir (churches which owned the home-farm) came under the control of the bishop.\(^{42}\) This in turn created a renewed relationship of patronage and service between the bishops in Iceland and the priests who served them in hopes of acquiring a lucrative benefice.

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

Scandinavia, the emergence of the position of officialis was tied to the promulgation of the Liber sectus in 1298, which regularized the position of officialis throughout the Christian West.\(^{45}\)

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

[Bla er líkid var frá hingaburd vorz herra Jesu Christi þusund þríhundrund og xvii aðraðuinn Byskupsdæmis wirtuligs herra Audunar Byskups. liet hann júnivildiga skoda og reikna Gods alla kyrkja i sijnu Byskupsdæmi, og þad þessa Bok skraseta hann fann samnligast og rieltíugast. huad huor kyrkja ætti ad formu og nyu i lausu og fostu.]

\(^{41}\) The best account of stóðamál is Magnús Stefánsson’s Frá göðakirkju til biskupskirjú.
\(^{42}\) Magnús Stefánsson, Stadir og stóðamál, p. 48.
\(^{44}\) DI II, 630–1; Gunnar F. Guðmundsson, ‘Íslenskt samfélag’, p. 140.


\(^{46}\) DI IV, 247.

\(^{47}\) DI II, 425: ‘In 1318, in the bishopric of the worthy Lord Bishop Audun, he caused the goods of all the churches in his bishopric to be minutely examined and calculated and to write in this book that which he found to be most truthful and accurate regarding that which each church owned in moveable and unmoving property, past and present’. 
What is perhaps most immediately noticeable about the preface is the way it frames the creation of the mál dagabók as the product of a comprehensive inventory of the diocese. Rather than describing the mál dagabók as a compilation of pre-existing mál dagar, Bishop Auðun’s preface emphasizes instead the active process of surveying churches and creating data. Additionally, the preamble suggests—contrary to what is known about the process of creating the mál dagabók—that this book was to be seen as a single unit, produced at a single time and entirely under the guidance of Bishop Auðun. In short, the impression created by this preamble is that of a centralised administrative project undertaken by the new bishop of Hölar. This is a very different view of the mál dagabókur than that which prevails in modern scholarship, which has been more interested in the longer oral and written tradition of the individual mál dagar, as discussed above. The preamble to Bishop Auðun’s mál dagabók says nothing of the past, of longstanding tradition, oral or otherwise, or of the role of the mál dagar as contracts between the churches and their lay patrons. Instead it presents us with an episcopal view of the mál dagabókur, one which emphasizes the active role of the incoming bishop and the production of new data through a process of inventorying the churches in the diocese.

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

Anno domini CD9, ccc9, xc9, iij . j fyrstann týma er herra Petur visiteradi nordannlandz. reynuduzt þuliljik ornamenta og kyrjiku Eignjr í faustu og lausu J Hola Biskupzdeke sem hir fylgjar.

An itinerary of Bishop Pétur’s visitation has also survived, itself a remarkable document, confirming the dating of the visitation to 1394. Additionally, an individual mál dagi for the church at Vióðalstunga confirms the message from the preamble to Bishop Pétur’s mál dagabók. In its preamble, the individual mál dagi claimed that it was made at the time of Bishop Pétur’s visitation; apart from the addition of this preamble, the text of the mál dagi is identical to the mál dagi for Vióðalstunga preserved in Pétur’s mál dagabók. In addition to confirming the idea that the mál dagar were created on the occasion of the bishops’ first visitation, as outlined in the preambles, the existence of this loose mál dagi might also provide more clues about the process of creating the mál dagabókur. In particular, it suggests that it may have been standard practice to have a copy of each mál dagi made at the time of the visitation, to be held at the parish church. This document is unfortunately preserved only in a very late copy and the language and contents may have been influenced by that of the mál dagabók. At any rate, the mál dagabókur are remarkably consistent in their claims that they were produced on the first visitation of the new bishop. Their assigned dates are also consistent with this.

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48 DI III, 155; DI IV, 247. See also Magnús Stefánsson, Stakir og stathamál, pp. 86–9.

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

51 ‘Anno Domini M9, ccc9, xc9, iij . j fyrstann týma er herra petur visiterade nordann lands’, DI III, 592 (in the year of our Lord 1394, the first time that Lord Pétur went on visitation in the north of the country). Cf. DI III, 538–40.

52 See the note to the text, DI III, 592.
made by Sophia Eiríksdóttir, who became the owner of Móðruvellir í Eyjafjarðar after the death of her father, Eiríkr Magnússon.56

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

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

56 There is also a family connection here, as Sophia’s sister (unnamed) was Steinmóðir Þorsteinsson’s concubine. She probably died in the plague together with Steinmóðir, because by 1415 another daughter of Eiríkr Magnússon, named Margarét, had inherited their property. DI III, 761–2.
57 See for instance the málagi for Breiðabólstaður í Vesturhópa from Bishop Aðún’s málagabók. While the entire collection is dated to 1318, the málagi includes the record of a donation made by Bishop Egill Eyjólfsbóinn, bishop of Hólar between 1332–41: DI II, 480.
corroborating that there were indeed two officials in the diocese of Hólar in the late fourteenth century. In a document dated to 1396, Dórðr Dóðarson was described as officialis of Hólar, while Steinmódr was named vicar-general, and indeed this was the more common configuration in fourteenth-century Iceland. As vicar-general and official, and later as co-officials, Dórðr and Steinmódr were both very active in the administration of the diocese of Hólar in the final decades of the fourteenth century. Bishop Pétr left Iceland in 1396, leaving Dórðr and Steinmódr to manage the diocese. Having effectively taken over the role of bishop after Pétr’s departure in 1396, the prominent role of Dórðr and Steinmódr in the management of the diocese is further illustrated by their visitation in 1399.

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

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

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

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59 DI III, 643.
60 DI III, 611.
61 'Eír vörðaligt herra herra petr med guds oc postolighs sætiz nad biskup a holm bidoðst til skips, en sira steinmódr tok med stadnum', DI III, 611 ("when the reverend lord, Lord Pétr, bishop of Hólar by the grace of God and the Apostolic see prepared to set sail, and the Reverend Steinmódr received the stabr").

62 DI III, 277–85.
63 DI III, 287–90.
older form of documentation, recording and affirming the contract made between a church and its patron. While the bishops and other producers of the málaga bækur emphasized the former process in their preambles to these collections, the preservation of this older format suggests that it, too, held meaning to late medieval Church administrators.

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

In the above discussion, I have done no more than scratch the surface of a complex topic about which a great deal more remains to be said. Indeed, much remains unclear both about the textual history of the málaga bækur and about the context in which these texts were produced. Future research might benefit from an examination of the different variations between the format and content of the different málaga bækur, for instance, as well as from further investigation of the small number of loose málagar, such as that from Víðidalstunga. In this article, I have attempted to highlight some of the possible avenues through which the málaga bækur might be approached within the framework of literacy studies. Further study in this area will develop a stronger understanding not only of the history of the Church and administrative structures in Iceland, but also of the role that administrative literacy played in developing the history of literacy and writing in an otherwise undervalued period in Icelandic literary history.
Borough Foundation and Ethnic Identity in English Towns after 1066

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To speak of English boroughs and their relation to ethnic identity in England after the Norman Conquest of 1066 sees a rather stark juxtaposition of two aspects of scholarship that seemingly have been subject to almost completely inverse fortunes in terms of their diachronic popularity. For questions concerning the issue of ethnic identity in post-Conquest England, the latter part of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first really marks the period in which these began to receive more serious scholarly consideration. This development was likely a result of an increasing willingness to accept that, while it might not be appropriate to speak in the medieval period of nations as one might understand the term today, medieval people doubtlessly had a sense of identity and belonging to a wider community: a gens, or natio for example. As such, scholars have thought it important to assess what effect the significant coming together of identity groups after 1066 had on English society, particularly in terms of the social practices of its inhabitants, and their perceptions of identity. In particular, much attention has been paid to just how, when and why settlers who arrived in England from the continent came eventually to regard themselves—and be regarded—as English. Arguably the most comprehensive recent work on the subject is Hugh Thomas’s 2003 monograph in which he elucidated some mechanisms through which he believed interaction and assimilation between the English population and continental settlers were effected. In particular, Thomas saw townspeople and the urban sphere as crucial to this process, although he was at pains to point out that it is necessary to appreciate the fact that assimilation was the result of many interrelated factors. Moreover, while this work doubtlessly did much to augment our understanding of post-Conquest identity, the chapter on urban interactions also had the effect of highlighting the importance of studying post-Conquest identity.


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

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

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


Borough Foundation and Ethnic Identity

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

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


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

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

8 "The English burgesses who live there have their former customs ... the
French burgesses have all their forfeitures discharged for 12d". Herefordshire, ed.
P. Thorn and C. Thorn, Domesday Book 17 (Chichester, 1983), C14.
9 Shropshire, ed. F. Thorn and C. Thorn, Domesday Book 25 (Chichester, 1986),
C14.
11 Nottinghamshire, ed. C. Parker and S. Wood, Domesday Book 28 (Chichester,
1977), B3; S. N. Mastoris, "The Boundary Between the English and French
Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham: A Documentary Survey", Trans. of the
Thornton Soc. of Nottinghamshire 85 (1981), 68–74, at p. 68; Lilley, Urban Life in the
Middle Ages, pp. 97–8.

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

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

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

12 Lilley, Urban Life in the Middle Ages, p. 98; Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis', p.
689; Mastoris, 'English and French Boroughs of Mediaeval Nottingham', p. 68;
D. Roffe, 'Nottinghamshire and the North: A Domesday Study' (unpubl. PhD
dissertation, Univ. of Leicester, 1987), ch. 7. See also below, p. 47.
13 Norfolk (Part 1), ed. P. Brown, Domesday Book 33 (Chichester, 1984), 166; C.
Platt, Medieval Southampton: The Port and Trading Community, AD 1000–1600,
(Chichester, 1982), S2; Lilley, City and Cosmos, p. 149.
14 Lilley, 'Mapping Cosmopolis', p. 689.
necessarily relating to any special privileges granted to the French burgesses in particular. They complain that their assessment is unfairly high due to the fact that there were far fewer dwellings liable for the geld payment than there were in 1066, for the Shrewsbury customs in Domesday claim there were 197 dwellings exempt from taxation in 1086. Indeed, part of the reason for this is the fact that the forty-three French burgesses were granted an exemption. However, this constitutes but one of a number of other factors that reduced the numbers liable for geld payment, namely the destruction of fifty-one houses to facilitate the building of the castle, the fact that fifty houses were unoccupied and that thirty-nine burgesses granted to the abbey were also exempt. It ought to be noted that the granting of geld exemptions was certainly not an exceptional practice either before or after 1066. The problem in the eyes of the English burgesses of Shrewsbury, therefore, was not that they perceived a policy of unfair favouritism towards the French burgesses, but that they thought it unreasonable, perhaps unrealistic, to expect the same amount of geld to be levied as was previously, considering the severely diminished numbers now responsible for paying it. It is perhaps significant too that the low assessment of 12d under the laws of Breteuil does not feature in the complaint, although it is in fact not clear whether or not the French burgesses of Shrewsbury had been granted these customs by 1086.

Indeed, there appears to be little if any evidence that these spatial—and in some cases legal—divisions reified and engendered real ethnic tensions within towns, the likes of which provoked violent conflict in some comparable situations on the continent. In fact, incidental comments by both Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury suggest English and French inhabitants were living together peacefully within towns and even intermarrying by at least the mid to late 1070s. If the absence of evidence for tensions is indicative of such an atmosphere of harmonious cohabitation, one must consider why the English population did not become embittered towards those in the apparently privileged French settlements. This therefore calls for a careful consideration of the nature of the new boroughs and the motives that potentially influenced their foundation. It shall be argued here that when borough foundation is considered in relation to broader synchronic and diachronic trends pertaining to social, economic and legal practices both within the urban sphere and in English medieval society more generally, it is perhaps possible to see why the new Norman plantations did not incite the levels of resentment that might be expected.

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

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13 Shropshire, C14.
14 Ibid.
A thorough analysis of this problem is hindered by the fact that there is no extant record of the customs of Breteuil. Bateson’s reconstruction of the Breteuil customs was to a large degree based on the assumption that the twelfth-century customs of Verneuil (themselves known only through a reproduction in a later grant to Pontorson) were sufficiently similar to those customs in England avowedly based on the Breteuil laws to conclude that the Verneuil customs must have been substantially similar to the original Breteuil customs.\(^{21}\) However, as Ballard observed, the distribution in other borough customs, both British and French, of the majority of the thirty clauses in Bateson’s reconstruction of the Breteuil laws is not sufficient to show any incontrovertible sign of a common Bretalian origin; that is, the customs were either too widely distributed and appeared in a number of customs that cannot be shown to have any Bretalian influence, or they appeared in such a small number of customs so as to produce a fairly inconclusive distribution pattern.\(^{22}\)

There are only four clauses, on account of either their appearance in customs for which there is good evidence of Bretalian influence, or their explicit attribution to Breteuil in other documents, that may tentatively be ascribed a Bretalian origin: the stipulation that a military expedition from the town should return on the same day; a clause stating that an accused might avoid arrest if bail can be found; a clause limiting relief on the sale or succession of burgages to 12d; and the clause stating that amercements are to be discharged at a flat rate of 12d.\(^{23}\) One must therefore question the extent to which the so-called Breteuil class of borough customs in England after the Conquest might be perceived as having a distinctly and recognisably French character; the presence of a handful of clauses with a supposed French origin does not seem sufficient evidence to do so. This is compounded by the apparent rarity of most of these clauses. Only the first two appear in other extant customs from Normandy and their appearance across the Channel is somewhat rare, for they are each attested in only one English and three Welsh examples. The limitation of relief for the sale or succession of burgages is somewhat better attested with seven appearances; however, the extent to which it constituted a favourable privilege is questionable considering that there are lower limitations of between 4d and 1d to be found elsewhere.\(^{24}\)

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

\(^{23}\) Ballard, ‘The Law of Breteuil’, p. 654. Ballard also postulated that the clause forbidding the assize mortis antecessoris from being held in the town may also be a Bretalian clause. However, the fact that a number of boroughs that were seemingly not granted the laws of Breteuil were exempt from the assize would suggest otherwise. Bateson, Borough Customs, I, 243 and n. 1. It has been suggested the reason for these exemptions was due to the fact that burgages could be freely bequeathed by will, while the assize was appropriate only for
dealing with land that was solely heritable in nature. See Tait’s introduction in British Borough Charters 1216–1307, ed. A. Ballard and J. Tait (Cambridge, 1923), p. xiii; also Bateson, Borough Customs, II, ccxi.
\(^{25}\) Chichester, ed. P. Morgan, Domesday Book 26 (Chichester, 1978), FT2,19.
\(^{26}\) In the Verneuil customs a list of fines is enumerated for various offences, most but crucially not all of which are discharged at 12d. Ballard, ‘The Law of Breteuil’, pp. 647–8.
\(^{27}\) British Borough Charters, p. 151.
as to why such a significant concession did not produce any traceable feelings of resentment amongst the English townspeople. The answer may be sought in a consideration of the broader trends and attitudes prevailing within medieval law and the nature of urban jurisdiction. For, as has already been touched upon in considering the exaction of geld, exemptions and other miscellaneous privileges granted to a specific group as a result of royal or seigneurial favour were by no means uncommon during this period. Diversity rather than universality of urban law was the norm both between and within towns, for even within the same settlement is was not uncommon for its inhabitants to be subject to different legal jurisdictions. It is therefore unlikely that any feeling of entitlement to treatment under equal and uniform law existed within these communities. In this context, then, the 12th amercement clause may have been regarded as fairly unremarkable in constituting simply another instance of a concession to a group favoured by their lord.

However, what of those new French settlements for which there is no evidence that they were granted the law of Breteuil? Indeed, this would appear to be the case at Nottingham and Norwich. In these cases it is often difficult to establish what legal relationship the new areas of settlement had to the rest of the town. As has already been mentioned, a rather exceptional legal distinction between the two boroughs of Nottingham is in evidence from the thirteenth century until the early eighteenth. This distinction, however, was limited to only a handful of matters, namely inheritance, widows’ dowries, seofment by youths and fines for affray. The history of this legal distinction between the two boroughs of Nottingham is, however, very difficult to interpret. David Roffé has done much to demonstrate its possible existence from the time of Domesday Book at least—and most probably before also. Significantly, he raised the possibility that the division between the two areas was in fact already essentially in existence by 1066, the area of the later French borough possibly having been the head of a comital estate centred upon Nottingham which passed to William Peverell after the Conquest. The later division in customs that one finds in the thirteenth century was therefore a result of the new borough having been part of the Peverell honour and subject to its court until the family’s escheat to the crown in c. 1154. However, there is nothing to suggest particularly significant privileges being extended towards French settlers, for what Mastoris’s study demonstrated is that the customs within the English borough were in fact the slightly more favourable of the two, the fines there having been lower than in the French borough by as much as half.

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

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28 Some good examples of jurisdictional heterogeneity within towns are given in Nicholas, The Growth of the Medieval City, pp. 152-4.
30 Roffé, ‘Nottinghamshire and the North’, ch. 7.
32 Cf. the map in Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, ed. W. Hudson, Publ. of the Selden Soc. 5 (London, 1892), p. vii with Lilley, ‘Mapping Cosmopolis’, p. 691, fig. 5. For a survey of the functions of the thirteenth-century leet courts in Norwich see Leet Jurisdiction in the City of Norwich, pp. xxii–xlvii.
complex questions related to the role of leets in East Anglia more
generally during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This topic has
been well surveyed by James Campbell and there is therefore little
reason—not to mention insufficient space—to embark here upon a
wholesale reproduction of the evidence he presents.34

To keep things both necessarily simple and brief, it seems that
one ought to accept the likelihood that Norwich, as a hundred in
itself, had been organised into leets at some point before the
Conquest for at least the purpose of apportioning Danegeld payments
within the hundred. Whether before the thirteenth century they had
developed their own courts, as some rural leets may well have done in
the twelfth century or even before, is difficult to say. Personally, I am
inclined to see such a development at Norwich as more suited to the
period in which the borough and burgesses as a municipal entity were
acquiring rights and duties formerly belonging to the crown; that is
following their acquisition of the *firma burgi* from Richard I in 1194.35

It was during this period that the responsibilities of the borough
administration were becoming more numerous and thus some sort of
devolution of jurisdiction to smaller courts may have been both
convenient and necessary. The fact that Norwich from an early date
likely had leets for the purposes of geld apportionment, possibly with
the area of the French borough constituting a leet in itself, need not
however entail the view that the leets served to foster divisions
amongst the town’s population. Significantly, from what little we
know, it appears that decisions regarding the organisation of leets
were taken at the level of the hundred.36 In the case of Norwich this
means that such decisions would have been taken at the level of the
borough, thus the co-operation of inhabitants from all areas of the
borough (both its old and new areas) would have been necessary for

35 *Records of the City of Norwich*, I, 12–14.
36 Campbell, ‘Hundreds and Leets’, p. 158.

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

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

The chronicle contains a rental list—which Eleanor Searle dated
to 1102–1110—detailing the names and occasionally the occupations
of those who were renting in the new borough established by the
abbot.38 It is one of only a few sources of such an early date that lists
large numbers of a town’s inhabitants by name and thus permits
some sort of demographic analysis. Crucially for the discussion here,
Unlike similar information available for residences in Colchester and Winchester which were already established settlements, the Battle rental provides information on the population of an entirely new post-Conquest plantation. An onomastic analysis of the Battle rental reveals that the vast majority of the settlers there were not only of likely English origin but were also for the most part natives of east Sussex. As an abbatial foundation, Battle does not perhaps provide a direct parallel with those new French boroughs in the towns discussed above. However, it does aptly demonstrate the potential draw new settlements might have for the English population living within their hinterlands. Indeed, the frequent statement in customs that villeins might obtain freedom through residence in the borough for a certain period, provided that they were subject to no seigneurial claim during this time, would also appear to demonstrate that migration of this kind was occurring with a relative degree of frequency.

It would therefore be reasonable to assume that those new, supposedly French boroughs might also attract English settlers from the town’s hinterland who were keen to take advantage of the privileges afforded by borough franchise. Indeed, references to the establishment of a French borough need not necessarily entail the assumption that it was intended as a truly ethnically homogeneous and separate community. Certainly no extant borough charter includes any ethnic qualification for borough franchise. In some cases certain villeins were disbarred from obtaining freedom through borough franchise, though for the most part franchise was open to anyone provided they fulfilled certain requirements, most commonly a period of residence in the borough of a year and a day. If any exclusionary clause based on ethnicity existed in any charter that is no longer extant, its appearance would have been truly exceptional judging by the precedent set by the surviving sources.

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

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

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40 British Borough Charters 1042–1216, pp. 102–5.
41 Ibid. pp. 101–11.
42 On the restrictions relating to villeins see Beresford, New Towns, p. 208.
43 ‘These [aforementioned Frenchmen and Englishmen] all pay amongst themselves £A 6d for all customary dues’. Hampshire, S2.
names at the expense of Old and Middle English names.\textsuperscript{44} Whilst these statistics may in part have been influenced by the trend towards the adoption of continental names within English families during the twelfth century, they do strongly suggest a large amount of French settlement in the town, particularly between 1066 and c. 1110. Nevertheless, there is evidence for the continued presence of Englishmen within the social and financial elite of Winchester.\textsuperscript{45} In particular, the English moneyers not only maintained positions as some of the town's more wealthy citizens but also continued to occupy dwellings on the high status streets that were increasingly dominated by French inhabitants.\textsuperscript{46}

The sharp increase in French immigration to Winchester may be owed in part to the town’s function as a centre of royal administration for at least some time after the Conquest. However, evidence from thePipe Rolls of Henry II reveal a number of cases in which the royal officials based in other towns were of English extraction.\textsuperscript{47} What is more, evidence from London in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries shows a strong English presence maintained amongst the city’s civic elite along with frequent interactions and even a number of exogamous marriages between English and French families.\textsuperscript{48} There is evidence too from other towns that Englishmen and English families achieved positions of status as wealthy merchants or landlords, as heads of guilds and occasionally as high ranking officials within civic government, even within towns in which one may observe distinct areas of French settlement.\textsuperscript{49}

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

\textsuperscript{45} M. Biddle and D. J. Keene, 'General Survey and Conclusions', in \emph{Winchester in the Early Middle Ages}, pp. 449–508, p. 476.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 480.
\textsuperscript{47} Thomas, \emph{The English and the Normans}, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{49} Thomas, \emph{The English and the Normans}, pp. 184–5.
lines of class and for rupture to have been more likely the result of grievances related to fiscal matters rather than ethnic tensions.\textsuperscript{50}

Flann Mainistrech's \textit{Götterdämmerung} as a Junction within \textit{Lebor Gabála Érenn}\textsuperscript{1}

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

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


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

LEBOR GABÁLA ÉRENN: TEXTUAL HISTORY AND CRITICISM

One of the most troublesome—but also one of the most interesting—aspects of Lebor Gabála is the significant variance in content, structure and doctrine between its thirteen manuscript texts, which are generally grouped into four recensions.⁵ Since Robert Macalister’s edition of Lebor Gabála, R. M. Scowcroft has offered another response to the text, as well as to various attempts to describe its textual history.⁶ He has argued that, rather than being derived from an authorial archetype, much of the material in the extant compilation is derived from subsequent commentary and supplementary material, as well as fundamental re-working in subsequent redactions and conflations of material from different versions.⁷ Any original with which the tradition began is no longer extant and Scowcroft does not believe it is possible to reconstruct it definitively.⁸ Therefore, ‘the very quest for an “original” [Lebor Gabála] ... is misguided’.⁹

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

Poetry in Lebor Gabála Éreinn

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

Éstid a eolchu en Íon (‘Listen, scholars without flaw’) appears in several versions of Lebor Gabála and is part of a considerable corpus of lengthy metrical histories found in the compilation.¹¹ It is

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⁸ Ibid. pp. 94–5.
⁹ Ibid. p. 88.
attributed to the poet and historian, Flann Mainistreach (ob. 1056). Studies of the frequently occurring genre of prosimetrion in medieval Irish literature have generally concluded that the function of the verse component is to support the prose either through marking moments of heightened pathos and drama or as evidence for statements made in prose. The evidential quality of a poem is derived from identifying it as the words either of an eyewitness or of a known scholar. Usually, poetry in Lebor Gabála is neither concerned with heightened emotion nor found in the mouths of characters involved in the action. It tends, in general, to be very similar to the accompanying prose in terms of content and doctrine. While much is anonymous, the longer poems tend to be attributed to scholars of the Middle Irish period, such as Flann Mainistreach, who worked shortly before or during the period in which Lebor Gabála was compiled.

Macalister, Scowcroft and John Carey view much of the poetry as having been originally composed independently, before subsequently becoming extremely influential in the development of the prosimetric compilation. Thus, many are cited in extenso as direct sources, rather than supporting evidence. Scowcroft regards the original document behind the extant Lebor Gabála as having been written entirely in prose, with subsequent redactors adding and integrating poems into the prose. Macalister has described the verse in Lebor Gabála as an ‘unmitigated nuisance’ and, conceiving it to be independent from the prose, edits and prints it separately. However, both Carey and Scowcroft, while understanding the prose as being derived from the verse, also stress how both forms function integrally within the extant compilation, viewing the result in terms of the well-known medieval literary form, the opus geminatum. Scowcroft’s analysis is particularly interesting for this study. He suggests that, in Lebor Gabála, authoritative verse is not simply invoked in support of prose but, instead, the latent authority of the cited verse is in a dialogic relationship with other poems and within a wider, composite and more complex exposition by the compiler of the recension:

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

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

17 Macalister, Lebor Gabála I, x.
19 Scowcroft, ‘Leabhár Gabhála Part I’, p. 91. For examples of poems in Lebor Gabála that Scowcroft believes to be based on existing prose, see ‘Leabhár Gabhála Part I’, p. 90 and ‘Leabhár Gabhála Part II’, p. 5.
Editions and Citations

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

It is for this reason that citations of Lebor Gabála in this study will be from Macalister’s edition, checked against the diplomatic edition of the Book of Leinster where appropriate. Quoted text from other versions has been checked against the original manuscripts and I have revised some of Macalister’s translations. Mostly, however, this study is concerned with ordering of material, rather than with close reading, so the shortcomings of Macalister’s edition, while worth noting, are not relevant to it.

\textbf{Éstid a eolchu... in Context}

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

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[22] \emph{LL. I, II. 1–1800}, pp. 1–56.
\item[25] This is the customary translation of their name but see J. Carey ‘The Name “Tùatha Dé Danann”’, \emph{Éigse} 18 (1980–1981), 291–4.
\item[26] \emph{Lebor Gabála} IV, §§ 304–77, pp. 91–342; \emph{LL. I, II. 1049–456}, pp. 33–46.
\item[27] Van Hamel, ‘Lebor Gabála’, pp. 190–1; \emph{Lebor Gabála} IV, pp. 97–105; Dillon, ‘Lebor Gabála’, p. 67. For further references, see Scowcroft ‘Leabhar Gabhála Part 1’, p. 82, n. 1.
\item[28] For example, both Éstid a eolchu... and the poem Éstid in senchas shugach (‘Hear the history of hosts’), also found in Lebor Gabála, refer to the Tùatha Dé Danann as deo (‘gods’): \emph{Lebor Gabála} IV, l. 1982, pp. 232–3; \emph{LL. I, I. 1377}, p. 43; \emph{Lebor Gabála} IV, ll. 2497–505, pp. 282–91.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Eystein Thanaesch

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

Éistid a eclum..., with one late exception, is always found as part of Lebor Gabála.  
It appears in the following manuscripts.

Recension m

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

Recension a

- N (Book of Leinster): Dublin, Trinity College, H 218 cat. 1339 (s. xii), 11ra18–11rb40.
- F (Book of Fermoy): Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, Stowe D iii 1 cat. 671 (Munster? s. xv), 11vb21–12ra39.

Recension c

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

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

A genealogical context within m and N

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

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30 Cambridge, University Library, MS. Add. 4207 (s. xii), fols. 44v–45r.
31 The sigla used hereafter are those used in Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 3–5. For more details concerning the manuscripts and for a guide to how they relate to Macalister's edition, see Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', pp. 84–6, 139–42.
33 This manuscript consists of folios which have become detached from the Book of Fermoy proper, which is bound as Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 23 E 29 cat. 1134 (Munster? s. xv).
34 Scowcroft describes Éistid a eclum... as a 'later addition' to µ but does not elaborate 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', p. 5.
35 Ibid. p. 2; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 4–6.
36 Lebor Gabála IV, §§ 316 (N) and 316a (m), pp. 126–33; LL I, ll. 1130–89, pp. 35–7. The other poem is Éistid in sanche dhuach, see above, p. 75, n. 28.
The prose coverage of the Túatha Dé Danann in N concludes with cognate genealogies, the material on Tuairill Bicreò being absent.\textsuperscript{38} Ėstid a celtun... is the third of three poems which follow N's prose, each, like Ėstid a celtu..., apparently the work of an eleventh-century scholar. Erín co n-áilll co n-tráith ('Ireland, with pride, with weapons'), is attributed elsewhere to Eochaid Ua Flainn and focuses on the arrival of the Túatha Dé Danann and the reigns of their kings.\textsuperscript{39} Tóath Dé Danann fo diarnáir ('The Túatha Dé Danann under obscurity'), attributed to 'Tanaide', lists their major figures and their particular skills.\textsuperscript{40} N is peculiar, in that it does tend to group poems together where other versions intersperse them more regularly with the prose.\textsuperscript{41} However, the implication is that the scribe of N does not interpret Ėstid a celtu... as directly supporting the genealogies, as the poem is separated from them by seventy lines of manuscript text in N (10vb3–11ra17). These complementary poems can thus almost be read as a verse account of the Túatha Dé Danann in Ireland entirely discrete from the prose.

The general character of m and N, however, may provide insights into the role Ėstid a celtun... plays in these versions. Both are derived from μ, the focus of which is, Scowcroft argues, on tracing the various settlers in Ireland genealogically back to Noah, establishing a continuous line of its kings and associating them with Tara.\textsuperscript{42} With a few exceptions, m does not tend to deviate extensively from these topics. N keeps the structure of μ and interpolates content from α, resulting in a version similar in character to m.\textsuperscript{33}

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

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., § 316, pp. 126–31; ll. I., ll. 1130–86, pp. 35–7.
\textsuperscript{40} Lebor Gabála IV, l. 1861–904, pp. 220–5; ll. I., ll. 1263–306, pp. 40–1; and for the attribution to Tanaide, see Lebor Gabála IV, § 366, pp. 184–5. This more obscure poet is thought to have lived during the eleventh century: Carey, 'Legendary History', p. 44.
\textsuperscript{41} Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 91.
\textsuperscript{42} Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', pp. 7, 32. For the kingship of Tara, see B. Jaski, Early Irish Kingship and Succession (Dublin, 2000), pp. 214–25.
\textsuperscript{43} Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 97.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 112.
\textsuperscript{46} Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', p. 31; Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', p. 11.
\textsuperscript{47} Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part II', pp. 29–31.
One distinctive feature of *Éistid a volcan*... in m is the inclusion of four additional quatrains at the end of the poem, which are also found in Le. These quatrains reject the idea that the Túatha Dé Danann are still alive and living in the sid or in Tir Tairngire; instead, they are in Hell. Carey doubts that these quatrains were part of the poem as originally composed. However, if they are later additions, it is not clear whether they were added by the compiler of m or in an earlier version of the poem. They do not fit comfortably with the rest of m or N. The Túatha Dé Danann retreat to the sid—a kind of underground world—after the arrival of the Gaedil in Mesca Ulad ("The Intoxication of the Ulstermen") and De Gabáil in tsìda ("Concerning the Seizure of the Fairy Mound"), but this does not happen in any version of Lebor Gabála. The term Tir Tairngire has been shown by James Carney to be a translation of terra repromissionis ("promised land") and generally refers to a Christian paradise. Only in a few late Middle Irish texts is a place with that name inhabited by the Túatha Dé Danann.

Within this article, these interesting quatrains must receive less attention than they merit. Sufficient to say, while they are clearly of relevance to *Éistid a volcan*..., they appear to attack a viewpoint not expressed anywhere else in the Lebor Gabála tradition, perhaps suggesting that the poem as it appears in m was intended for another context. If they are a later addition to the poem, they constitute an interpretation of it akin to those to which we shall now turn.

**Gods, demons or humans? F and c**

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

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

\[
\text{Atbert \( \text{tra araile} \) beitid demna so, sevo \( \text{fetattair} \) curpu daenca impu o lo, d\(\text{in as fin; ar \( m\text{archetar a \( n\text{egenelacha} \) forul, \( d\text{o nebbat ra \( tiachtain c\text{ereitmin. Conad \( d\text{ia n\text{\-aideai} \) ro chan Flann Mainistrech in \( d\text{han-sa sis ga forigeall.}\)}}\]

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

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

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

62 Lebor Gabála IV, II. 2053–6, pp. 238–9; L.L. I, II. 1448–51, p. 46.
63 Dictionary of the Irish Language: Compact Edition (Dublin, 1983), e.g. forgell.
64 Lebor Gabála IV, § 371, pp. 200–3: ‘And though some say that the Túatha Dé Danann were demons—for they came into Ireland without being perceived, and they themselves said they came in dark clouds, it is on account of their excessive knowledge and their learning and on account of the difficulty of following their genealogies back—but, in truth, they pursued knowledge and powers of vision, for in Ireland, all obscurity in art, all clarity in reading and every exactitude in craft, their origin is thus with the Túatha Dé Danann and, although the Faith came to Ireland, these arts were not discarded, for they are good. For all know that they took human bodies around them by day, which is more true. And (their) genealogy can be traced back and they existed at the time of the coming of the Faith, so that of their deaths,
The emphasised text closely resembles part of the passage we have cited from F, while the rest of the passage similarly resembles a passage in b, which also argues that the Túatha Dé Danann were not demons. The passage in e thus appears to be constructed out of pre-existing material although its arrangement in e gives the material from F new meaning. The overall sense of the passage in e seems to be that the Túatha Dé Danann are not demons but the passage includes the idea that they only had human bodies by day. Macalister regards this phrase as out of place, describing it as a ‘gloss’ when it occurs in e. However, the phrase is presented as part of the main text in both e and F. The rest of the passage from F effectively argues that they are human and cites Eštid a eolchu... in support of this view.

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

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

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Flann Mainistirech chanted this poem¹, author’s own translation and emphasis.

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² These poems are Fir Bolg batar suima sel (‘The Fir Bolg were here for a season’) and Gáedel Glas bun Gáedel (‘Gaedel Glas, of whom are the Gaedel’): Lebor Gabála IV, ll. 1493–544, pp. 46–53; LL I, ll. 893–940, pp. 28–30; Lebor Gabála II, ll. 339–510, 347–350, 371–98, 415–8, pp. 90–107, 90–1, 92–7, 98–9; LL I, ll. 244–387, pp. 8–13, at ll. 260, 280–91, 304–7. The former is attributed to Tanaíde, for whom see above, p. 78, n. 40; the latter is attributed to Gilla Cóemín (ll. 1072), see LL I, §§ 117, 165, pp. 30–3, 78–9; P. J. Smith, Three Historical Poems Attributed to Gilla Cóemín, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 8 (Münster, 2007), 25–32.
addition, several examples of death-tale poetry occur among the other
purposed works of Flann Mainistrech. For instance, Ríg Thomra duí
lesbann iúi ('The kings of Tara who lack envy') and Ríg Thomra tolebaige
iar tair ('The kings of Tara of the slopes, after that') together list the
deaths of the kings of Tara from Eochu Feidlech to Mael Sechnaill
mac Domnaill (ob. 1022).71 Sporadically, cause of death is also
supplied in Flann's poem on world kingship, Rēdīg dam, a Dé, do nim
('Unravel for me, O God, your heaven').72 An early example from
outside Lebor Gabála is Fianna hútar i nÉmain ('Warriors that were in
Émain'), which is attributed to the tenth-century poet Cinaed Ua
h'Artacáin (ob. 975) and recounts the deaths of characters familiar
from a wide range of texts and cycles.73

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

71 Pódrád, 'Twelve Poems' I, pp. 279–303; LL III, ll. 15,640–780 and 15,782–
989, pp. 504–8 and 509–15;
72 S. Mac Airt, 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship', Êtudes Celtiques 6
(1953–54), 255–80; 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship cont.', Êtudes
Celtiques 7 (1955–56), 18–45; 'A Middle Irish Poem on World Kingship cont.',
73 W. Stokes, 'On the Deaths of Some Irish Heroes', Revue Celtique 23 (1902),
303–48; J. Carey, 'Cináed Ua h'Artacaín [Cineth O'Harragain] (d. 975)' in Oxford
2011.

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

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

74 Carey, National Origin Legend, p. 17.
76 Lebor Gabála IV, §§ 376–7, pp. 208–11; The Codex Palatinus-Vaticanus No. 830:
In the *LL* king-list and *Éistid a cölchu...* the deaths mentioned occur in the same order. The accounts in the *LL* king-list are a lot terser but what details it gives are the same. Specifically, its account of the death of Bres mac Ealadan closely follows the wording in the poem: ‘Bress mac Ealadan meic Néit .uiii. mhladna d’ól rota i right lomna ros marbh’;78 ‘... rope domna trota tra / ól rota i richt ind lomma.’79 Also, the *LL* king-list’s description of the death of the Dagda (Eochu Ollathair) uses the same distinctive phrase as the poem: ‘Eocho Ollathir .xxx. marbh de gae chró,’80 ‘Marbh in Dagda do gáí chró / isin Bruig, ni himmargó.’81

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

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

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

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84 *Palestino-Vaticanus*, p. 292: ‘and in the fifteenth year after that, Cairpre died by a beam of the sun and Étain died’, author’s own translation.
86 Smith suggests that this sort of apparatus developed after the work of Flann Mainistrech and was perhaps based on it: ‘Historical Poetry’, p. 341.
It is not clear if the use of *Éistid a eolchu... in this context is actually a later development subsequent to the reading evidenced in m and N. Indeed, the additional quatrains in m demonstrate that such an interpretation had been made by someone at the time of m's compilation. On the other hand, both F and e are derived from a lost version or group of versions, termed *U by Scowcroft, which did not influence m or N. The interpretation of *Éistid a eolchu... in F and e could thus be derived from an innovation at that stage.

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

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

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

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87 Scowcroft, 'Medieval Recensions', pp. 4–5.
88 Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála Part I', p. 91.
90 Lebor Gabála IV, § 306, pp. 106–9; LL I, ll. 1054, p. 33.
91 See above, p. 76.
93 Ibid., § 371, pp. 200–3.
94 Ibid., § 353, pp. 164–5.
was to render them human beings and thus euhemerize them. This may also explain the presence of the additional quatrains in the texts of *Estid a eolchu...* in m. The later versions may thus be interpreting the intention behind the material more accurately than the earliest extant versions.

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

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

**Conclusion**

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

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97 See above, p. 75.


100 Scowcroft, ‘Medieval Recensions’, p. 18.
Rhetoric, Translation and Historiography: the Literary Qualities of Brut y Tywysogion

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Brut y Tywysogion (‘the Chronicle of the Princes’) is a Welsh historical chronicle thought to have been translated into Welsh from Latin chronicles which are no longer extant.\(^1\) Entries begin with the year 681 and continue through 1282; a later continuation in Peniarth 20 extends the entries to the year 1332.\(^2\) The text is often noted for its

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

\(^2\) See BT, Peniarth MS. 20, pp. 228–36; for discussion see G. and T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Continuation of Brut y Tywysogion in Peniarth Ms. 20’, in Ysgryfan value as an historical document providing essential details of medieval Welsh history from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries and the various political and dynastic struggles therein. Yet its remarkable literary qualities are rarely considered, despite the fact that, beginning with the entry for the year 1014, it surpasses the sort of brief, annalistic entries that one would expect of a chronicle and instead embellishes the provided historical information with character descriptions, rhetorical flourishes, fast-paced battle scenes and even extended elegiac passages.\(^3\) The work is thus more in line with the historiographical modes of medieval authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury or Henry of Huntington than the genre of the purely annalistic chronicle.\(^4\) The presence of these literary features calls for an examination of the stylistic choices made by the compilers and the effect these choices have on the resulting product. For the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on the section of Brut y Tywysogion documenting the death of Rhys ap Gruffudd, prince of Deheubarth, in 1197, as this entry exemplifies


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

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

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

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8 See above, n. 1, p. 94; also BT, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi–xxxvii. For the Peniarth 20 edition of the text, Jones uses Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 20 (s. xiv\(^\text{3}\)); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3046D (formerly Mostyn 143, s. xvi); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3055D (formerly Mostyn 159, AD 1587); and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 213 (s. xvii\(^\text{1/2}\)); others have since been discovered (see BT, *Chronicle of the Princes*, pp. xiv–xxxvii). The primary manuscripts of Jones’s edition of the Red Book version are Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 18 (s. xiv\(^\text{3}\)); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 3035B (formerly Mostyn 116, s. xiv\(^\text{3}\)); the Red Book of Hergest (Oxford, Jesus College 111, s. xiv–xxv); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Llanstephan 172 (c. 1580); and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 19 (s. xiv–xxv). Though the Red Book of Hergest text itself is not actually the basic text for this edition, as it contains many errors and ‘inferior readings’, it is appropriate to follow convention and call it ‘the Red Book version’ (see BT, *Red Book of Hergest*, pp. xi; xxxviii–l). The primary manuscripts of *Brenhinedd y Saeson* are London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra B. v. (s. xiv\(^\text{3}\)) and the Black Book of Basingwerk (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales 7006, s. xv\(^\text{3}\)); see *Brenhinedd y Saeson*, pp. xv–xxv; also *Brenhinedd y Saeson*, pp. v–x. Dates, where available, have been taken from D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000).


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

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

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

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{13} Brechtinod y Sæsson, p. xiv: ‘The earlier and shorter notices in the Latin original of Brut y Tywysogion he took over in full, but the later and, in general, fuller entries down to the year 1197 he has attempted to compress, presumably to allow room for the addition of the earlier entries on the Saxon kings’.

\textsuperscript{14} Jones, ‘Historical Writing’, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. p. 22.

\textsuperscript{16} Jack, Medieval Wales, p. 30; he states that ‘in general Peniath 20 has more high rhetoric than Hergest’.

\textsuperscript{17} BT, Chronicle of the Princes, pp. xxxvii–xl and Hughes, ‘Welsh Latin Chronicles’, pp. 17 and 19.

\textsuperscript{18} For details, see BT, Red Book of Hergest, pp. xi–lxi and BT, Chronicle of the Princes, pp. xxxvii–xxxix; this model is in need of re-evaluation; see Brechtinod y Sæsson, ed. Dunnville, p. vi.

equivalent passages in the surviving Latin chronicles in order to
determine whether rhetorical and literary adornments are present in
the Latin versions as well as the Welsh: rather conveniently, the three
versions of Brut y Tywysogion have many passages in common with the
Cronica de Wallia, a Latin chronicle found in Exeter, Cathedral Library
MS 3514 and containing entries from 1190 to 1266.  

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

Julia Crick's important recent study on Exeter 3514 establishes
that the manuscript was copied in Wales 'in the decades [on] either
side of the Edwardian conquest, probably in a milieu very close to the
political centre'. She asserts that the Cronica de Wallia scribe was
working 'in or after 1266': a time of great political upheaval in Wales
very nearly contemporary with the annals themselves. Crick
demonstrates that the various texts in this manuscript (including
sections of Honorius of Autun's De imagine mundi, pseudo-Methodius
and Henry of Huntingdon's Historia Anglorum) represent 'an assertion
of intellectual and aesthetic standards' in which 'the place of Welsh
history was staked out ... using the universal language, in texts copied
in contemporary European script'; the compilers were highly
conscious of current artistic, literary and political trends. The section
of Cronica de Wallia upon which the present article focuses is
consistent with this assessment, as the text reflects a high quality of
Latin in keeping with the rhetorical modes of its day.

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

22 Crick, 'The Power and the Glory', p. 24. She argues that the manuscript was a
Welsh production based on its preservation of genealogies of Llewelyn ap
Gruffudd, the First Variant version of De gestis Britonum, a distinctly Welsh
version of Dares Phrygius’s De excidio Troiae historia and various archaic insular
abbreviations: ibid. pp. 25; 33.
23 Ibid. p. 39.
24 Ibid. p. 35.
25 Hughes also notes that the entries for 1228–30 'have correspondences with the
Brut', 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', p. 17. In agreement with Jones, she argues
that the Cronica de Wallia uses a Strata Florida source, just as Brut y Tywysogion
is suspected to have done, based on the fact that the text is particularly concerned
with events in Strata Florida: ibid. p. 19; see also BT, Chronicle of the Princes, p.
xxxix. Hughes ends this date range at 1248 because the Exeter annals 'omit a
reference in 1248 to the settlement of a debt owed by Strata Florida to King
Henry, which the Bruts say was recorded in the monastic annals'; the remainder
of the chronicle is a conflation of extracts from St David's annals and the Bury
observes that the entries ‘are in a rhetorical style similar to that of the *Bunl*.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Cronica de Wallia</em></th>
<th><em>Peniarth 20 version</em></th>
<th><em>Red Book version</em></th>
<th><em>BL Cotton Cleo. B. v.</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qua combusta</td>
<td>agwedy llosgi dyd</td>
<td>A gwydy llosgi, y</td>
<td>Ac odena y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eadem die Rogerus</td>
<td>hwnw y</td>
<td>dyd hwnw y</td>
<td>brysiassant hyt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Mortuo Mari</td>
<td>kyunasodès</td>
<td>dyffryn yn gwyagos</td>
<td>yn Radynor, ac</td>
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<tr>
<td>et Hugo de Sáil cum</td>
<td>roesser dy</td>
<td>y kyweinwed Roser</td>
<td>a’l llosgassant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximo apparatu</td>
<td>mortmyr ahu dy</td>
<td>Morter a Hu</td>
<td>A’r dyd hwnw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in ualle eiusdem</td>
<td>say dinuawr lu</td>
<td>Dysai yn vydnoed</td>
<td>yr doeth Rosser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulle turnas</td>
<td>ynydyyfrn ynh</td>
<td>arauwc o veich a</td>
<td>Morter a</td>
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<tr>
<td>magnas bellicis</td>
<td>emyl ydref hono</td>
<td>llurugeu a</td>
<td>Hvgyn o Say a</td>
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<tr>
<td>armis</td>
<td>ac ygossoddant</td>
<td>helmeu a</td>
<td>lint dinuawr o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>munitissimas, acies</td>
<td>eutoroed ynh</td>
<td>tharyaneu y</td>
<td>wyr arvau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instauratias</td>
<td>arauwc olurugeu</td>
<td>dirybod yn erbyn y</td>
<td>ymladgar yn ev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loric[at]as,</td>
<td>atharyaneu a</td>
<td>Kymry. A phan</td>
<td>bydneyn yn</td>
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<tr>
<td>clipeatas,</td>
<td>helmeu yn erbyn</td>
<td>welas y</td>
<td>barawt y ymlad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>galeatas, contra</td>
<td>y kymry. aphan</td>
<td>mawrwyduyd Rys</td>
<td>A gwydy gvelet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resum principem</td>
<td>weles rys hynn val</td>
<td>hyn, ymwysegw a</td>
<td>o Lys hynn,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exposuerant. Quos</td>
<td>yroed wr mawr</td>
<td>wnaeth megys</td>
<td>kyrcyu y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ut Resus ut</td>
<td>vrydus ef</td>
<td>llew dyfal o galon</td>
<td>elynnwn y wrawl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magnanimus</td>
<td>aymwysegw</td>
<td>lew a llaw gadarn</td>
<td>a’r hynhochut ar</td>
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<tr>
<td>asspiciens manu</td>
<td>megys llew</td>
<td>a chyrchu y</td>
<td>fo a’e hynhlic a’e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vulida, corde</td>
<td>ormys law a</td>
<td>elynnwn y wrawl</td>
<td>traethu yn dicw,</td>
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<tr>
<td>audaci leonem</td>
<td>beidyawyd</td>
<td>a’e hynhlic a’e</td>
<td>kyt bei gwrawl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>induens, in hostes</td>
<td>galon ac</td>
<td>traethu yn dicw,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irumpens</td>
<td>a grychawd y</td>
<td>kyt bei gwrawl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>eodsamque</td>
<td>elynnwn ac ay</td>
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<tr>
<td>actu tum in fugam</td>
<td>grrawad ar ffo</td>
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<tr>
<td>conuertens,</td>
<td>agweddy eu gyrru ef</td>
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<tr>
<td>fugatos instanter</td>
<td>ay hmyllidywed ynh</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>persequens utiliter,</td>
<td>wrawl ac ay</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sed uiuiutier</td>
<td>lladawd.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tractuit.</td>
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26 *Ibid., p. 19.*
27 Jones, ‘Cronica de Wallia’, p. 30: ‘On the same day that it was burned, Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai, with the greatest preparation, from that same valley, Hughes demonstrates these similarities in rhetorical style using the entry from 1196, which compares Rhys to a lion as he defeats Roger de Mortimer and Hugh de Sai. The various versions are reproduced as above.

It is apparent that the tricolon ‘loric[at]as, clipeatas, galeatas’, for example, is recreated in the Welsh, with the items in different order: ‘a llurugeu a helmeu a tharyanesu’. The description of Rhys as a lion is also retained: the Latin reads ‘manu vulida, corde audaci leonem induens’; the *Peniarth 20* version reads ‘megys llew orymus law a sent forth great hosts with the most fortified weapons of war and battle lines equipped with cuisseas, shields and helmets, against the Lord Rhys. So when the brave man Rhys saw them, with a strong arm and brave heart and taking on the guise of a lion, bursting upon his enemies, he immediately turned them about to flight, and with them instantly put to flight, he pursued them deprivately, but treated them manfully’, translation by the author and Paul Russell.

28 *BT, Peniarth MS.* 20, p. 136b: ‘And after it had been burnt, on that day Roger de Mortimer and Hugh de Sai arrayed a mighty host in the valley near that town, and they placed their forces armed with corselets and shields and helmets against the Welsh. And when Rhys perceived that, as he was a great-hearted man, he armed himself like a lion with a strong hand and daring heart, and attacked his enemies and drove them to flight, and after driving them he manfully pursued them and slew them’, *BT, Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 76.
29 ‘And after it had been burnt, that day in the valley close by, Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai drew up their forces equipped with horses and corselets and helmets and their shields without warning against the Welsh. And when the great-hearted Rhys saw this, like a fierce lion he armed himself with a stout heart and a strong hand, and he attacked his enemies manfully and turned them to flight and pursued them and treated them vilely, although manfully’, *BT, Red Book of Hergest*, pp. 176/177.
30 *Brenhined y Saeson*, p. 192: ‘And thereupon they hastened to Radnor, and they burned it. And that day Roger Mortimer and Hugh de Sai came with a mighty hold of armed fighting men in their ranks ready to fight. And after Rhys had seen that, he fell upon his enemies in their lion, and he forced them to flight and manfully pursued them, and shot at them, slaughtering them mercilessly’, *ibid.* p. 193.
beidyawdyr galon'; the Red Book version reads ‘megys llew dyfal o galon llew a llaw gadrn’, with the *galon* ‘heart’ and *llaw* ‘hand’ reversed, and the abbreviated *Brenhinedd y Sseisson* entry, represented solely by BL Cotton Cleopatra B. v. in Jones’s edition, simply reads ‘megys llew’. Thus it is possible to trace the evolution of a select passage through comparison of a single episode (keeping in mind that the exact relationships between the passages and their chronology are unknown). The account of Rhys’s victory in battle in auxesis, a sequence of clauses increasing in force, is found in both the Latin and Welsh versions; thus this example indicates not only that the Welsh translator was using a Latin text very much like *Cronica de Wallia*, but also shows that in such a case where the Welsh text closely parallels the Latin, rhetorical devices such as tricolon, climax, auxesis and metaphor used in the Latin version have been carried over into the Welsh.

Paul Russell has discussed the use of rhetorical tricolons, ‘paratactic’ narrative structure, rhetorical climaxes, anaphora and comparisons to classical and biblical figures in the context of *Vita Griffini Fili Conani*.

This text, for which Russell proposes a composition date between 1137 and 1148, can be used as a benchmark for the sort of rhetorical devices extant in Welsh texts of the central Middle Ages. The presence of rhetorical ornamentation in the *Vita Griffini* is perhaps expected in the genre of the royal biography, which by definition elevates the status of the subject through praise and flattering character descriptions. Given that many passages in *Brut y Tywysogion* concern the actions of political leaders and often include descriptions of their physical person, political activities and heroic deeds in battle, the conventions of the royal biography genre are indeed an appropriate model for the sort of descriptions we see in *Brut y Tywysogion*.

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

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


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronica de Wallia</th>
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<th>Red Book version</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duo fili Griffin, Resus scilicet et Owen, fauentibus sibi regis baronis ubi terrarum de Strachewy uirilem penetrantes ad Dynneuor usque perueruntur; cuius castelli curiae adiacentibus cantaredis tunc temporis Resus filius Resi possessors et dominus. Venientes itaque castellanos in breui dedicioni cogenentes castellum optinuerunt, sola uita eisdem castellanis concessa cum armis. Qui modicum post simuliter Francorum suffulti uiritate castellum de Lana[m]deuri cum armis optinuerunt, sola uita castellanis concessa.</td>
<td>athranoeth yrkardassant odyno a rys ym dynwyssawc ymlaen y vydin gynraf. afauk. ymlaen yr el yvynin, ac ywein ymlaen y vydin diwaethaf. ac ef agyrwrrv vys ychyan ar vydin gynraf agwevy ymlaen yr ymlaen yvynin onadunf. ef aerywrrv yys ychyan yr ymlaen yr ymlaen yvynin llawer yr wyr yr dyslii. athrhaftol rys yeuanc yn ryelu ef a aeth rys ychyan ac agadarnhawed kastell dinefwr o wyr ac arweu ac alosges tref llanddeilaw vawr yr gwbl ac a aeth ymchith. ac ef adeot yrs yeuag wrth yr kastell athranoeth yr peris dodi ysgoluron wrth ymroed a gwy aruawc y ysgyru y muroed ac ary yrch yr kynhyf y kat yr kastell oll ei thyr yr trw yr hwnnw yr ymgynnullaw</td>
<td>A thrannoeth yrch ym yr oregant gynoeth Rys Gryc a chwyraerw y hydnoed a dodi Rys Jeaunc a’a yrch yr y traen yna ac Fawcoco a’e yrch yr y canaw alyw yr ap Gruffud a’e yrch ynn ol. Ac yny bu bell yny gyfararu Rys Gryc a’e lu ac wynt. Ar ynn rvvydwr a’r yrch gynraf y gorwyrwyr an Rys Gryc a’e yr, ac yr kilywd ar ffo, wedy llad re o’r yr a dala errei. Ac yna yr aeth Rys Jeaunc ar veder ymlad a chastell Dinefwr. Ar eisosoc Rys Gryc a’r ractaneonawd an gataunhawd y castell o wy yr arweu. A gwydy llosoc Llan Deilaw y kilywrd ymdeith. Ac eisosoc Rys Jeaunc a yrchawrd y castell. A</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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

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

56 ‘And on the following day they made for the territory of Rhys Gryg and they arrayed their troops and placed Rhys Ieuan and his troop in the van and Falkes
I have not been able to find any other instances of material added to the vernacular version of *Brut y Tywysogyon* through comparison with *Crónica de Wallia* in particular. Thomas Jones does find other such instances of expansion from the annalistic source; an exhaustive comparison of the *Brut* texts to extant equivalent sources and a full assessment of the manuscripts of *Annales Cambriae* would be necessary to address this issue definitively. Since we do not know the exact shape or contents of the original Latin chronicle which formed the basis of *Annales Cambriae* and *Brut y Tywysogyon*, any conclusions drawn from these comparisons are tenuous at best. It is always possible that instances of text in *Brut y Tywysogyon* that do not correspond to extant *Annales Cambriae* manuscripts could have come from other Latin versions; the textual history is almost too complicated to untangle.37 What is clear, however, is that the

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

37 See, for example, Wendy Davies’s assertion that the ‘significance’ of *Brut y Tywysogyon* for the pre-Conquest period lies in the fact that they occasionally have entries which are not to be found in any of the surviving texts of the vernacular version of events in this particular case has been expanded and reworked to create a much fuller, more descriptive and seemingly eyewitness account.

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

As mentioned above, previous scholars have used the elegy for Rhys ap Gruffudd as an apt example of the rhetorical refinement of the text. Following the convention of royal biography, this entry praises Rhys in a series of comparisons to classical and biblical heroes.38 The Peniarth 20 version names him ‘drywed herkwiff eil achel herwyd garwddc y dwy vron. hynawstter nestor. glemwer tydeus. kedernyt samson. dewed hector. llwyd curiatus. tegwch aphryt paris. huolder vlixes. doetheineb selyf. macrwyrt tiax’.39 Fitting the

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

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

39 *BT, Peniarth MS*, 20, p. 139a: ‘the magnanimity of Hercules! A second Achilles in the sturdiness of his breast, the gentleness of Nestor, the doughtiness of
context of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Dares Phrygius's *De excidio Trojan historia*, Rhys is equated with heroes of the Trojan War. This flowery praise—markedly different from the bare entries found in the chronicle's earliest sections—places Rhys in the ranks of great classical and biblical heroes. The passage indicates significant familiarity with classical figures and with conventions of biographical writing on the part of the chronicler and a similar familiarity expected of his audience.

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

> Ac yn y rhwydyn dynheustus hono yd ymddangoses Antropos a’echwioryd, y rei a chwùr gyn y Dwysesu y Tygheutuenoc, y bygomyrus wenwyntic nerthod yn erbyn y veint arderchawc dywyasawc hyt na allei ystoriau Ystas ystoriawr na chath[ll]eu Feryll vard menegi y veint gwyrw na dolur thruni a doeth y holl gendely y Bryanwein pan dorses Aghue, yr enelltigedig rhwydyn hono, ohwyn y Tygheuten y gynyr yr Arglywdd Rys ap Gruaffad gan y haldaned dan darystigedig vedant Aghue. 40

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

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

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

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

>[Ar] dyneuall dyheghen greulonaf chwaer y antropos heb wybot na mynur arbed y neb yr hon a aruiedawd echwyrnui oggygyrrynus law personolaeth y kyfryw wr hwnw. yr hwn a ganorthwydawn kynno hyny ydeychetuen maw dynyadawd anyan o hygar dechreu y yeugetif ef ac odyna y diodefawd mynet dros golfo neu chelded yr rot pan vwydawn hwn yr llawr. 41

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

Hoc enim anno pestifero Atropos, sororum sequissima quae nemeni parcerem gnostra, cunctis mortalibus inuisa, magni uiri, scilicet Resi, exicium ausa est demoliri, quem instabilitatis mater Fortuna, naturae conditionem hoc solo oblitia, iugi celsitudo rote passa est permanere suque ab etatis sue exordio benigno reoenerat gremio. Ad tanti ergo obtium uiri accedens aut sine lacrimis enarrandum, utpote planctu

41 *BT*, *Peniarth MS. 20*, p. 139b: ‘And cruellest, tempestuous Fate, sister to Atropos, without knowing how or desiring to spare anyone, ventured to approach with envious hand the personage of such a man as that; — he whom before that Fate, mother of human nature, had aided from the beloved commencement of his youth; and thereupon she suffered to be forgotten the height of her Wheel, when she cast this man to the ground’, *BT*, *Chronicle of the Princes*, p. 77. The abbreviated *Brenhinedd y Saeson* version reads only ‘Ac y by bwaw Rys ap Gruaffed, twyssauc Dehunvarth Kynme, bledoed y marchogion, a’t gorev o’r a u o gendedy Gyme reoet, iij. Kalendas Maii, gweddy llawer o uddogolatwyth’ (‘And Rhys ap Gruaffad, prince of South Wales, the flower of knights, and the best that had ever been of the race of the Welsh, died on the fourth day before the Calends of May, after many victories’), *Brenhinedd y Saeson*, pp. 192/193.
dignum, aut cuique sine dolore recordandum, quia omnibus damnosum, aut sine merore audiendum, quia cunctis lugubre, deficio, uox silet, lingua stupet. Tantui uiri probatet quas ille magnanimus historiographus Thebanus, si temporis uicissiduo concessisset, Tebaidse sopita protractante gauderet, uerum ille historiographus Troianus poetarum nobilissimus, si misera fata dedisset, grandiloquox stilo in longum diffunderet eum.\(^{42}\)

Interestingly, the Latin version of this passage is much more elaborate than the Welsh versions and reflects a thorough understanding of Latin on the part of the chronicler. Peníarth 20, while lacking the mention of Virgil and Statius found in the Red Book version, also mentions Atropos, the wheel of Fortune, and Fate as a ‘mother’, indicating a common source for the material.\(^{43}\) However, if the Peníarth 20 compiler was indeed using a Latin version similar to *Crónica de Wallia* as a source, it is clear that he has misunderstood the distinction between Fate and Atropos made in the Latin and has attributed Rhys’s misfortune to the cruelty of ‘mother’ Fate rather than to Atropos. The Red Book compiler has similarly misunderstood the reference to Atropos, blaming Rhys’s death on ‘Antropos a’ chwioryd y rei a elwir gynt yn Dwysesseu y Tyghetuenoed’.\(^{44}\) Despite these discrepancies, it is apparent that the rhetorical style of the Latin version has been taken into the Welsh versions, which exhibit a strong Latin influence.\(^{45}\)

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

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

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

\(^{43}\) Notably, it is not immediately apparent that the Peníarth 20 version is closer to the Latin than the Red Book version, although it is older.

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

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


\(^{47}\) For a discussion of poetry in Irish annals, see G. Toner, ‘Authority, Verse and the Transmission of *Senchait*, *Ériu* 55 (2005), 59–84.
Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, no marwnnad written for him has survived.48 Peniarth 20’s verse elegy for Rhys, which in the context of the Welsh vernacular would suggest the marwnnad genre, is in the context of its Latin medium dependent on Latinate models like the planctus, a popular literary form in the Middle Ages certainly known in Wales. It is notable that Latin was chosen as a medium for composition, introduced with the following statement in Welsh, ‘a llyma y gwerseu myd yr ladin awaethpwy pan yr varw yr arghwyd rys’,49 challenging our assumption that Welsh was the preferred medium for eulogising deceased noble patrons and immediately heartening back to the lament of Rhgyfarch ap Sulien written at Llanbadarn Fawr some one hundred years earlier.50

It is also notable that, following the conclusion of the thirty-six-line elegy, the chronicler returns to Welsh to introduce the epitaph for Rhys: ‘Llyma wedo hynty y gwerseu myd yr / ladin yswd yr


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


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

It also seems clear, in examining the praise epistles for Rhys in the prose sections of this lament, that the Welsh chronicler was at least partly dependent on the conventions of traditional Welsh praise poetry. These praise epistles occur in all the versions of Brut y Tywysogyon: ‘Oed ghyhorwr kenedy a gorochwyguwr y kedyrn ac amdiwynwr y darystydagwyd yr wyr, grymys ymladwr y caerdy kyyfrwrt ytoruon aruthrw gelynoynwr bydinao ... och am ogonant y ryeuloed atharyn ymarchogwr amdiwynwr ydwyr tegwch areu breich kedernyt llaw haelyoni lllya elgu ardwyndra blaelinwyr mwyr ymdywnynygwyd dosparth ...’.52 We do not know whether the

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

52 BT, Peniarth MS. 20, pp. 138b–139a: ‘a counsellor as he was of his kinsmen and a conqueror of the mighty, and a defender of the vanquished, powerful stormer of fortresses, inciter of armies, and assaulter of hostile troops ... Alas for the glory of battles and the shield of knights, the defender of his land, the splendour of arms, the arm of prowess, the hand of generosity, the eye and lustre of worthiness, the summit of majesty, the light of reason ...;’ BT, Chronicle of the Princes, p. 77; for the equivalent passage in the Red Book version, see BT, Red Book of Hergest, p. 178. Praise epistles are also extant in the equivalent section of Cronica de Wallia: ‘O miserorum tutum refugium, nudorum indumentum, esurientium morsus, sciencium porus! Omnia postulatione prompta satisfacio donorum! O dulcis eloquio, comis obsequio, morum honestus, sermo modestos, ultu hilaris, facie decoros, cunctis benignus, omnibus equos, simplicitatis saepe fite pictas, humiliatas aut fabricate sublimitas! Heul heul lam Wallia uduata dolet ruinura dolore’, Jones, Cronica de Wallia’, p. 31, for equus read aequum (‘O safe refuge for the wretched, clothing for
translator of the chronicle would have placed these praise epithets in the
category of planctus or whether he would have considered them to
be ultimately reliant on Welsh poetic forms. There does seem to exist
some debt to Welsh vernacular models in this passage, echoing the
language of extant Welsh praise poetry: Rhys is described as 'gwr a
oed ben a tharrŷn a ceddernit y Deheu a holl Gymry'; such similes
describing a warrior as a shield or sometimes a pillar in battle are
found in the poetry of the heird y tywyogion and in earlier praise
poetry such as the poems attributed to Taliesin.53

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

the naked, food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty! O ready provider of gifts
for all who petition! O sweet in eloquence, agreeable in behaviour, honest in
habits, modest in speech, cheerful in expression, noble in appearance, kind in all
things, fair to all, a dutifulness of unfeigned simplicity, an exaltation of
undisguised humility! Alas! alas! Wales mourns, now widowed and doomed to
be destroyed by grief', translation by Paul Russell and the author). Jones notes
that the last line of this passage, 'iam Wallia viduata dolet nutura dolore', is
echoed in the concluding line of the Latin elegy for Rhys, 'Wallia iam viduata
doler nutura dolore' (see Appendix A), suggesting some sort of correspondence
between the two texts. Notably, this concluding line is a dactylic hexameter
rather than the elegiac couplets of the rest of the poem.
53 The man who was the head and the shield and the strength of the South and
all Wales, BT, Red Book of Hengest, pp. 178/179.

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

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

54 Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 22.
55 See Hughes, 'Welsh Latin Chronicles', p. 23; also Jones, 'Historical Writing',
p. 24 for the same assumption.
56 Jack, Medieval Wales, pp. 23; 26-7.
57 Chronologically, this influence would have to occur after the 1130s, when De
gestis Britonum was written, and before the Welsh vernacular translations of the
thirteenth century.
from Geoffrey's and was unlikely to have used him as a model.\textsuperscript{58} As both of these scenarios are overly general and fail to take into account the necessary chronology, I would like to propose a third scenario. Given that the Latin chronicle from which \textit{Brut y Tywysogyon} derives is thought to have been written in the thirteenth century, \textit{after} the popularity of Geoffrey's text had taken hold in Wales, it is likely that Geoffrey's writing influenced not only the vernacular chroniclers, but also the writers of the Latin annals. That is to say, the influence of Geoffrey's style occurred at the level of the underlying Latin chronicles rather than at the level of the vernacular translation. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact demonstrated in this paper that the marked literary style of \textit{Brut y Tywysogyon} is present in its Latin exempla.

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

\textsuperscript{58} Jones, 'Historical Writing', p. 18.
APPENDIX A: The Latin verse lament for Rhys ap Gruffudd in the Peniathrh
20 version of Brnt y Tywynog (BT, Peniathrh MS. 20, pp. 140–1)

Nobile cambrensis cecidit dyadema decoris.
Hoc est resus obit cambria tota gemit
Resus obit non fama perit sed gloria transit
Cambrensis transit gloria resus obit
Resus obit decus orbis abit laus quoque tepescit
In geminum viuit cambrica resus obit
Semper resus obit populo quem viuas amauit
Lugent corda tacent corpora resus obit.
Resus obit vexilla cadunt regia signa.

Hic iam nulla leuat dextera resus obit.
Resus obit ferrogo tegit galeam tegit ensen
Arma rubigo tegit cambria resus obit.
Resus abest inimicus adest resus quia non est
Iam tibi nil prodest cambria resus abest.
Resus obit populi plorant gaudent inimici.
Anglia star cecidit cambria resus obit.
Ora rigant elegi cunctis mea flebitus isti
Cor ferit omnne ducis dicat fageda necis.
Omnis lingua cantit reso preconia nescit.

Laudes insignis lingua tacere ducis
Ploratu plene vite luxantur habene
Meta datur meri laus sine sine duci.
Non moritur sed subtritur quia semper habetur
Ipsius egregium nomen in orbe novum

Camber locrinus reso rex albaque nactus.
Nominis et laudis inferioris erant
Cesar et arthurus leo fortis vterque sub armis.
Vel par vel simillis resus vtrique fuit
Resus alexander in velle pari fuit alter

Mundum substerni gisit vterque sibi
Occasus solis titus resi fuit armis
Sensit alexandri solis in orbe manum
Laus canitur cineri sancto cantetur ab omni
Celi laus regi debita spiritui

Penna madet lacrimis quod scribit thema doloris
Ne careat forma littera cesse ea.

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

The noble crown of Welsh honour has fallen.
This is to say, Rhys is dead, the whole of Wales mourns.
Rhys is dead; his fame has not perished, but his glory has passed away.
The glory of Wales has passed away, Rhys is dead.

Rhys is dead, the glory of the world has gone, his praises too grow cold.
Wales lives on in her grief, Rhys is dead.
Still Rhys is dead, for his people for ever whom he loved while alive.
Their hearts grieve, their bodies are silent, Rhys is dead.
Rhys is dead, the standards fall, no right hand

Lifts his royal symbols aloft here, Rhys is dead.
Rhys is dead, rust covers his helmet and his sword;
Rust covers his armour, Wales, (for) Rhys is dead.
Rhys is gone, the enemies close in, for Rhys is no more.
Nothing is of benefit to you now, Wales, Rhys is gone.

Rhys is dead, the people weep, (while our) enemies rejoice.
England stands, Wales has fallen, Rhys is dead.
My face is wet with all the tears of his elegy.
The dire arrow of the leader's death strikes every heart.
Every tongue sings songs of praise to Rhys; the tongue cannot

Keep silent about the praises of (our) famous ruler.
The reins of life fall slack, full of lamentation.
A marker is deservedly given; praise without end to a leader.
He does not die but is removed, for his fair name
Is held ever fresh throughout the world.

Camber, king Locrinus and Albanactus
Were inferior in name and repute to Rhys.
Caesar and Arthur, both strong (as) lions in arms,
Rhys was their equal or similar to both.
Rhys was a second Alexander of like desire,

Both yearned for the world to stretch out beneath them.
The west was beaten down by the arms of Rhys;
He felt the hand of Alexander in the sun's orbit.
Praises are sung to holy ashes; let due
Praise be sung by everyone to the king of heaven (and) the holy spirit.

My pen grows wet with tears for it writes on a theme of grief,
Let it not lack beauty, let not the writing cease.
APPENDIX B: The Latin epitaph for Rhys ap Gruffydd in the Peniarth 20 version of Brut y Tywysogion.

Grande decus tener iste locus, si cernitur orris
Si quis sit finis quenitur ecce cinis
Laodis amator honoris odor dulcedinis auctor.
Resus in hoc tumulo conditur exigno

5 Cesaries quasi congeries solis radiorum
Principis et facies vertitur in cinere
Hic tegitur sed detegitur quia fama perhennis.
Non finit illustrem voce latere ducem
Colligitur tumba cinis hac sed transuolat ultra

10 Nobilitas claudi nescia fune breui
Walia iam vidhuta dolet ruitura dolore. 323

Translation

If its origin is sought, that place has great majesty;
If one asks what is his end, here are his ashes:
One who loved a fair name, one fragrant with distinction, a fount of gentleness,
Rhys is buried in this small tomb;

5 The prince’s hair, like a mass of the sun’s rays,
And his face are turned to ashes
Here he lies hidden, but he is revealed, for his eternal fame
Does not allow the ruler, famed for his words, to lie concealed.

His ashes are collected in this tomb but his nobility flies beyond it

10 Refusing to be confined by a short rope.
Wales mourns, now widowed and doomed to be destroyed by grief. 324

323 BT, Peniarth MS. 20, p. 141.

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