THE MULTIVOCALITY OF THE CROSS OF THE SCRIPTURES:

CLAIMING VICTORY, KINGSHIP, AND TERRITORY IN EARLY

MEDIEVAL IRELAND

by

Caitlin Hutchison

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Art History

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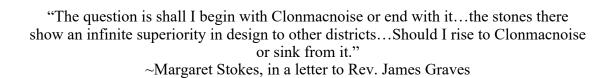
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"The question is shall I begin with Clonmacnoise or end with it…the stones there show an infinite superiority in design to other districts…Should I rise to Clonmacnoise or sink from it."
~Margaret Stokes, in a letter to Rev. James Graves

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFM: *Annals of the Four Masters*

AI: *Annals of Innisfallen*

AT: *Annals of Tigernach*

AU: *Annals of Ulster*

CCH: *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*

CIH: *Corpus iuris hibernici*

CS: *Chronicon Scotorum*

EH: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*

JRSAI: *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*

PRIA: *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*

PSAS: *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*

ABSTRACT

At the early medieval monastery of Clonmacnoise in Ireland, there is a high cross known as the "Cross of the Scriptures" that exhibits a remarkable aesthetic quality, a complex iconographic program, and inscriptions pointing to its patronage by the High-King Flann Sinna (c.847-916) and Abbot Colmán mac Ailella (d.926). This high cross serves as the pivot of my dissertation to explore the various messages of power and authority expressed by the sculptural type within the social and political context of early medieval Ireland. Whereas previous literature emphasized the devotional and didactic functions of this monument, this project unpacks the political motivations, legal aspects, and social customs imbedded in its creation and use. I employed an interdisciplinary approach that integrated scholarship from the fields of art history, archaeology, history, law, and critical geography to conclude that the high cross type could simultaneously function as a witness to historical events and compacts, marker of boundary and territorial control, and expression of identity and legitimacy for the rulers that erected them. More broadly, it revealed that site-specificity played a larger role in their intended function and appearance than previously thought. This dissertation investigates the interaction of the monument's inscription, form, and selected imagery with the contemporary historical events associated with Flann Sinna's reign and its situation in its political, cultural, and geographic landscape. It also examined the universally Christian *and* characteristically Irish motifs of kingship present on the high cross in

order to demonstrate how the patronage network wove Flann Sinna's claims into the sculpture's form and iconography to bolster his quest for legitimacy and convey his divinely-sanctioned rule. Finally, it considered the interaction of the monument's design and location with its sacred landscape and built environment to demonstrate Flann Sinna's use of the ancestral past to reinforce his territorial claims and special relationship to Clonmacnoise. Overall, this approach broadens the potential performance of the type and joins the reaction against the commonly-accepted notion that the art of this period, and the Middle Ages in general, was primarily devotional and devoid of multivocal meanings, multifunctional purposes, and complex patronage networks.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Crossing the Border

On October 10th, 1849, the United States government erected an obelisk to commemorate its victory in the Mexican-American War (1846-8) and mark the newly reconfigured boundary that resulted from the "Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo" ("Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits and Settlement between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic").[1] Border Monument 258, or the so-called "Initial Point of Boundary between U.S. and Mexico," is a 20-foot monolith carved from imported Italian marble and placed on a high rectangular base; its point takes the form of an acorn to represent the region's California live oak tree (Figure 1). By 1894, the number of obelisks marking the 2000-mile-boundary grew to 278 (Figures 2-3), but Border Monument 258 located between San Diego County, California, United States and Tijuana, Mexico was the first and largest. One hundred and twenty-five years later, it continues to play a role in the highly contentious discourse on the separation of peoples, societies, and states, in addition to defining national identity.

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[1] Upon the western side of the monument is an inscription which reads: "Initial point of Boundary between the United States and Mexico, established by the Joint Commission, 10 October, A.D. 1849, Agreeably to the Treaty dated at the City of Guadalupe, Hidalgo, February 2, A.D. 1848. John B. Weller, U.S. Commissioner. Andrew B. Gray, U.S. Surveyor."

Long associated with the permanence and power of Egypt and Rome, the obelisk was particularly embraced in the United States during the nineteenth century as the nation attempted to realize its "Manifest Destiny."[2] Since its erection, Border Monument 258, with its inherent message of supremacy and its location at a contentious border zone, experienced alternating conditions of being celebrated, reviled, and (generally) overlooked. Souvenir-seekers and defilers forced the government to first erect protective fencing and then relocate the monument after only forty-three years. It was later reset in its original site in 1974 by First Lady Pat Nixon as part of Richard Nixon's "Legacy of Parks" initiative, where it served as the centerpiece to the area's re-christening as "Friendship Park."[3] This site simultaneously served as the meeting and celebration place for families separated by the border and as a locus of illegal activity. Inspired by nativist sentiments and fear of terrorism, the U.S. government increasingly restricted access to the border, especially during periods of perceived threat to national security. The apparent fluidity of this boundary continues to be a powerful partisan rallying point, driving a

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[2] The obelisk's popularity its evident both in the form of the Washington Monument commemorating the nation's victorious general and first president and on a much smaller scale as a common marker for high status graves of this era. Michael Dear, "Monuments, Manifest Destiny, and Mexico, Part 2," *Prologue Magazine* 37, No. 2 (Summer 2005), last reviewed on July 19, 2017*,* https://www.archives.gov /publications/prologue/2005/summer/mexico-2.html.

[3] Department of Homeland Security, "Did you Know…Century-Old Obelisks Mark U.S. Mexico Boundary Line?" History Branch of the US Customs and Broder Protection, last modified March 8, 2014, https://www.cbp.gov/about/ history/did-you-know/obelisk.

contentious wedge between political parties and serving as the cause of the longest

government shutdown in U.S. history.[4]

Wire and chain-link fences have aided in marking the border since 1910, as

evident in the rust still visible on the obelisk today from when a metal fence abutted the

monument down the middle (Figure 4). Today, Border Monument 258 is no longer apart

of the actual fabric of the boundary. During the government initiative Operation Gate-

Keeper, the U.S. built a military-grade wall, three-feet behind the boundary marker.[5] The

obelisk now stands in front of two partitions added in 2009, one of barbed wire and one

of steel bars, and is accessible only from the Mexican side. With the increased

securitization, this symbol of power that once celebrated peace, announced victory, and

delimited the separation of two lands and peoples is now largely ignored, save for some

minor graffiti left by visitors.[6]

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[4] Dara Lind, "What's actually happening at the US-Mexico border, explained" *Vox* January 9, 2019. https://www.vox.com/2019/1/8/18173721/trump-border-facts-truth-speech-lying.

[5] Barbara Zaragoza, *"The San Diego-Tijuana Boundary Monuments,"* *San Diego Free Press*, June 23, 2015, https://sandiegofreepress.org/2015/06/the-san-diego-tijuana-boundary-monuments/#.W-8FdafMwnU; and "Friendship Park and Boundary Monument 258," *San Diego Compass*, November 5, 2014, http://southbaycompass .com/friendship-park-boundary-monument -258/.

[6] Claire Carter and David Arreola, *David Taylor: Monuments* (Santa Fe, NM: Radius Books and Reno, NV: Nevada Museum of Art, 2015). Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, "Monuments: 276 Views of the U.S.-Mexico Border by David Taylor: December 5, 2017-January 31, 2018," https://www.mfah.org/exhibitions/monuments-276-views-us-mexico-border-david-taylor. Border Monument 258 and the hundreds of other boundary-markers forming the US-Mexico border inspired artistic reaction, such as the 2014-work of American David Taylor and Mexican Marcos Ramirez, who placed 47 obelisks alongside the pre-war border of 1821 from Oregon to Louisiana. Taylor also photographed the entire collection of monuments at the current border, which are the

What does this cursory glance at Border Monument 258 have to do with the central object of this study, a high cross of early medieval Ireland? It provides a contemporary example of a symbol of power erected by a governing force at a well-known and inherently unstable boundary. It also illuminates the shifting multivocality and multifunctionality of a sculptural type, especially as it interacts with its environment over time. The aim of this dissertation project is to understand that the high cross of early medieval Ireland existed in a similar condition, and to recapture the original context of its creation within the political, cultural, and actual, i.e. geographical, landscapes of its time. Like Border Monument 258, a high cross could function as a border monument, demarcating land claims and commemorating peace treaties, at the same time as it expressed the identity and ideologies of the governing force they serve to represent. On an abstract level, both monument-types are sculptural expressions of universal symbols, which accumulated different functions and messages with each new cultural context. As argued in the following pages, the high cross came to serve a variety of practical and symbolic functions in Ireland involving religion of course, but also commemoration, boundary-marking, grave-marking, and the projection of legitimacy. Site-specificity plays a large role in deciphering the Cross of the Scriptures in that its location affected its

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subject of a recent exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Although all appear in the form of an obelisk, exhibit a historical inscription expressing purpose, and feature a number, the markers vary in material, height, and proportion. They appear in various states, from the pristinely preserved to those damaged or heavily graffitied with names or undeniably xenophobic messages. Many of them are part of the fabric constructed to more clearly delineate the border. However, most of the monuments consistently appear in front of fences made of barbed-wire, wood, and steel.

intended function and appearance. Although the perception of its original purpose could also be altered by time and other variables.

In essence, this dissertation investigates the intersection of Irish high-kingship, boundaries, and high crosses through a concentrated study of one tenth-century monument, the Cross of the Scriptures of the monastery of Clonmacnoise (Figures 5-6).[7] It examines the alternative functions of the monument type beyond its generally accepted role as either devotional instrument or didactic tool. More specifically, the following chapters consider how political communities used the prestigious form of the monumental cross and its iconography to establish and reaffirm significant religious and political borders, as well as assert political claims in contested landscapes. The study focuses on this particular cross because it is one of finest and most-documented examples of the corpus, well-preserved, and datable. The purpose of this dissertation is not to contest interpretations of the high cross's decorative program based in ecclesiastical or continental European textual and iconographic sources as presented by the majority of previous scholarship, but rather to provide an interpretation of the additional layers of meaning and function of the Cross of the Scriptures informed by Irish history, custom, and law. The consideration of the multivocality and multifunctionality of the high cross challenges orthodox perceptions about the monolithic nature of the Irish (Celtic) Church

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[7] The Cross of the Scriptures is the traditional title for the western high cross located at the medieval monastery of Clonmacnoise in current-day County Offaly, Ireland. I have chosen to use the title because of its popular recognition, but chapter two provides further explanation as to the name's origin and association with the cross beginning in the nineteenth century, as well as the problematic aspects of this title.

and the art produced in the early medieval past as primarily devotional in function. In doing so, the high cross moves beyond being an apparatus of piety and religious instruction to become a material expression of the authority of Christianity and an implement for legitimating power. Thus, it addresses the larger question regarding the function of art in early medieval Ireland by focusing on the diverse individuals who made, used, and viewed these monuments and elucidating their wide-ranging motivations as evidence of the vibrancy of an era still too often called the "Dark Ages."

1.2   The Multivocality and Multifunctionality of the Irish High Cross

High crosses are exceptional among works surviving from the seventh through twelfth centuries due to their freestanding nature, their great height (some rising over twenty feet), and their complex decorative programs consisting of figural panels, abstract interlace, entwined figures, and geometric forms. The often eroded and enigmatic forms continue to fascinate those attempting to unlock their purposely multivalent messages assembled from early Christian, Frankish, Anglo-Saxon, Roman, hagiographical, classical, and Irish sources, a phenomenon recently labeled by Martin Goldberg as "Insular Fusion."[8] In addition to images, the corpus of these sculptures possesses a great variety of stone types, proportions, and sizes. The high cross's form generally comprises of a Latin-cross type placed upon a truncated, pyramidal base (Figure 7). The ring

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[8] Julia Farley and Fraser Hunter, eds., *Celt: Art and Identity* (London: British Museum Press, 2015), giving particular attention to Martin Goldberg, "At the Western Edge of the Christian World, c. AD 600-900," 173-205; and Heather Pulliam, "Tracing the Celts? Survival and Transformation, c. AD 800-1600," 206-233.

encircling the intersection of the arms characteristically distinguishes the Irish variety from other cross-types. The impressiveness of the high cross's form and its extensive repertoire of iconographic sources alludes to its prestigious nature and reveals that an informed, powerful, and wealthy patronage network of clerical and lay elite were responsible for the production. With over 200 intact and partial examples across modern-day Ireland, the prevalence and lasting nature of these monuments and their imagery also make them key historical records for the early medieval period (Figure 8).

Due to these characteristics, it is not surprising that high crosses have captivated academic and amateur alike, garnering prodigious scholarly attention among publications concerning medieval Ireland. Although written in 1928, Arthur Kingsley Porter's observation in his *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* remains an apt summary of high cross scholarship.[9]

> Archaeology is like the Hydra of Hercules; for every head that is cut off, two others appear. In spite of the devoted labors of Irish scholars the problems of the crosses have not been solved, nor is it likely they soon will be. They present us with an extraordinary and almost embarrassing wealth of material, including hundreds of figure reliefs of varying, but at times high, artistic merit. Some of these panels beyond any possible doubt illustrated episodes of the Bible or of legends of saints. Others have baffled all attempts at explanation.[10]

As the subject of scholarship since the late-nineteenth century, high crosses and the wealth of images appearing across the corpus have garnered numerous identifications and

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[9] Arthur Kingsley Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931).

[10] Ibid., 3.

theories regarding the purpose of the monument type. Indeed, a popular approach to their

study remains analyzing motifs by tracing iconographic and stylistic precedents. The

most-accepted interpretation of the purpose ascribes the monument-type's primary

function as the illustration of biblical and hagiographic narrative with the intent of

presenting the ideals, practices, and theology of the religious communities with which the

high cross is usually associated. Undoubtedly scenes from these sources make up a large

portion of the decorative program on the Cross of the Scriptures, but it is also useful to

consider the multivalent messages and alternative modes of communication the viewer

encounters. Although the high cross's capacity to act as a boundary marker has been

acknowledged by scholars such as Ann Hamlin, Kathleen Hughes, Peter Harbison,

Raghnall Ó Floinn, and Rachel Moss, this is the first study to comprehensively address

this function and to integrate how the interpretation of its iconography and form relative

to the local landscape supported this role.[11]

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[11] Ann Hamlin, "Crosses in Early Ireland: The Evidence from Written Sources," in *Ireland and Insular Art A.D. 500-1200: Proceedings of a conference at University College Cork, 31 October-3 November 1985*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987), 139; Kathleen Hughes, *The church in early Irish society* (London: Methuen, 1966), 148-9; Rachel Moss, *The Art and Architecture of Ireland, volume 1. The Medieval Period c. 400-1600* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 146; and Harbison, *The High Crosses of* Ireland, 1:352. In Moss's extensive survey of Irish art and architecture during the medieval period, she focuses on the high cross's implied function as a way-marker or reference points in contemporary definitions of the topography of ecclesiastic settlements. She noted that the location of a cross doubtlessly also had a bearing on function." Moss cited the *Synodus Hibernensis* and its stipulation that the "demarcation of the termon" should use "crosses as indicators of the physical boundary and area of sanctuary." The high cross's role as boundary marker is discussed in greater detail below and referenced in two formative studies: Raghnall Ó Floinn, "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artefact and Methodology," in *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Insular Art held at the National Museum and Gallery of Cardiff 3-6 September 1998*, ed. Mark Redknap, Nancy Edwards,

This dissertation adopts a multivocal approach, in which it considers the layers of messages and alternative voices expressed in the program of the Cross of the Scriptures. In doing so, it also draws from different methods beyond iconographical comparison for study. Multivocality and multifunctionality provide flexibility and space in interpretation, allowing the images appearing on high crosses, as well as the monument-type itself, to have several simultaneous and equally-valid meanings and purposes. Subsequently, multivocality offers scholars the opportunity to present "alternative readings, multiple identities and roles, and standpoints of diverse participants" that are usually ignored or suppressed.[12] In terms of this present study, it contests that a monolithic, monastic voice is the only one communicating through the Cross of the Scriptures, let alone the entire corpus. Different actors from within the Church and from other groups, such as Irish royalty and artists, competed to express their values and beliefs through these influential

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Susan Youngs, Alan Lane, and Jeremy Knight (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 1-12; and Peter Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel and a Historical Reconsideration of the Ahenny Group of Crosses," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (*PRIA*) 93C, no.1 (1993): 1-20. A discussion of high crosses as boundaries also appears in George Petrie, *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language. Chiefly Collected and Drawn by George Petrie*, ed. Margaret Stokes (Dublin: The University Press for the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland, 1872-78). Stokes was the primary author of the text on the boundaries with Petrie's research providing the information.

[12] Patrice M. Buzzanell, "Voice/multivocality," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, ed. Jörg Matthes, Christine S. Davis, and Robert Potter (Wiley Online Library, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.Iecrm 0266. Multivocality "destabilizes "singular or unified" understandings of voice. It "surface[s] and render[s] visible" positions that are characterized by "ambivalence, ambiguity, contestation, tensions, [and] contradictions."

monuments.[13] The "volume" of these voices could also be fluid, alternating between being dominant and residing somewhere in the "background" as an undertone, depending on the viewer's perception and the monument's use.[14] In the arguments that follow, I seek to highlight a high-king's participation in the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures. Although he would have belonged to a powerful societal group, i.e. royal men, within the context of early medieval Ireland, scholarship has overlooked his interests and values expressed by the monument in favor of the more popular ecclesiastic viewpoint.

Considering the Cross of the Scriptures as a multivocal artwork more accurately conveys the complexity of the type, as well as the social and cultural context of the time and place of its creation. Instead of vanquishing the Hydra that is the high cross problem by attempting to assign one consistent purpose for all members of the corpus throughout time, this study welcomes complexity and a diversity of approaches. Paradoxically, this dissertation focuses on one line of inquiry, namely, the monument type's interactions with the political, social, and cultural landscape, and concentrates on one cross, the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, to explore its complexity further. Although the study focuses primarily on only one of the alternative and overlooked voices expressed in this high cross, the overall approach creates an opening for the study of the other possible viewpoints, while not discounting or excluding others.

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[13] Buzzanell, "Voice/multivocality."

[14] Idem.

1.3   The Case for Close Looking and Localized Context

As one of the finest examples of the type, the Cross of the Scriptures has received

much attention in scholarship, yet its study remains piecemeal and focused on a few

images and inscriptions. To my knowledge there is no monograph on the Cross of the

Scriptures and the most extended discussions appear in larger surveys, such as George

Petrie's *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland* and *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish*

Language, the latter work largely edited by Margaret Stokes, and the monument's

extensive entry in Peter Harbison's *The High Crosses of Ireland*.[15] Previous monographs

written about high crosses were primarily "in the interest of comparative archaeology," as

Stokes described in her work on the high crosses of Durrow and Castledermot, as well as

her smaller studies on Old Kilcullen, Moone, Drumcliff, Termonfechin, and Killamery

(Figures 9-16).[16] She sought to publish images and illustrations of these works and

introduce any known history of the crosses in order to aid the decoding of "the mystic

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[15] George Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland: anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion; Comprising an Essay on the Origin and uses of The Round Towers of Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1845); and *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*. Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, "Authorship denied: Margaret Stokes, Rev. James Graves and the publication of Petrie's Christian Inscriptions," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (*JRSAI*) 138, (2008): 134-44. Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland: An Iconographical and Photographic Survey,* Monographien, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz, Forschungsinstitut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Bd. 17. (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1992).

[16] Margaret Stokes, *The High Crosses of Castledermot and Durrow* (Dublin: The Academy House, 1898); "Old Kilcullen," *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society* 2, no. 7 (1899): 432-446; "The Holed-stone cross at Moone," *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society* 3, no. 1 (1899): 33-38; and with T. J. Westropp, "Notes on the High Crosses of Moone, Drumcliff, Termonfechin, and Killamery (Plates XXVIII. to LI.)," *The Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* 31 (1896/1901): 541-578.

language of early Christian Art," or the image-writing on the crosses communicating biblical stories "before the masses had learned to read."[17] Similarly, Helen Roe's *The High Crosses of Kells*, *The High Crosses of Western Ossory,* and *Monasterboice and its monument*s[18] were studies that attempted to rectify the common practice among previous scholars to select certain panels only from one or another cross to discuss while ignoring the rest of the iconographic program. However, she admittedly modified her published images by removing the background setting of the crosses from her photographs in order to keep the landscape separate from her reading of the crosses.[19] Her goal was to divorce from her work the picturesque and Romantic notions associated with the ruined churchyards of the early medieval Ireland that were popular among antiquarian studies. This was fitting with her general scholarship that sought to tie the monument-type and its iconography to broader artistic traditions in Europe. Roe provided descriptive lists of the imagery and featured drawings of continental *comparanda*, but her reading detached the crosses from the local contextual information that is fundamental to this dissertation's approach.

Although this project addresses universal expressions of monumental crosses and Christian kingship, the following chapters essentially provide a site- and context-specific

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[17] Stokes, *Castledermot and Durrow*, 1.

[18] Helen Roe, *The High Crosses of Western Ossory* (Kilkenny: Kilkenny Archaeological Society, 1962); *The High Crosses of Kells* ([Dublin]: Meath Archaeological and Historical Society, 1959); and *Monasterboice and its Monuments* ([Dundalk]: County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society, 1981).

[19] Roe, *High Crosses of the Western Ossory*, i.

study of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, examining its form and function in relation to its geographical, political, and historical situation. In a separate paper, "Cross-Communication: A Methodological Comparison of the Monumental Stone Crosses of Ireland and New Spain," which was based on research presented at the 2016 meeting of the College Art Association and that I plan to publish as an article, I performed a study of monumental crosses that revealed the importance of understanding the localized context of a work, rather than attempting to find generalized groupings by topography or religious order (Figures 17-18).[20] Curiously, this insight arose through an unconventional comparison of the methodologies of study for Irish high crosses and the sixteenth-century atrial cross of New Spain. Both monument-types express the negotiation of local materials, aesthetics, and beliefs melded with the universal form, iconography, and function of the Christian cross. The atrial cross in Mexico has been treated in a cursory manner by scholars working in the area of early Spanish colonial art, regardless of the integral role it performed in the conversion of New Spain. By initiating a dialogue between the two types, the more established and codified scholarship of the high cross provided transferable methodologies to aid in the consideration of these monuments of New Spain. Conversely, the better-documented New Spanish material invited new considerations of the early medieval works, in terms of conversion, performance,

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[20] Caitlin Hutchison, "Cross-Communication: A Methodological Comparison of the Monumental Stone Crosses of Ireland and New Spain," Paper Presented at the 104th Annual Meeting of the College Arts Association, Washington D.C., February 2016; article forthcoming.

syncretism, and multivocality.[21] Especially relevant for this dissertation, comparative

analysis of four different regions within and outside centers of religious and political

control in Mexico revealed that immediate locality played a more important role in

design than any overarching attempt to provide standardization by religious order,

characteristics of the ethnicity or pre-contact religion of the converts, or the larger

geographic region. Certain ideological principles guided each of the religious orders in

New Spain on the topic of conversion and education, but this generic factor fails to

consider the diverse personalities of leaders within each order, their conversion tactics,

and the strength of the missionaries in a certain area, issues that proved to be of

fundamental importance for artistic production.

These findings based upon the later monuments in New Spain support the value

of considering the role that individual personalities and goals played in the creation of

Irish high crosses. This idea also supports Liam De Paor's call in his article "The High

Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture" for "[t]he monuments

themselves, studied closely and locally, must be the point of beginning."[22] Try as we

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[21] Such an academic model is not without precedent: Lesley Abrams compared strategies of conversion in Anglo-Saxon England to that of New Spain and Jane Webster studied intercultural exchange in Roman Britain through comparison to Creole North America. Lesley Abrams, "Bede, Gregory, and Strategies of Conversion in Anglo-Saxon England and the Spanish New World," Jarrow Lecture, (Jarrow, U.K.: Parish of Jarrow, 2013); and Jane Webster, "Art as Resistance and Negotiation," in *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*, ed. Sarah Scott and Jane Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24-52.

[22] Liam De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," in *Figures in the Past: Studies on Figurative Art in Christian Ireland in Honour of Helen M. Roe*, ed. Etienne Rynne (Dun Laoghaire: Glendale Press, 1987), 144. De Paor summarized that when "[t]he normal documenting methods of art history are not

might to establish patterns and topographic groupings to make sense of form and purpose, the survey of atrial crosses forces us to reflect upon the corpus's complexities, often overlooked in favor of more simplified, grand narratives. As scholarship has questioned the traditional notion of the monolithic nature of the Celtic Church, the monument type that served as its symbol must also be considered in a less homogenous fashion and viewed as an expression of its distinct locality and of the patronage network responsible for its creation.[23] The study of the high cross's interaction with the physical, historical, and religious landscape can further aid this re-evaluation. Although the high cross type is customarily tied to monastic sites, it is necessary to explore more deeply the pre- and early-Christian usage of those locations, or at least the past ascribed to them, as well as the continued use of pre-Christian spaces of power or sacredness for the placement of monuments at areas not associated with known religious settlements.

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available. We must fall back on the methods of archaeology - not wholly suited to this purpose. There is a temptation to resort to dubious, pseudo-art-historical methods; to invent a documentation, largely by rash, even random, analogies and comparisons between different cultures whose actual relations with one another may remain very obscure even to the most diligent historical researcher. The temptation is all the more dangerous if we indulge the illusion that Dark Age Christian culture, in church matters at least, one and indivisible like the seamless garment of Christ. On the contrary, every local church had its own culture – even in church matters – and could turn the small common stock of Christian ideas and images to its own purposes and its own meanings."

[23] Kathleen Hughes, "The Celtic Church: Is This a Valid Concept?" in *Church and Society in Ireland, A.D. 400*-1200, ed. David Dumville (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), 1-20. De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 143.

1.4   *Ard-Rí agus Cros-Ard*: The Royal Patronage of High Crosses

      The high cross's association with Irish kingship is not a new idea. However, the

question as to why high-kings would erect crosses apart from endowing the Church for

spiritual gain has been insufficiently addressed. To understand how these monuments

functioned as border markers and claims of kingship expressed in stone, it is first

necessary to review how scholarship considered them in relation to rulership and explain

why their political function has not been addressed in greater depth. As the survey below

reveals, previous scholarship generally accepted the tripartite Renaissance patronage

model of designer-benefactor-artist for the creation of high crosses.[24] In the case of high

crosses, overall design and choice of images of the work was attributed to the abbot of

the monastery, who guided the artist. The possibility of a royal patron participating in the

design of the decorative program was often overlooked, save for the inclusion of

inscriptions naming kings that appear on a handful of high crosses.[25] This model is still

partially propagated today, visible in the Clonmacnoise Visitor Centre's use of

mannequins to display an abbot holding out an annotated drawing of the Cross of the

Scriptures to instruct the master-wright and his young apprentice, who stand with

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[24] Colum Hourihane, ed., *Patronage, Power, and Agency in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Index of Christian Art; University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2013), giving particular attention to Colum Hourihane, "Introduction," xix-xxiv; and Jill Caskey, "Medieval Patronage and its Potentialities," 3-30.

[25] R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Muiredach, abbot of Monasterboice, 890-923 A.D.; his life and surroundings* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, and Co. Limited, 1914), 45. See section 1.3.1 for further explanation of Macalister's support of the tripartite patronage model of high crosses, which gave preference and ultimate control of design to a high-ranking ecclesiastic or abbot.

hammer and chisel over a stone slab in the process of carving (Figures 19-20). Neither

Flann Sinna's interests nor his person are represented in the diorama, although he appears

in the timeline of notable Clonmacnoise events displayed throughout the centre.

Roger Stalley and Douglas Mac Lean have already contributed to the deeper

understanding of the motivations of the different actors of the patronage network

responsible for the high cross by reexamining the role of the supposedly slavish artist.

Stalley speculated that the "open ended nature of [high cross] compositions and lack of

narrative" implied one was meant to stop, meditate, and reflect on many of the

ambiguous images and their placement in the iconographic program.[26] He disagreed with

the long-accepted view that the artist was a humble servant carrying out a more

knowledgeable, ecclesiastic designer's plans. To create these works and have

recognizable scenes for their monastic viewers to understand them, Stalley argued both

artist and designer must have understood the iconographic significance of these

carvings.[27] In "The Status of the Sculptor in Old Irish Law and the Evidence of the

Crosses," Douglas MacLean translated passages from the "*Uraicecht Brecht*," an Old

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[26] Roger Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master:' problems of identification and meaning," *PRIA* 114C (2013): 1-39, here 3. Stalley referred to Kees Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha: eschatological theophanies and Irish high crosses* (Amsterdam: Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, 1997) and "the high degree of theological sophistication" encoded in the high cross, as well as Barbara Rau, *Anglo-Saxon crucifixion iconography and the art of the monastic revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), to highlight the distinction between art meant for meditative and narrative purposes.

[27] Ibid., 17. Stalley did not believe the general populace would have this type of knowledge, only elite-monastic community members and the artists creating these works.

Irish law tract with glosses in Middle Irish, to ascertain the role of craftsmen in medieval

Irish society.[28] The older text referred to woodworking-wrights, but the gloss of these

particular entries discussed stone-wrights and their work.[29] The text elaborated upon

societal positions and some artistic practices, from which MacLean interpreted that the

"craftsman was a client of a patron, [he was] also a patron of his employees."[30] The

author also highlighted evidence of the existence of apprentices, or *felmaccib*, and

revealed a hierarchy in the status of artist similar to other stations in Irish society.

However, the "*Uraicecht Brecht*" does not assign who was responsible for the design of

high crosses, nor whether the patron was an ecclesiastic or lay person, only that many

actors were involved.[31]

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[28] Douglas MacLean, "The Status of the Sculptor in Old Irish Law and the Evidence of
the Crosses," *Peritia* 9 (1995): 125-55. MacLean's analysis of the law tract has thus far
provided the greatest amount of information on the role of the stone-mason in society and
stands as a model of what further exploration of Old Irish textual sources could reveal
about the creation process of high crosses.

[29] Ibid., 125, 127. MacLean viewed this transformation of carpenter to stonemason as
proof of the translation of the high cross from wooden prototypes to stone.

[30] Ibid., 130. In return for instruction, food, and clothing, the apprentice gave the master-
wright his wages until the learning period was completed. The apprentice was also tasked
with helping to support his supervisor when he reached old age and could no longer
work. A master-wright, or *sáer*, could gain a high social status, but was still dependent
upon noble dignitaries for work.

[31] Ibid., 128-130, 153. The *Uraicecht Brecht* confined *sáer* to the status of *dóernened*, or
the "base or subject privilege of dependent professional, who, although themselves free,
serve through their arts the socially superior free privilege of the *sóernened*, or noble
dignitaries." *Sáer* appears in a slightly different form (*thaer*) on the twelfth century Cross
at Tuam: "*OR DO THAER GILLUCRU THUATHAIL*"- "Prayer for the craftsman
Gillachrist Ua Tuathail."

When scholars such as Françoise Henry and Peter Harbison began to examine the role of royal donations in the creation of a small number of high crosses displaying the names of kings, their primary focus remained on the inscriptions for the purposes of dating, rather than determining a motivation related to rulership.[32] Along with Michael Herity and Catherine Herbert, Harbison has since suggested that the abundance of images of King David may also allude to royal patronage, as the biblical figure served as the quintessential model for Christian rulership in the early medieval period.[33] However, high crosses remained firmly tied to ecclesiastic designers, as Herbert maintained when she argued that those high crosses displaying kings' names and Davidic imagery were monastic instructions in good rulership directed towards the royal benefactor.[34]

The partiality for attributing ultimate control in high cross design to the abbot supports traditional views of power relations in early medieval Ireland, such as the notion that kings were nothing more than "priestly vegetables" with no real authority, a remnant

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[32] See section 1.4.4 for a full discussion of the inscriptions displayed on the Cross of the Scriptures, as well as Harbison's and Henry's arguments in the debate regarding their dating. Françoise Henry, "Around an Inscription: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise," *JRSAI* 110 (1980): 36-46. Peter Harbison, "The Inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, County Offaly" *PRIA* 79 (1979): 177-88.

[33] Peter Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel," 14. Harbison proposed that the High-King Máel Sechnaill, in imitation of Charlemagne, may have started the trend of Irish kings using Davidic imagery. Michael Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare" in *Figures from the Past: Studies on Figurative Art in Christian Ireland in Honour of Helen M. Roe*, ed. Etienne Rynne (Dun: Laoghaire, 1987), 111-30. Catherine Herbert, *Psalms in stone: royalty and spirituality on Irish high crosses*, PhD thesis (University of Delaware, 1997).

[34] Herbert, *Psalms in stone*, 273-4.

of the previous Celtic pagan culture.[35] As this understanding has shifted to reveal a more

balanced distribution of power and mutually-beneficial alliances between ecclesiastical

and lay rulers, especially regional high-kings, so too must our understanding of the

patronage of one of the most prestigious types of artworks in early medieval Ireland. The

political motivations for a king endowing a high cross and the strategic images in the

decorative program that might express claims of legitimacy and territorial control require

further exploration beyond attributing the monument's donation as a display of religious

devotion or sign of allegiance to a particular ecclesiastic site. As Susan Reynolds

observed in her study of secular power in the middle ages, there was a powerful impetus

for kings to be perceived as legitimate, for therein lied the source of their authority.[36] She

argued that this authority was derived from a combination of sources, not from the

Church alone, although it remained a crucial one.[37] Abbots assuredly contributed to the

decorative programs of high crosses, and may have controlled the entire design process of

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[35] Patrick Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship: Some Further Thoughts," in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Kalamazoo: The Medieval Institute, 1986), 151-83, 153 for quotation. Wormald used the phrase "priestly vegetable" to refer to the sacral nature of early Irish kingship, an idea promoted chiefly in the scholarship of D.A. Binchy. This characterization portrayed Irish kingship as having changed very little since pre-Christianity; the office was largely symbolic, offering little power in the making, administering, and deciding of law, as well as in overall rule and waging war. Although Wormald generally agreed with this, he questioned some of Binchy's notions. He noted the ability of Irish kings to stave off and subjugate Vikings as evidence of power and cited canon law for examples of kings carrying out legislation.

[36] Susan Reynolds, "Secular Power and Authority in the Middle Ages," *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: essays in memory of Rees Davies*, ed. Huw Pryce and John Watts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11.

[37] Ibid., 12.

some monuments. However, this dissertation questions the accepted model to argue that high-kings played a larger role in the patronage network than once thought and likely had input in delimitating the purpose, design, and situation of certain high crosses, demonstrably so in the case of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise.

The following review highlights major methodologies and theories applied by scholarship to the intersection of high crosses, especially the Cross of the Scriptures, and the study of kingship, as well as benchmark scholarship that contributed to these ideas. I have chosen with some exceptions to roughly organize these sources chronologically rather than thematically because many of the conceptual threads addressed later in this dissertation, i.e. patronage, Celticity, multifunctionality (or lack thereof), site-specificity versus universal connection, and Irish kingship, are tightly interwoven throughout the historiography of the high cross.

1.4.1   Early High Cross Scholarship and the Celtic Twilight

Discussed by antiquarians and early Celticists such as George Petrie, Margaret Stowe, R.A.S. Macalister, and Arthur Kingsley Porter, the connection between the high cross and kingship was present at the beginning of the formal study of the type. These scholars sought to emphasize the illustrious past of Ireland's Golden Age of monasticism and high-kings through architecture and art, as part of a larger literary and artistic movement that constituted Celtic Revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These scholars' larger aims were successful, as their studies influenced mainstream culture and resulted in renewed interest in the high cross as an expression of

Irish ingenuity.[38] The profusion of grave-markers emulating the medieval high cross

visible in Ireland and wherever Irish émigrés relocated provides one of the most tangible

examples of the lasting effects of the Celtic Twilight. Although their studies promoted

Irish identity through history, folklore, and myth, the methods used by these scholars

reflect their primary academic concern of tying the monuments to a historical personage

for the purposes of dating. The study of images on the high cross helped to establish

stylistic chronologies within Irish art and in the developmental timeline of the canon of

western art. However, the patrons' intended purpose for producing an Irish high cross

was certainly not for it to serve as stylistic *comparanda* or as a stepping stone in aesthetic

quality and iconographic complexity for the developing Romanesque sculpture of

continental Europe, as it is often portrayed in standard art historical textbooks.

Petrie, "the father of Irish archeology," began to record Irish high crosses during

his tenure as head of the Topographical Department of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland,

publishing his writings and drawings in *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*.[39] The

purpose of Petrie's scholarship was not the study of high crosses, rather he used the

monument-type in a subsidiary capacity to support his dating and attribution of

ecclesiastical architecture. Petrie proposed that the crosses commemorated the founding

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[38] For further reading on this phenomenon, see Maggie M. Williams, "The Sign of the Cross: Irish High Crosses as Cultural Emblems," PhD thesis (Columbia University, 2000); and *Icons of Irishness from the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[39] Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*. The Ordnance Survey of Ireland was tasked with creating detailed maps of the entire Ireland and documenting any prolific heritage sites.

of the great churches in Ireland, such as those at Clonmacnoise, Monasterboice, and

Tuam. In his study of the monastery of Clonmacnoise and its great church, he focused on

two inscriptions located on the Cross of the Scriptures (Figures 21-22). These carvings

are discussed in greater depth throughout this dissertation, but one of Petrie's greatest

contributions was his confident identification of the "greatly effaced" dedications that

mention High-King Flann Sinna and Abbot Colman mac Ailella.[40] For the most part,

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[40] Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, 271-3, 285. Petrie confidently
determined the following dedications and translations: on the western face "*OROIT DO
FLAIND MAC MAELSECHLAIND*" ("A prayer for Flann, son of Máelsechnaill"); and on
the eastern face "*OROIT DO COLMAN DORROINDI IN CROSSA AR IN RI FLAIND*"
("A prayer for Colman who made this cross on the King Flann"). Petrie concluded the
same two men featured in the inscriptions of the Cross of the Scriptures, Flann Sinna and
Colman, were also responsible for the erection of the greatest of Clonmacnoise's seven
churches, commonly called the "Cathedral" or the *Damhliag*. This is an event featured
both in the *Chronicon Scotorum* (CS) and the *Annals of the Four Masters* (AFM).
Chronicon Scotorum, trans. and ed. Geróid Mac Niocaill, unpublished manuscript; and
*Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the earliest times to A.D. 1135,
with a supplement containing the events from 1141 to 1150,* ed. William M. Hennessy, 1st
ed. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866). CELT: Corpus of Electronic
Texts, University College, Cork, accessed October 31, 2017, https://celt.ucc.
ie/published/T100016/index.html. CS 926: "Colmán son of Ailill – *i.e. of the conaille of
Muiretemne; by him was built the stone church of Cluain moccu Nóis* – abbot of Cluain
moccu Nóis [Clonmacnoise] and Cluain Iraird [Clonard], rested." *Annala Rioghachta
Eireann*: *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period
to the year 1616,* ed. John O'Donovan, 7 vols. (Dublin: Hodges & Smith: 1848–51).
CELT: The Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed October 31,
2017, https://celt.ucc.ie/published/ T100005B/index.html. AFM 924*:* "Colman, son of
Ailell, abbot of Cluain-Iraird and Cluain-mic-Nois, a bishop and wise doctor, died. It was
by him the Daimhliag of Cluain-mic-Nois was built; he was the tribe of Conaille-
Muirtheimhne." For further discussion and manuscripts containing the CS and AFM, see
section 1.6 of this dissertation. Peter Harbison, "The Inscriptions of the Cross of the
Scriptures, Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly," 178; and Petrie, *Ecclesiastical architecture*, 269-
70. Thomas Johnson Westropp, "A Description of the Ancient Buildings and Crosses at
Clonmacnoise, King's County," *JRSAI* (Dublin: The University Press, 1907): 280, 292.
In the description of these dedications, Harbison drew attention to Petrie's use of coercive
language, including phrases such as: "should unquestionably be read" and "very plainly

Petrie was unconcerned with the iconography of the cross, except one panel, High-King

Flann Sinna and Abbot Colmán founding Clonmacnoise, that supported his identification;

the image continues to appear as a common reference point in scholarship today due to

this association (Figure 23). He elaborated little upon the forty-some other scenes

featured on the cross, other than to state that the panels featured Christ's life "as recorded

in the Scriptures" and therefore this cross must be the "*Chrois na Screbtra*" referred to in

the *Annals of Tigernach* (AT).[41] The correspondence of the dates and persons included in

the annals with the inscriptions on the cross provided Petrie with a tidy timeline for the

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read." As contemporary drawings and the state of the inscription today reveal, these were
not particularly legible inscriptions.

[41] Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, 270. Petrie called this high cross the
Cross of the Scriptures because the name *Chrois na Screbtra* appears in a reference to
Clonmacnoise in the eleventh century in the *Annals of Tigernach* (AT) for the year 1060:
"The Éile and the Ó Fócarta plundered Clonmacnoise and took many prisoners out of
Chrois na Screbtra, and two persons were killed, i.e. a student, and another a layman. So
God and St Ciarán commanded the Delbna to pursue them and they left their slaughtered
men, including the crown prince of the Uí Fócarta, for it was he that had killed the
student. Now on the morrow, at sunrise, their cattlespoil came back to Clonmacnois
through St Ciarán's miracles." ("*h-Eili & Ua Focartai do argain Cluana Mac Nois, co
rucsad bruit moir o Chrois na Screbtra, & cor' marbadh dis and .i. mac leigind & oclach
eli, co ro isis Dia & Ciaran Delbna ina* n-díaidh, *cor' laissed a n-ár am rigdamna h-úa
Focarta, air is esidhe ro marb in fer leigind. Do-rocht tra a m-bu trath eirgi do lo
arnamarach co Cluain tre fertaib Ciarain*.") If this record does in fact refer to this
monument, it is one of the rare documentations of high crosses in the Irish annals.
"Annals of Tigernach," trans. Gearóid Mac Niocaill (unpublished text). CELT: Corpus of
Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed May 1, 2018,
http://www.ucc.ie/celt/ published/T100002A/. See section 1.6 for greater discussion of
this group of annals.

creation of the cross and the church, in addition to laying the groundwork for establishing

a chronology for the dating of other Irish high crosses.[42]

The drawings of these high cross inscriptions first appeared posthumously in

Petrie's *Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language*, a work largely edited by Margaret

Stokes (1832-1900).[43] Petrie's illustrations and research formed the basis of this

publication, but fellow antiquarian and Celticist Stokes wrote the accompanying text that

further elaborated upon the royal sponsorship of Clonmacnoise, beginning with the site's

co-founding in 544 CE by the soon-to-be High-King Diarmait mac Cerbaill and the

monastery's patron saint, Ciarán. She also discussed Flann Sinna's and Abbot Colman's

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[42] Colmán mac Ailella's death record of 909 CE stated he was abbot of Clonmacnoise
and responsible for building a great church (CS and AFM). The CS recorded Flann's
death in 916 CE stating he died "in the thirty-seventh year of his reign, at Cenn Eich of
the people of Cluain." The AFM recorded Flann Sinna's death as "A.D. 914. After Flann,
the son of Maelsechlainn, had been thirty-eight years in the sovereignty of Ireland, he
died at Tailltin." The records of these two men's deaths demonstrated their lives
coincided with the building of the church and provided the parameters of time for the
erection of the cross, in addition to indicating the important associations and social
positions held by these men in the community of Clonmacnoise.

[43] Petrie's drawings and research formed the basis of *Christian Inscriptions in Irish Art*,
but fellow antiquarian and Celticist Stokes wrote the accompanying text which supported
and further elaborated upon ideas Petrie discussed in his previous publications. Stokes
dated Petrie's drawings to his visit to Clonmacnoise in 1822. Ní Ghrádaigh, "Authorship
denied," 140. Ní Ghrádaigh's article attempted to shed light upon the influential roles
Stokes and the Rev. James Graves played in Petrie's publication. Petrie, *Christian
Inscriptions in Irish Art*, 41-43. In the discussion of the Cross of the Scriptures, Stokes
also included a "sculptural reading" of one of the panels observed by George Du Noyer,
who identified the bottom panel of the eastern face of the shaft as King Flann and Abbot
Colman "making a compact by swearing on the cross or pastoral staff of the saint." He
stated the king can "be recognized by the long-plaited beard [and] large fibula with four
circles, so as to form a cross...fastening his mantle on his right breast below the
shoulder."

involvement in the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures and the large church at the monastery. Stokes and Petrie, however, did not investigate the possible roles Flann Sinna played in the creation of this work or in crafting its intended meaning beyond the implied economic involvement.

The early art historical work of R. A. Stewart Macalister and Porter provided the foundations of several influential theories that dominated art historical scholarship of these crosses for most of the twentieth century. Macalister's work in *The Memorial Slabs of Clonmacnois, King's County* and in *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* expanded upon the archeological records begun by antiquarian scholars.[44] However, in *Muiredach, abbot of Monasterboice, 890-923 A.D*.; *his life and surroundings*, Macalister attempted to broadly contextualize the Cross of Muiredach at the monastery of Monasterboice, a work similar and style and iconography to the Cross of the Scriptures, within Irish art and in relation to trends in continental Europe (Figure 24).[45] Instead of the benefactor, Macalister suggested the inscription on the Cross of Muiredach ("*OR DO MUIREDACH LASNDERN……RO*" [Prayer for Muiredach who had the cross erected]) was the signature of a professional artist (Figure 25).[46] He proposed that this Muiredach

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[44] R.A. Stewart Macalister, *The Memorial Slabs of Clonmacnois, King's County* (Dublin: The University Press for the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 1909); and *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1945)*.

[45] R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Muiredach, abbot of Monasterboice, 890-923 A.D.; his life and surroundings* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, and Co. Limited, 1914), 12.

[46] Ibid., 21.

was the sculptor responsible for this cross and similar monuments, including the Cross of

the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise (Figure 5) and the Cross of Durrow (Figure 9).[47]

Macalister upheld the tripartite Renaissance patronage model of designer-

benefactor-artist and supposed that the artist was relegated to designing the abstract

panels alone.[48] In doing so, he limited the potential for the artist's creative ability and

portrayed abstract ornament as a lesser art form than Christian figural panels. Macalister

also proposed that the high cross's purpose was to instruct the "simple folk," and that

images without clear biblical references were inclusions of personal fancy or the

continuity of pagan forms.[49] The limitations Macalister placed on the artist's role and

mental capacity, his identification of uncertain scenes as presumably non-Christian

iconography, and his assignation of a primarily didactic purpose all remained prevalent

theories in scholarship, restricting the potential understanding of the high cross for most

of the twentieth century. However, his broader contextualization and acknowledgment of

variations in similarly-styled works being the result of different patrons, albeit abbots, are

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[47] This idea has been recently revisited, see Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master.'"

[48] Macalister, *Muiredach*, 45.

[49] Ibid., 56, 68. Macalister believed the panels on the cross were meant to instruct the illiterate in biblical passages and theological doctrine. This idea became the accepted function of these crosses by such scholars as Françoise Henry and Peter Harbison. For example, Macalister interpreted the animals on the inscription panel of the Cross of Muiredach as common domestic cats, commenting that "it is very charming to see how in half playful, half poetic mood he has confessed to this weakness of his…he is not ashamed to put figures of his pets on the cross, even the panel where he asks for prayers. Here are two quaint little figures of cats...and the letters of the inscription play hid and seek between them!"

useful methods for current studies of the Irish high cross. Subsequent scholars refrained for decades from questioning the work of Macalister and Petrie and instead focused on the identification of the iconography and establishment of a stylistic chronology.

Porter's *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland* attempted to identify and locate models for the iconography of the so-called "elusive" scenes.[50] In agreement with Macalister, he argued that those previously unidentifiable images were illustrations from Ireland's history, either saints like Patrick and Columba or legendary figures like Finn MacCool, Oisín, and Cú Chulainn. Porter emphasized the antiquity of Irish culture, its foundation by Celtic tribes that settled in Ireland, its persistence into the medieval period, and the far-stretching influence of Irish missionaries in Britain and the European continent.[51] To further support these claims, he approached the high cross through an Orientalist lens and pointed out iconographic models for the cross and its images stemming from Egypt and Palestine.[52] He likened the perceived archaic and static nature

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[50] Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland,* 1. Porter considered the iconographies previously unidentified as "elusive" because they fell outside the realm of biblical or hagiographical illustrations.

[51] Ibid.*,* 12, 38. Porter stressed the strength and longevity of Irish folklore. He believed that although St. Patrick, a Briton, brought Christianity to Ireland, the Celtic St. Columba was responsible for its spread to Iona and Scotland and the rest of Europe.

[52] Ibid., 86. Porter drew a connection between the ascetic saints of Egypt and Irish monasticism, writing: "[i]t was Egypt that initiated the warfare on Hellenistic art; it was Egypt that created the monastic ideal; it was Egypt that inspired the world with new ideas of unworldliness. The seed there sown took root at the opposite pole of Europe in Ireland…it is not surprising that Coptic artistic motives blended with others to form that surpassing artistic development which carried Ireland far ahead of the continent." He observed that the images of Saints Paul and Anthony are a common motif on Irish high crosses.

of these Near Eastern cultures to that of Irish art. When scholarship increasingly moved

away from the study of the "Celtic" roots of these monuments in favor of continental

inspiration, Porter's work was largely refuted as strained arguments promoting the

continuity of Irish culture from the Iron Age to the early medieval period.[53] However, his

work deserves a re-evaluation. Whereas this project does not understand the crosses to

display Celtic heroes like Cú Chulainn as a part of a lingering paganism persisting with

the Christian faith, it does propose a greater engagement with that past than is usually

seen. It gives serious consideration to Irish saints and early Christian kings that might be

included in the iconography, as well as generic martial imagery that reflected celebrated

attributes for high-status men of the time period. Pre- and early-Christian heroes

remained important models of kingship during the early middle ages. Their tales

continued to be recounted and most likely were recorded in monastic settings.[54] Like

King David, some Irish heroes were considered prefigurations of Christ, and thus a part

of the grander Christian narrative. High-kings like Diarmait mac Cerbaill served as the

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[53] Another work that was similarly treated when scholarship moved away from studying the Celtic roots of the early medieval period was Kenneth Jackson's *The Oldest Irish Tradition. Window on the Iron Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; first published 1964). Jackson used his study of the heroic sagas of pre-Christian Ireland to suggest that different social aspects continued after the introduction of Christianity.

[54] Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian present in Early Irish Literature*. Maynooth Monographs 3 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1990); James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1955); and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Early Irish Hermit Poetry?" in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach, and Kim McCone, Maynooth Monographs 2 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1989), 251-67.

lay counterparts to the powerful, early Irish saints.[55] As discussed in the following

chapters, ancestral and legendary heroes also played an integral role in the geographical

and political landscapes of Ireland, providing justification for alliances and legitimacy.

1.4.2 Creating a Grand Narrative of Irish Art: The Dichotomy of Celtic Paganism and European Christianity as Represented by the High Cross

Although Françoise Henry's work did not emphasize the role of kingship in the

creation of Irish high crosses, a review of her work is a requisite in any historiography of

the type, as she contributed several dominant theories that shaped the scholarship of high

crosses.[56] She wrote a stand-alone study on the monument type, *Irish High Crosses*, but it

was her three-volume survey *Irish Art* that provided the first synthesis of the island's

medieval art from the early Christian period to the Romanesque.[57] In this endeavor,

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[55] Peter Harbison, "Old Testament prefigurations of New Testament events on Irish high crosses," *PRIA* 118C (2018): 123-39. Helen Roe, "The 'David Cycle' in Early Irish Art," *JRSAI* 79 (1949): 39-59. Francis Byrne, "*Senchas*: The Nature of Gaelic Historical Tradition," in *Approaches to History*, *Historical Studies: Papers Read Before the Irish Conference of Historians* 9, ed. J.G. Barry (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1974), 137-59. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "The theme of lommrad in Cath Maige Mucrama," *Éigse* 18, no. 2 (1981): 211-224. Bart Jaski, "Early medieval Irish kingship and the Old Testament," *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 3 (1998): 329-344.

[56] Françoise Henry, *La sculpture Irlandaise pendant les douze premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: Leroux, 1933); *Irish Art During the Early Christian Period, to A.D. 800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965); *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions, (800-1020 A.D.)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); *Irish Art in the Romanesque Period (1020-1170 A.D.)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970); and *Irish High Crosses* (Dublin: Three Candles, 1964).

[57] Henry, *Irish High Crosses,* 13. Henry's stated purpose for her publication, *Irish High Crosses*, was "to sum up what is known about them, the figures and ornament, the connections with other monuments and the time when they were erected." This book is a survey of Irish high crosses describing the chronology and content of these monuments.

Henry formulated a grand narrative of development by establishing a chronology anchored by the style of abstract and figural decoration of Irish high crosses. She emphasized that non-figural ornamented types of high crosses, such as the Ahenny crosses, were older than the examples dominated by figural imagery, thus providing evidence that a persisting pagan Celtic culture was accepted alongside (or veneered in) the Christian faith (Figures 26-27).[58] Drawing comparisons from Celtic metalwork, Henry proposed that these crosses, along with insular manuscript designs, were inspired by or directly translated from pre-Christian designs. Like Porter, she also highlighted the presence of Celtic motifs and pseudo-historical figures from the Fenian cycle, primarily on high cross bases.[59]

For Henry, the non-figural designs of these early crosses were untainted Irish creations, paralleling the prevailing social anthropological discussions that portrayed the Irish people and culture as primitive and unchanged from the Celtic Bronze Age. She attributed the introduction of Christian figural scenes to interaction with Carolingian Europe, but also maintained that the Irish negotiated these images to make them their own through incorporating distinctive, indigenous motifs.[60] Henry also supported the

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The information was first and more thoroughly introduced in *La sculpture Irlandaise pendant les douze premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne*.

[58] Henry, *La sculpture irlandais*, 118; and *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period*, 155.

[59] Idem. See also Herbert, *Psalms in stone*, 8, 249, for a commentary on the Henry's separation of pagan imagery of the bases and Christian iconography of the cross shafts.

[60] Françoise Henry, "Les Origines de l'Iconographie Irlandaise," *Revue Archéologique* 5th Ser., 32: 107-8. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:311.

theory that the main purpose of the figural crosses was for biblical illustration and education. She identified iconographic models for these scenes, as she had done for the precursors of Celtic design on high crosses. Tracing these antecedents to support her grander art historical narrative did not require an in-depth consideration of the role and motivations of those creating the works, or the type's alternative functions. Any mention of crosses with inscriptions and the historic people to which they refer was divorced from her discussion of the iconography.[61] Subsequently, her theories supported a complex dichotomy present throughout interdisciplinary scholarship that separated Celtic pagan Ireland with its warriors and interlace designs from the influence of European Christianity embodied in the island's monastic communities and their art characterized by its figural iconography and narrative quality.

Although there are conflicting narratives as to the nature of the early medieval period in Ireland, an archetypal rendering often presented is that of a place isolated from the rest of the world and left to develop on its own because imperial Rome never reached its extreme western shores. Scholars, such as Henry, supporting this tradition believed that when the island became fundamentally Christian, it was ruled by powerful abbots of affluent monasteries, yet "pagan" and "Celtic" characteristics lingered and affected secular governance and overall society. Both the extent of influence from this pre-Christian society and the island's degree of connection to the rest of Europe are heavily debated topics.

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[61] Henry, "Around an Inscription," 36-46.

As "Celtic cross" is a common, colloquial descriptor of the Irish high cross, questions regarding the "Celtic" nature of the monument-type are impossible to avoid. Scholarship is largely divided onto a spectrum with two extremes described by Patrick Sims-Williams in his article, "Celtomania and Celtoscepticism."[62] Celtomaniacs generally supported the mass migration theory that considered the Irish and other "Celtic" groups in the British Isles as the last vestiges of the tribes that originated near the Mediterranean and continued to move westward, where they persisted due to their isolation.[63] As part of the uninterrupted Celtic past, this group of scholars considered early medieval Ireland as culturally purer than areas of mixed ethnicity, such as Anglo-

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[62] Patrick Sims-Williams, "Celtomania and Celtoscepticism," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (1998): 1-35.

[63] Fraser Hunter, Martin Goldberg, Julia Farley, and Ian Leins, "In Search of the Celts," in *Celt: Art and Identity*, 23-35. "Celt" and "Celtic" are difficult to define. The name appears in ancient sources, although they do not describe the people or region usually associated with the modern "Celtic" culture today of northwestern Europe. In 450 BCE, Herodotus located the Celts at the Danube in south-west Iberia and Julius Caesar noted that the Celts were a subgroup of Gaul with their own language. It was not until the early eighteenth century that similarities among the languages of Irish, Scottish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, and Breton were noticed and tied to the ancient "Celtic culture" by scholars such as Paul-Yves Pezron and Edward Lhuyd. From this connection, scholars formulated unsubstantiated migration theories of the Celtic peoples from central Europe outwards towards the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Iberian Peninsula, and to the western European fringe. Although this idea was entrenched in scholarship, it has been increasingly challenged. John T. Koch persuasively argued that the "Celtic" language was developed among the peoples of the Atlantic seaways, i.e. Spain, Brittany, Western Britain and Ireland, and developed c. 2000 BCE. See John Koch, "Paradigm Shift? Interpreting Tartessian as Celtic," in *Celtic from the West: Alternative Perspectives from Archaeology, Genetics, Language, and Literature,* ed. Barry Cunliffe and John T. Koch (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010), 185-301; "Ha Cla ≠ PC (The earliest Hallstatt Iron Age cannot equal proto-Celtic")," in *Celtic from the West 2. Rethinking the Bronze Age and the Arrival of Indo-European in Atlantic Europe*, ed. Barry Cunliffe and John Koch, Celtic Studies Publication 16 (Oxford: Oxbow, 2013), 1-16.

Saxon England. Thus, with the conflation of the indigenous culture and Christianity, the Celtic Church formed a unique and powerful faction within the universal Church, one that arguably rivaled Rome in influence at times, as reflected in the Easter Controversy and the founding of many Irish monasteries across Europe.[64] These Celtomaniacs sought to emphasize evidence of the continuing influence of paganism to support this idea of Celtic continuity. On the other hand, the Celtosceptic scholars, who were strongly associated with Britain rather than Ireland, denied this continuity, which they believed oversimplified a complex history and homogenized diverse peoples. A turn in scholarship during the latter half of the twentieth century saw many of this camp supporting the view that Irish culture during the early medieval period was primarily a Christian culture, which drew inspiration from the classical culture transmitted to the island from Western Europe rather than its own past.[65] In support of one or the other of these polarities, high cross scholars on both sides of the debate focused on stylistic and iconographic analysis, tracing artistic precedents and constructing a relative chronology based on these findings.[66] However, surely these aims were not motivating factors contributing to the patronage of these high crosses.

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[64] On the other hand, this continuity was also used to emphasize the stereotype of Ireland's "backwardness" and lack of evolution and development when compared to Britain.

[65] McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian present*; Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History*; Roe, "The David Cycle;" and Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*.

[66] Separating Celtophile and Celtosceptic theories regarding high crosses into unequivocal categories may not be possible due to the complexity of the topic of Celticity and the range of topics each scholar addresses. However, notable scholars that I place more on the Celtophile side of the debate include Petrie, Stokes, Porter, Macalister, and

Sims-Williams entreated scholars of Celtic Studies to "[strike] a balance" by "re-examining the evidence for Celticity" and called for them to "to make fewer excessively grand assumptions about non-linguistic Celtic unity and continuity," a potentially important approach for the investigation of the high cross.[67] A general agreement now exists on using increased clarity when discussing and defining "Celtic," a word that Sims-Williams claimed "is far too useful to abandon."[68] The term continues to be convenient because it is identifiable, evident in its appearance in the recent major exhibition (2016) at both the British Museum and National Museum of Scotland: "Celts: art and identity." The organizers of the exhibition addressed the plurality of the term, the "widespread similarities and regional variations," and the "need to [place each of the Celtic arts] in their own histories."[69] The prevailing belief that emerged from this exhibition regarding the medieval period was the idea of "Insular Fusion." The art produced of the time in Ireland and Scotland drew from earlier designs that were viewed as empowering and the

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Henry, whose full bibliographic references are listed above, as well as Liam and Maire de Paor, *Early Christian Ireland* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964). The de Paors' supported Henry's theory of high cross development and further argued that the abstract art of the crosses preserved the Celtic continuity of the works after the introduction of foreign designs to Ireland. For the most part, I view the work of Roe and Harbison as occupying the Celtosceptic half of the spectrum, with Stalley and Herbert placed closer to the middle.

[67] Sims-Williams, "Celtomania and Celtoscepticism," 34, 36.

[68] Ibid., 33.

[69] Hunter, Goldberg, Farley, and Leins, "In Search of the Celts," 31.

craftspeople innovatively employed them, along with Roman, Viking, and Carolingian figures, for new uses in the decoration of prestigious objects.

Whereas the high cross is first and foremost a monument in dialogue with the visual language and general tenets of the universal Church, its study should not be divorced from its relationship of the specific customs of the so-called "Celtic Church," Irish pre-Christian history, and local considerations. Christian and classical paradigms undeniably shaped the use and formal characteristics of the high cross. The Irish certainly partook in cultural exchanges with the Continent and further abroad, both before and during the period of extensive Norse involvement in Ireland, and engagement with the Viking trade network. The Irish intelligentsia was also very much in tune with the prevailing discourse both in Rome and the Carolingian Court.[70] However, those living and producing in early medieval Ireland were not slavish copyists.[71] They also did not forget their own history, legends, and symbols or fail to incorporate their present condition.

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[70] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland* (New York: Longman Press, 1995), 186-195, 224-228.

[71] Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 39. Reacting against the tradition of scholarship that focused primarily upon establishing models of continental iconography for the imagery that appears on high crosses, Stalley wrote "Irish sculptors were not necessarily dependent on passive imitation of contemporary models from abroad, but succeeded in formulating their own unique response to Christian thought and ideas, and in the process drawing on imagery long familiar within the Irish Church." Looking for these direct models abroad negated the artist and designer's ingenuity, as well as the experience of both those creating and viewing.

As Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk[72] and Tomás Ó Carragáin[73] addressed in their studies of high cross figural panels and ecclesiastical buildings, respectively, there is a reasonable side to Celtic continuity, as evident in the respect the Irish displayed for the past in their art and architecture through the commemoration of legendary heroes, Irish saints, or important places of authority and ritual. As with the atrial cross of conversion-era New Spain, distinctively indigenous characteristics were not all together forgotten, but ideas deemed harmless to the tenets of Christianity and effective in elucidating its truth were assigned established typologies and forms. Bettina Brandt-Förster, Charles Doherty, Maggie Williams, and Heather Pulliam have argued that the aforementioned panel on the eastern shaft of the Cross of the Scriptures represents an episode from the hagiography of Ciarán in which the saint co-founded Clonmacnoise with Diarmait mac Cerbaill while alluding to a contemporary Irish event, i.e. Flann Sinna and Abbot Colman's building of the great stone church at Clonmacnoise (Figure 23).[74] As addressed

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[72] Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk, "Pilgrimage Ad Limina Apostolorum in Rome: Irish Crosses and Early Christian Sarcophagi," in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and Its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 9-26.

[73] Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory*, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[74] Bettina Brandt-Förster, *Das irische Hochkreuz*: *Ursprung, Entwicklung, Gestalt* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1978). Charles Doherty, "The monastic town in Early Medieval Ireland" in *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe*, ed. H.B. Clarke, and A. Simms (Oxford: B.A.R., 1985), 65. Williams, *Icons of Irishness*, 27-28. Heather Pulliam, "Encounters with Clonmacnoise: Rethinking Slow Looking," in *Slow Scholarship in the Digital Age*, ed. Catherine Karkov (Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming); and "Between the Embodied Eye and Living World: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise," (provisional title, forthcoming). This image on the eastern face of the

in greater detail in chapter four, both Stalley and Harbison have posited obscure scriptural

readings for the image fitting with the abbatial-designer approach.[75] However, in a later

article, Stalley also put forward the idea that high cross panels were intended to present

multi-layered messages. He referred to the practices of well-educated monks, who were

encouraged by the writings of early Christian fathers to contemplate biblical passages in a

fourfold manner: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical.[76] He speculated the

"open ended nature of these compositions and lack of narrative" might also invite this

same type of contemplation.[77] It is probable that the layers of interpretation present in

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Cross of the Scriptures is discussed in greater detail in chapter four. It is one of the most popular images used in discussions dealing with the royal patronage of monasteries and one of the more debated panels.

[75] Roger Stalley, "European Art and the Irish High Crosses," *PRIA* 90C (1990): 135-58. Harbison, *Irish High Crosses*, 202-3. Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 153. Ó Carragáin suggested that "what we are seeing here is hagiography inspired by sculptural iconography: a reinterpretation of the scene that made it an enduring visual expression of the association between the two building projects and between Clann Cholmáin and Clonmacnoise."

[76] Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 16. Stalley defined these four approaches in the following ways: "the literal or historical sense focuses on what the text states or reports directly; the allegorical sense explains the text with regard to its doctrinal content, identifying symbolic meaning; the tropological approach relates to the moral implication of the text; the anagogical sense explores allusions to hidden metaphysical and eschatological knowledge."

[77] Ibid., 11-15, 39. Stalley considered an undefined iconography of two figures wrestling/embracing commonly featured on the crosses of Durrow, Kells, and Clonmacnoise, as well as in Romanesque art. The author summarized previous interpretations of this scene on high crosses (Jacob and the Angel or the Kiss of Judas) and relatable models throughout Christendom. As Stalley demonstrated, the problem with reading this image was not due to the deterioration of the stone cross, but rather it was a conscious choice to portray an ambiguous scene that pointed to a deeper function than biblical didactic.

images appearing on the Cross of the Scriptures also included hagiographical or contemporary events that were viewed as part of the grand Christian narrative, especially if the patrons, lay and ecclesiastical, desired to emphasize their role in it.

The old dichotomy existing in scholarship between Christian monasticism and pagan secular rulership is no longer valid. The warrior and hunting imagery on high crosses were not incongruous with the Christian faith, thus it was not necessary to separate them from biblical iconography, as was once maintained.[78] Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, among others, have progressively argued that high-status kings were not merely sacral, they were powerful Christian rulers like their abbatial and episcopal counterparts.[79] A high-king's authority and perceived legitimacy

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[78] Herbert, *Psalms in Stone* 63-165. Herbert suggested that the hunt and herding imagery that appears on high cross bases was inspired by the Book of Psalms.

[79] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Nationality and kingship in Pre-Norman Ireland," in *Historical Studies 11: Nationality and the Pursuit of national independence,* ed. T.W. Moody (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1978), 1-35. Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, "Celtic kings: 'priestly vegetables'?" in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson, and David Pelteret (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 65-80. Ó Corráin argued that Irish kings held great power and the idea of a high-kingship over all of Ireland existed, although it never became a reality. A united Ireland under one man's rule provided a powerful impetus for the political actions of the Uí Néill dynasty in the ninth and tenth centuries, and other regional kings who worked to consolidate territory. He explained as "[l]arger and more cohesive kingdoms emerged, the powers and pretensions of the kings grew apace, the nature of kingship itself changed and by the eleventh and twelfth centuries rule over the entire island of Ireland had become, for good or for ill, the prize in the political game and express[ed] object of contenders." In his essay written in memory of Wormald, Charles-Edwards discussed the theory of the "priestly vegetable," noting how Wormald pushed back against some of Binchy's earlier claims. However, Charles-Edwards also argued for a middle ground between Ó Corráin and Wormald, stating that Irish kingship could be more aptly described as a "mixed diet" (p.80), in which small local kings continued in a sacral role, but regional kings had great power and used it.

came from a number of sources, including the Church, but also his military strength and success, his aptitude for political negotiations, and his ability to maintain just rule.[80] Although Christian, it was essential for Irish kings to remember important totems, ancestral heroes, and history, especially in relation to the land. Among the mechanisms of kingship, Christian rites, laws, and imagery held sway, as they did for the rest of the early medieval society, but it is hard to deny the persistent evidence of earlier practices deemed either inoffensive or too important to abandon. As discussed in the following chapters, the traditional association of Irish kingship with stone symbols of power clearly continued into the early medieval period, and most likely contributed to the cross finding such an exceptional expression in Ireland and the British Isles during the Middle Ages. Certain aspects of pre-Christian Ireland very much continued to affect ideas of rulership and political alliances after the introduction of Christian kingship, but again only those ideas deemed compatible with the new faith survived and transformed. High-kings also used the faith to their advantage, drawing on the church's doctrine and tying themselves to its authority to further legitimize their political claims. This dissertation investigates actors and monuments who were very much Christian, but also the indigenous social practices and history that helped to shape the form, placement, and certain images on the Cross of the Scriptures. High crosses were devotional objects, but they were also potent symbols of rulership, used to substantiate status and prestige.

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[80] Reynolds, "Secular Power and Authority in the Middle Ages," 12-14.

1.4.3 The Davidic High Cross

One of the most popular figures identified throughout the corpus of high crosses, as well as other early medieval monuments of the British Isles, is that of the Old Testament King David. The work of both Helen Roe and Catherine Herbert supported the view that the Davidic imagery appearing on the high crosses served as models of warrior and royal Christianity.[81] Roe's article "The 'David Cycle' in Early Irish Art" drew attention to these images of David, as shepherd tending his flock, conquering hero, psalm-composer, and king (Figures 28-29). Above all, Roe sought to identify iconography, highlight commonalities among these Davidic high cross scenes, and compare these examples to classical or continental models.[82] She supported the didactic function of the high cross, stating "many of the episodes were regarded as parallels to types of certain events in the life of Christ and further symbolizing various aspects of Christian teaching."[83] Roe concluded the role of a high cross was to be a "doctrinal illustration" of Christ's victory over death.[84] Although she suggested a possible royal

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[81] Roe, "The David Cycle," 39-59. Herbert, *Psalms in stone*. For Pictish sculptures with references to David, see Isabel Henderson, "The 'David Cycle' in Pictish Art," in *Early Medieval Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John Higgitt, British Archaeological Reports (Oxford: B.A.R. publishing, 1986), 87-123.

[82] Idem. Davidic imagery appears on the Cross of the Scriptures, the Cross of Muiredach, the Tall Cross of Monasterboice, the North Cross of Dunleek, the Cross of Kinnitty, the South Cross at Kells, the High Cross of Arboe, the High Cross of Durrow, the Market Cross of Kells, the High Cross of Killamery, and the South and North Crosses of Castledermot, among other examples.

[83] Roe, "The David Cycle," 39.

[84] Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells*, 7.

designer or beneficiary, because of David's association with Christian kingship, she did not address the specific persons responsible or the motivation behind the creation.[85]

Herbert's 1997 dissertation, "Psalms in Stone: Royalty and Spirituality on Irish High Crosses," attempted to place these Davidic images within the socio-historical context of early medieval Ireland.[86] She questioned the dichotomy of secular and sacred spheres present in Ireland, and subsequently high crosses, by reconsidering images of hunting, herding, riding, charioteering, and fighting as related to the Book of Psalms and King David, rather than the previously accepted notion that they were pagan or "secular genre scenes" (Figures 30-31).[87] Through her study of patristic and biblical exegesis, hagiography, monastic rules, and liturgical and devotional sources, Herbert asserted that the many panels featuring or related to King David across the corpus were images of protection due to the perceived apotropaic quality of psalms *and* they served as *specula principium* (mirrors of princes) of Christian rulership for high-kings. She argued that these images "served a dual purpose: to affirm the status of the royal patron while simultaneously promot[ing] an ecclesiastically-generated ideology of kingship in which Old Testament King David figures as an exemplum of the ideal Christian ruler."[88] However, like Michael Enright's study of ordination ceremonies for divinely-sanctioned

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[85] Roe, "The David Cycle' in Early Irish Art," 39-59; and Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*.

[86] Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*.

[87] Ibid., 2.

[88] Ibid., 274.

Christian kingship in early medieval Europe, Herbert placed ultimate control in the hands of the ecclesiastic leaders.[89] Both scholars argued that these holy men manipulated rulers to achieve their own political aims, rather than envisaging symbiotic partnerships between actors. This dissertation builds upon Herbert's argument by addressing the royal motivations in erecting the Cross of the Scriptures, and further analyzing messages of both universal and Irish kingship presented in its form and iconography. I also push back against scholarship that considers every harpist, warrior, and king appearing on a high cross is David or a reference to the Psalms, and instead suggest that these figures may also be multivalent allusions or representations of Irish Christian kingship and "court" culture.

1.4.4   "Around an Inscription," Again: The Scholarship of Peter Harbison and other Patronage Studies[90]

The seminal and fundamental work for the study of the high cross remains Peter

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[89] Michael Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons: The Origin of the Royal Anointing Ritual*, ed. Karl Hauck, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985).

[90] Françoise Henry, "Around an Inscription: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise," *JRSAI* 110 (1980): 36-46; and Peter Harbison, "The Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise," 177-88. This section title is a reference to an article that discussed the inscriptions of the Cross of the Scriptures and asserted that Peter Harbison's attribution naming the ninth-century abbot Ronan, and not Colmán, was bold in its questioning of the traditional timeline of Irish art, yet misguided due to Ó Murchadha's evidence. Henry (p. 36) wrote: "In all studies, some facts are accepted for a long time without question. Everyone quotes them without verifying their validity…until an iconoclast comes and tries to smash it…"and even if rejected "the discussion swept all complacencies with a breath of fresh air and demanded a stricter definition of difficulties hither to overlooked or glossed over."

Harbison's *The High Crosses of Ireland*.[91] This long-awaited, encyclopedic work photographed the complete corpus, including every high cross and fragment thereof, and provided a full review of previous scholarship. For each panel of every cross Harbison included past identifications and the prevailing theories. He then compared the panels to various manuscripts, ivories, frescoes, and metalwork from Ireland and abroad. Harbison's work remains an excellent example of the scholarship siding with "Celtoscepticism," as a major trend in his scholarship is to assign biblical and hagiographic identifications, preferring tangential scriptural references over many Irish sources. His work also strengthened the evidence for a connection to Carolingian Europe that Henry drew by arguing the transmission of iconography through Carolingian frescoes.[92] Since he envisaged the iconographic sources as images from the Continent, the possible role of Irish traditions, whether Christian or, especially, secular, was in his view scanty at most. The compilation of information Harbison provided was revolutionary for the field, but in many ways, it maintained the *status quo* in scholarship by focusing on issues of chronology and identification. As with previous studies, he separated his section on inscriptions related to kingship from the iconographical

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[91] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*.

[92] See also Peter Harbison, "The Carolingian Contribution to Irish Sculpture," in *Ireland and Insular Art, A.D. 500-1200: Proceedings of a Conference at University College Cork, 31 October-3 November 1985*, ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1987): 105-10. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:316. Harbison argued that the extensive range of fresco cycles provided a better inspiration for high crosses than the ivories Henry proposed served as the vehicle of transmission.

interpretation of the monuments with such inscriptions.[93]

     A recurring theme throughout Harbison's scholarship was the patronage of high crosses, as addressed in a series of his articles: "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel and a Historical Reconsideration of the 'Ahenny Group' of Crosses," "An Irish Stroke of European Genius: Irish High Crosses and the Emperor Charles the Bald," "The extent of Royal Patronage in Irish high crosses," "The Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois," and "The Oliver Davies Lecture: Regal (and other) Patronage in Irish inscriptions of the Pre-Norman period."[94] He attributed the lack of patronage studies to the scholarly "fixation with seeking parallels for abstract ornament [in metalwork and illuminated manuscripts that] entirely dominated the discussion on the chronology" and further argued that this historiographical tendency distracted from the

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[93] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:352. Although expanding on the possibilities of the high cross's functions, Harbison supported Macalister's and Henry's postulations that they were biblical illustrations. He quoted Hamlin, "Crosses in Early Ireland: The Evidence from Written Sources," 138-40, who wrote that the monument type "delimited boundaries, areas of sanctuary or particular parts of monasteries, recorded land grants, and served as focus for preaching, prayer, penance, and sealing agreements." However, Harbison maintained that any plain cross could have served these functions, but "the figure-carved crosses must have conveyed certain [biblical] messages."

[94] Peter Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel and a Historical Reconsideration of the Ahenny Group of Crosses," *PRIA* 93C, no.1 (1993): 1-20; "An Irish Stroke of European Genius: Irish High Crosses and the Emperor Charles the Bald," In *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton NJ: Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archeology, Princeton University; University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2011), 133-48; "The extent of Royal Patronage in Irish high crosses," *Studia Celtica Japonica* 6 (1994): 77-105; "The Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois," 177-88; and "The Oliver Davies Lecture: Regal (and other) Patronage in Irish inscriptions of the Pre-Norman period," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 58 (1999): 43-54.

study of the high cross's iconographic connection to Carolingian court art.[95] Harbison and Henry once debated the dating of the inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, and subsequently the chronology of high cross and artistic development in early medieval Ireland. Harbison pushed for an earlier date, attributing the eastern inscription to the ninth-century abbot Ronan (abbot, 816-844), which would place the monument's creation prior to the destruction of the Viking invasions, instead of amidst it, and more closely aligned with the Carolingian Renaissance.[96] However, Domhnall Ó Murchadha subsequent rubbings of the inscriptions clarified the reading and confirmed Petrie's original assertion of Flann and Colman (Figures 32a-b).[97]

Ó Murchadha and Giollamuire Ó Murchú also created rubbings of the inscriptions of crosses at Kinnitty and Durrow, as well as of the southern cross of Clonmacnoise

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[95] Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel and a Historical Reconsideration of the Ahenny Group of Crosses," 9. These parallels also cannot be dated with any certainty.

[96] Harbison, "The Inscriptions of the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise," 180-2. Harbison questioned Petrie's generally-accepted reading of the inscription on the eastern face of the Cross of the Scriptures, stating that he could not have read Colmán into the inscription because it physically would not fit. His opposition was based on a 1738 drawing by Jonas Blaymires that recorded the letters OD: NAN DORRO. Harbison asserted "one gets the impression that Petrie was reading into the inscription his historical knowledge gleaned from Old Irish Annals."

[97] Domhnall Ó Murchadha, "Rubbings taken of the inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois," *JRSAI* 110 (1980): 47-51. The reading was made possible through the technique of pushing soft clay into the abscesses of the inscription to form a negative mold and then a positive plaster-of-Paris cast, of which Ó Murchadha made rubbings. He revealed two three-line inscriptions: on the western face – "OR DO RIG FL_IND M MA_____N_ OROIT DO RIG HERENN OR" and on the eastern face – "DO COLMAN DORRO____ CROSSA AR RIG FL_ND."

(Figures 33-34a-d, 9, 48).[98] Although fragmentary, all three seemingly mention the name

Máel Sechnaill, presumably Máel Sechnaill mac Máelruanaid, Flann Sinna's father and

high-king of Tara during the mid-ninth century. The inscriptions on Kinnitty and Durrow

also ask for prayers for the king of Ireland, like those on the Cross of the Scriptures. With

the reconfirmation that scriptural crosses in the Mide region were royal monuments,

Harbison applied the theory of kingly patronage to the Ahenny crosses, located in the

kingdom of the Osraige (Ossory), and a high cross base from Cashel. [99] He connected his

attribution to Roe's work, identifying several figures on the base of the Ahenny North

Cross as King David, and linked this group to Máel Sechnaill's penchants for erecting

high crosses and territorial expansion (Figures 26-27). Harbison then proposed these

crosses might be an attempt by the high king Máel Sechnaill to consolidate rule of Ireland

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[98] Domhnall Ó Murchadha and Giollamuire Ó Murchú, "Fragmentary inscriptions from the West Cross at Durrow, the South Cross at Clonmacnois, and the Cross of Kinnitty," *JRSAI* 118 (1988): 53-66. The Durrow Cross inscription possible mentioning Máel Sechnaill reads: "OR DO [M]_SECHNA__RIGHERE_OR_OC_O _A_DORRO_A_CHRO_S." The Cross of Durrow also includes an inscription on its western side that include the words "Dubt" and "Rig" on separate lines. The two Durrow inscriptions are on adjacent sides rather than placed on opposite sides of the cross. The inscription on the southern cross at Clonmacnoise reads: "OR___RIG_AE_ E_____[R]UA_[A]I[D]_____N_____[I][A]_____RIGH_E_[N]." De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 140-1. De Paor read Ó Murchadha's rubbings of the Kinnitty (Castlebernard) inscriptions as: "OR DO RIG MAELSECHNAILL M MAELRUANAID OROIT AR RIG HERENN" (A prayer for King Maelsechnaill son of Maelruanaid. A prayer for the king of Ireland) on the south face, and on the north face: "OR DO COLMAN DORRO_IN CROSSA AR RIG HERENN OR DO RIGH HERENN" (A prayer for Colman who made the cross for the king of Ireland. A prayer for the king of Ireland).

[99] Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel," 12. Harbison identified such scenes on the base as "David and his charioteer" (north face) and "David bringing home the body of Goliath" (south face).

in emulation of Charlemagne.[100] He further postulated that the placement of the crosses

may mark the boundary between Máel Sechnaill's territory and his rival (and both

brother- and son-in-law) Cerball mac Dúnlainge, king of Osraige (Figure 35).[101]

In "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artefact and Methodology," Ó Floinn instead

stressed the need to take into account the contextual history of the time and the site when

attempting to understand the motivations behind the creation of these crosses.[102] He

called for a reconsideration of the type beyond stylistic analysis and motif comparison,

noting that Harbison "neglect[ed] to look at original locations and specific site context of

crosses" in his large survey of high crosses.[103] Ó Floinn further reacted to Harbison's

scholarship of the Ahenny crosses, proposing a different interpretation. He suggested that

Cerbaill mac Dúnlainge erected the crosses at Ahenny (Kilclispeen), Kilkieran, Seir

Kieran, and Lorrha along his western border in response to Máel Sechnaill's monuments

and encroachment upon his territory. He further argued that their dominant non-figural

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[100] Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel," 14. Harbison noted that
Máel Sechnaill's youth would have coincided with the end of Charlemagne's reign.
Charlemagne embraced the Old Testament king as a role model, for example having
himself anointed by oil at his coronation and urging people at his court to refer to him as
"David."

[101] Ibid., 17. Roe, *The High Crosses of Western Ossory*, 7. Roe previously had noted the
situation of this group of crosses at western limit of the kingdom of the Osraige and the
boundary between the provinces of Leinster and Munster.

[102] Ó Floinn, "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artefact and Methodology," 1-12. Ó Floinn
stated the "[r]easons for the commissioning of a major piece of stone sculpture or
ecclesiastical metalwork may often depend on immediately local factors, some of which
may not be detectable due to the lack of detailed historical sources."

[103] Ibid., 8.

designs, in comparison to the figure-rich Mide crosses, were conscious acts of resistance (Figures 26-27). As addressed in chapter four of this dissertation, Stokes drew from annals and legal sources to support the high cross's function as an apotropaic boundary of monasteries early on in the study of the monument type. However, Harbison and Ó Floinn's studies broached the idea of high crosses as boundary markers for entire kingdoms or provinces, thus expanding the possibility of the monument's function. Subsequently, this idea provides a point of departure for the study of the Cross of the Scriptures in this dissertation.

1.5   The Intersection of Geography, Kingship, and High Crosses

The most important component in the scaffolding of my dissertation is a current approach in scholarship that considers early medieval monuments in the context of their geographical and political landscapes. Harbison's and Ó Floinn's conversation about the patronage of the Ossory crosses provide a starting point for the type of site-specific research with special attention given to political geography that is addressed in the following chapters. Three further studies are particularly influential to my project: *Early Medieval Stone Monuments: Materiality, Biography, Landscape* edited by Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton, and Meggen Gondek; "The Early Medieval Sculpture of North Wales: Context, Wealth, and Patronage" by Nancy Edwards; and "Symbols of Power in Ireland and Scotland, 8th to 10th century" by Katherine Forsyth and Stephen Driscoll.[104]

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[104] Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton, and Meggen Gondek (eds.), *Early Medieval Stone Monuments: Materiality, Biography, Landscape* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2015); Nancy Edwards, "The Early Medieval Sculpture of North Wales: Context, Wealth, and

All three works presented studies of monuments from Northwest Europe during the early medieval period and examined these sculptures in the context to their landscape, shifting the focus from previous considerations of iconography and style to geography.

These authors introduced a variety of approaches to the study of early medieval monuments including Irish high crosses.[105] The essays featured in *Early Medieval Monuments* examined the interaction of stone monuments, identity, and history through non-traditional methods involving social memory practices, spatial and temporal networks, materiality, and object biography. On the other hand, Edwards provided a site-specific case study of the Pillar of Eliseg, an important monument built by Welsh kings in a contested area during the early medieval period. She concluded that "sculptural production may have been driven at least in part by the need to express identity, as well as the control of resources" (Figures 36-37).[106] Although her focus remained on one monument, her suggestion is widely applicable to the entire corpus of high crosses, rather than being limited to those with inscriptions. Forsyth and Driscoll elaborated upon the theory of high crosses as totems of kingship by selecting sites across Ireland and

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Patronage," in *Making Histories: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Insular Art, York 2011*, ed. Jane Hawkes (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2011), 50-64; and Katherine Forsyth and Stephen Driscoll, "Symbols of Power in Ireland and Scotland, 8th to 10th century," *Territorio Sociedad y Poder* 2 (2009): 32-62.

[105] Williams, Kirton, and Gondek, *Early Medieval Stone Monuments*. Some of the objects featured in these essays are the cross at Maen Achwyfan, the Cleulow Cross, rune-stones and hogbacks, the memorial stones from Iniscealtra, high crosses, as well as other examples from Scandinavia, Scotland, Britain, Wales, and Ireland.

[106] Edwards, "The Early Medieval Sculpture of North Wales," 64.

Scotland, such as Clonmacnoise and Portmahomack and "[exploring] how kings used stone crosses in a landscape as an expression of power."[107] They particularly emphasized the visibility of high crosses and cross-slabs within the landscape in their discussion of these monuments as strategic territorial markers. As this framework is central to my argument, I include here the summary of their article regarding the perceived message of power expressed by this type of monumental sculpture:

> such acts of patronage and largesse effectively demonstrate [the kings']
> control of economic and cultural resources, their relationship to
> ecclesiastical power structures and thereby their access to the saints. The
> crosses provided a vehicle for asserting political authority: their decoration
> was a means of visually encoding messages expressing claims to authority
> which were sometimes made explicit in inscriptions. By placing
> monuments in the open at symbolically significant locations, kings ensure
> maximum visibility of such messages at strategic and sometimes contested
> locations.[108]

In the second half of the article, Forsyth and Driscoll determined that the association of these monuments with monastic sites derived from a long history of royals "manipulating" symbolically powerful places for their own use, including royal pagan ritual sites and hill-forts.[109] Although the rulers partially responsible for these tenth-

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[107] Forsyth and Driscoll, "Symbols of power," 32. Forsyth and Driscoll drew attention to the differences between Clonmacnoise, a site relatively well-documented for the early medieval period, and the monastic site of Portmahomack, which lacks documentation but has an abundance of archeological evidence. They also considered ancient sites of kingship, including Tara in Ireland and Dunadd in Argyll, Scotland.

[108] Ibid., 45.

[109] Ibid., 61. In this study's conclusion, the authors stated that they hope to convey the "diverse means by which the kings of Scotland and Ireland manipulated sites, monuments, and portable artefacts as symbols of power." A practice paralleled on the Continent and in England at this time period during the eighth through eleventh centuries.

century Irish crosses may have looked to the Carolingian fondness of Davidic

iconography and ideology for inspiration, they were also very aware of their own

symbols of kingship and history embedded in their landscape.[110] The following chapters

draw upon these works that consider landscape, materiality, and memory practices to

decode these messages of power by further relating the iconography and form of the

Cross of the Scriptures to its situation in space and history.

1.6   Complementary Studies

Other current trends in high cross scholarship complementary to this type of study

address phenomenology, the effect of environmental factors on performance, and

reconsider the artist's role in the creation of the high cross. Examples from the former

include Pulliam's "Blood, Water, and Stone: The Performative Cross" which considered

the effect of rainfall on the iconography and materiality of stone crosses, and Éamonn Ó

Carragáin's proposed reading of the decorative programs of high crosses based on

sunlight in "High Crosses, the Sun's Course, and Local Theologies at Kells and

Monasterboice."[111] Although the Cross of the Scriptures is one of the most well-known

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[110] Forsyth and Driscoll, "Symbols of power," 49. This is clear from the previous discussion of the Uí Néill kings, who called themselves kings of Tara.

[111] Heather Pulliam, "Blood, Water, and Stone: The Performative Cross," in *Making Histories: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conferences on Insular Art, York 2011*, ed. Jane Hawkes (Shaun Tyas: Donington, 2013), 262-278; and Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "High Crosses, The Sun's Course, and Local Theologies at Kells and Monasterboice," in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period,* ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University, 2011), 149-174.

and studied works of early Irish art, forthcoming scholarship by both Pulliam and Stalley

highlight the pressing need for a reconsideration of this high cross and the other

monuments of its corpus.[112] Due to the constraints of this study, it is not possible to

provide a detailed summary of the interdisciplinary studies that supplement this art

historical investigation of the Cross of the Scriptures; a list must suffice here, but the

works are furthered discussed as they occur at various points in the following chapters.

The consideration of the site-specificity of the Cross of the Scriptures would not be

possible without Heather King's excavations, conferences, and publications of

Clonmacnoise, Conleth Manning's study and dating of the site and early medieval

architecture, or Annette Kehnel's comprehensive history of the monastery.[113] My

conception of Irish kingship draws from multiple sources, including the works of Francis

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[112] Pulliam, "Encounters with Clonmacnoise: Rethinking Slow Looking" and "Between the Embodied Eye and Living World: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise." Roger Stalley, *Early Irish Sculpture and the Art of High Crosses* (provisional title, forthcoming from Yale University Press).

[113] Heather King, "Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise (Ireland)," in *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe: Papers of the "Medieval Europe Brugge 1997 Conference* 2, ed. Guy De Boe and Frans Verhaeghe (Zelik: I.A.P Papporten 2, 1997), 127-131; Ibid., ed., *Clonmacnoise Studies: Volume 1, Seminar Papers 1994* (1998, repr., Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2007); *Clonmacnoise Studies: Volume 2, Seminar Papers 1998* (Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2003). Conleth Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," in *Clonmacnoise Studies Volume. 1: Seminar Papers, 1994*, ed. Heather King (1998, repr., Dublin: Dúchas, The Heritage Service, 2007), 57-86. Annette Kehnel, *Clonmacnois: the Church and Lands of St. Ciarán: Change and Continuity in an Irish Monastic Foundation (6th to 16th* Century) (PhD diss., Trinity College, Dublin, 1995) (Series: Vita regularis 8. Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1997); and "The lands of St Ciarán," in *Clonmacnoise Studies: Volume 1, Seminar Papers 1994*, ed. Heather King (1998, repr., Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2007), 11-18.

Byrne,[114] Bart Jaski,[115] Edel Bhreathnach,[116] Donnchadh Ó Corráin,[117] Elizabeth

Fitzpatrick,[118] Michael Enright,[119] Patrick Wormald,[120] and Janet Nelson.[121] In terms of

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[114] Francis Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973); and "The Rise of the Uí Neill and the high-kingship of Ireland: O'Donnell Lecture delivered at University College Dublin on 28th November 1969," O'Donnell Lecture 13 (Dublin: University College, 1969).

[115] Edel Bhreathnach, *Ireland and the Medieval World, AD 400-1000: Landscape, Kingship, and Religion* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014); and Edel Bhreathnach, ed., *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005).

[116] Bart Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); "Early medieval Irish kingship and the Old Testament;" "The Decline of the Uí Néill: Irish Political Relations in the tenth century" (M.Phil. Thesis, National University of Ireland, University College Cork, 1989); and "Vikings and the Kingship of Tara," *Peritia* 9 (1989): 310-351.

[117] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "High-Kings, Vikings and Other Kings," *Irish Historical Studies* 22, no. 83 (March 1979): 283-323; "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies held at Oxford from 10-15 July 1983*, ed. D. Ellis Evans, J.G. Griffith and E.M. Jope (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 141-158; and "Nationality and Kingship in Pre-Norman Ireland," *Nationality and the Pursuit of national independence*, ed. by T.W. Moody, Historical Studies 12, n.9 (1978): 1-35.

[118] Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, "Assembly Places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," *Journal of the North Atlantic*, *Debating the Thing in the North: The Assembly Project* 8, no. 53 (2015), 52-68; and *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c.1100-1600: A Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004).

[119] Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*.

[120] Wormald, "Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship: Some Further Thoughts."

[121] Janet Nelson, "The Limits of Power in Medieval Europe," in *Power in History: From Medieval to the Post-Modern World*, ed. Anthony McElligott, Liam Chambers, Ciara Breathnach, and Catherine Lawless (Newbridge, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2011), 3-24. Also contributing to my ideas on Irish kingship are: D.A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); and Thomas Charles-Edwards, "A contract between king and people in early medieval Ireland? Críth gablach on kingship," *Peritia* 8 (1994): 107–119.

law, it looks to the established scholarship of D.A. Binchy,[122] Thomas Charles-

Edwards,[123] Fergus Kelly,[124] and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín,[125] as well as the literary studies of

James Carney[126] and Brian Lambkin.[127] Elizabeth O'Brien and Sarah Semple's

discussions of boundaries and burials are also invaluable to my arguments regarding the

high cross's situation in a liminal space.[128]

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[122] D.A. Binchy, "An Archaic Legal Poem," *Celtica* 9 (1971): 152-68; "Irish History and Irish Law," *Studia Hibernica* 15 (1975-6): 7-45; "Irish Law Tracts re-edited: I. Coibnes uisci thairidne," *Ériu* 17 (1955): 52-85; ed., *Corpus iuris hibernici: ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum; recognovit* (Baile Átha Cliath: Inst. Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1978); trans., *Críth gablach*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 11 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1941). The *Corpus iuris hibernici* is a collection of diplomatic transcriptions of Irish legal texts associated with Brehons, i.e. they are viewed as native laws. From here on the corpus is abbreviated as the CIH.

[123] Thomas Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Irish Law," in *Medieval Settlement: continuity and change*, ed. PH Sawyer (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 83-87; "Críth Gablach and the law of status," *Peritia* 5 (1986): 53–73; *Early Christian Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); "Érlam: The Patron Saint of the Irish Church," in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Richard Sharpe and Alan Thacker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 267-290.

[124] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (1988, repr., Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2003).

[125] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*.

[126] James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1955), ed., *The Poems of Blathmac, Son of Cu Brettan, Together with the Irish Gospel of Thomas and a Poem on the Virgin Mary*, Irish Texts Society 47 (Dublin: Published for the Irish Texts Society by the Educational Co. of Ireland, 1964).

[127] Brian Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A Reappraisal," *Studia Celtica* 23 (1999): 132-154; and "The Structure of the Blathmac Poems," *Studia Celtica* 20-1 (1985-6): 67-77.

[128] Elizabeth O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland during the 5th to 8th centuries AD," in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, *Proceedings of a Conference on the Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches, September 2004*, ed. Nancy Edwards, The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 29,

1.7   On Dating Sources: Annals, Law Tracts, Treatises, Hagiography

The established goal of this study is to consider the Cross of the Scriptures with special attention given to motivations of its royal patron, Flann Sinna, and the monument's geopolitical situation at the monastery of Clonmacnoise. It specifically explores the institution of early Irish Christian kingship and the concept of boundary-making in order to reconstruct an understanding of how and why the high-king and his monastic allies at Clonmacnoise used the high cross to reinforce the ruler's claims of legitimacy. To accomplish these aims, this dissertation considers the form and iconography of the Cross of the Scriptures' in comparison to a wide variety of works from the Insular world to the Eastern Roman empire, especially crosses and stone monuments associated with early medieval rulership. A large part of the following argument also relies upon a variety of written sources stemming from historic annals, hagiography, sagas, poetry, law tracts, and wisdom-texts because these sources help to recreate an approximation of the society responsible for the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures. An unavoidable issue for the study of early medieval Ireland is that many of its written sources are linguistically and contextually datable to the sixth through eleventh

Society for Church Archaeology Monograph 1 (Leeds: Maney, 2009), 135-154; and *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed*, British Archaeological Reports British Series 289 (Oxford: B.A.R. Publishing, 1999). Elizabeth O'Brien and Edel Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary Ferta, Their Physical Manifestation and Historical Context," in *Tome: Studies in Medieval Celtic History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards*, ed. Fiona Edmunds and Paul Russell (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2011), 53-64. Sarah Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual, and Rulership in the Landscape* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

centuries, but the texts are often known only through later manuscripts and have probably undergone alterations. This dissertation does not particularly seek to evaluate the historical accurateness of the alleged stories and laws from the sixth century, but it does consider if they were current in the early tenth century around the time of creation of the Cross of the Scriptures. The following section addresses the issues of dating for a select group of sources that are of particular importance to this study.

An essential issue of the early Irish annals is that they survive as transcriptions in later manuscripts dating from the eleventh century to the seventeenth century. Several of the annals begin with a generalized record of the past connecting Irish history to the biblical and Roman past. The entries become increasingly localized as they progress, especially during the tenth century. Nicholas Evans aptly described the points of consensus regarding the scholarly understanding of the Irish annals, writing:

> The three main areas of agreement are: first, that the 'Annals of Tigernach' (AT) and *Chronicum Scottorum* (CS) share a common source; second, that this common source and the 'Annals of Ulster' (AU) derived from another earlier common source; and thirdly that an important element for the section before ca 740 was a chronicle kept at the monastery on the island of Iona.[129]

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[129] Nicholas Evans, *The Present and the Past in Medieval Irish Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 2. Evans summarized major studies of the Irish annals including, but not limited to: Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to Sources* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 103-7; T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1984), 258; Gearoid Mac Niocaill, *The Medieval Irish Annals* (Dublin: Dublin Historical Society, 1975), 20-24; and Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, *The Chronicle of Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 1:6-7.

Kathleen Hughes called the common source for the *Annals of Tigernach* (AT) and *Chronicon Scotorum* (CS) the Chronicle of Ireland[130] and based her argument on the shared events, vocabulary, and phrases for the entries dating from 432-911. The text of the AT dates to the twelfth century, with entries listed until the year 1178, and survives in two manuscripts in the Oxford Bodleian Library, the twelfth-century Rawlinson B 502 and the fourteenth-century Rawlinson B 488.[131] The records of the AT are fragmented with the entries for the years 767-974 missing entirely. The lacuna in the dates includes the time period of this dissertation's particular area of interest. The compilation's name stems from its traditionally-associated, although uncertain, author, the eleventh-century abbot of Clonmacnoise, Tigernach Uí Briúin; his obituary reads: "*Huc usque Tigernach scribsit ocht ar ochtmogait quieuit*" ("Up to this point, Tigernach wrote and died in 88)."[132]

The only transcription of the CS survives in a seventeenth-century manuscript copied by Dubhaltach Mac Fhibhisigh.[133] The CS lists historical records until 1150 and essentially follows the entries of the AT. However, the CS's comparable entries are

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[130] Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 101. Mac Niocaill, *The Medieval Irish Annals*, 21-4. Mac Niocaill posited that the Iona chronicle "was incorporated into two chronicles independently at about 750…one kept at Clonard in Mide and the other in Armagh."

[131] Eóin MacNeill, "The Authorship and Structure of the Annals of Tigernach," *Ériu* 7 (1914): 30-113.

[132] For further discussion of the authorship of the Annals of Tigernach, see MacNeill, "The Authorship and Structure of the "Annals of Tigernach," 30-113, here 30-41. Tighernach's obituary is featured in the AT1088, AU1088 and CS1088.

[133] Trinity College, Dublin, MS no. 1292.

shorter and the annals contain records for the years during the AT's lacuna. Significantly for this study, the CS offers a more complete picture of ninth and tenth centuries and also features details about Clonmacnoise in particular, including such local affairs as obituaries for the ecclesiastic elite and natural disasters. As observed by Hughes and Kehnel, the earlier history appeared to be interpolated sometime in the tenth century with entries featuring Clonmacnoise abbots. After this time, the CS and AT adopted a decidedly Clonmacnoise-centric view.[134] The CS also contained specific details about High-King Flann Sinna's political maneuverings, his family, and his associations with Abbot Colmán (ab.904-920). These factors suggest that the writers of these entries were well-affiliated with the affairs of Clonmacnoise and the larger Mide region, and perhaps had Flann Sinna's political interests in mind. Kehnel argued that these details pointed to Flann Sinna's and Clann Cholmáin's (his dynastic family) potential involvement in writing and revising annals, rather than his exceptional superiority among the high-kings listed throughout the annals.[135] A related chronicle, the *Annals of the Four Masters* (AFM), is a seventeenth-century compilation composed through the use of earlier sources associated with the AT and CS. It also includes the details about events of the ninth and tenth centuries and the monastery of Clonmacnoise.[136]

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[134] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 9-13. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 104-5.

[135] Ibid., 9.

[136] Two copies signed by the Four Masters, Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh, Fearfeasa Ó Maoilchonaire, and Cú Choigcríche Ó Duibhgeannáin, exist in three archives in Dublin: University College Dublin UCD-OFM A 13 (A.M. 2242-A.D. 1169), Royal Irish Academy, MS C iii 3 (A.M. 2242-A.D.1171), Royal Irish Academy,

The interpolated transcription of the *Annals of Ulster* (AU) survives in a fifteenth-century manuscript. It derives from the earlier common source, possibly stemming from Iona, that Evans mentioned in his summary. The AU entries share certain characteristics with the Clonmacnoise group up until the eighth century, but its annals primarily focus on the concerns of northeastern Ireland. Thus, it presents a counterpoint to AT, CS, and AFM, among other chronicles considered to be a part of this group.[137] When the events of the Clonmacnoise group and the AU coincide after 911, they reveal the broader concerns for the entire northern half of Ireland, rather than more region-specific concerns. Likewise, the *Annals of Inisfallen* (AI, dated to 1092) has unique entries focusing on its regional environs in Munster, although it also shares similar events with the AT and CS up until 790.[138]

MS 23 P 6 (A.D. 1170-1499), Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 7 (A.D. 1500-1616), and Trinity College Dublin, MS 1301 (A.D. 1334-1605 (and 1616 fragment)).

[137] *The Annals of Ulster*, trans. and ed. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 1st ed. (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983); and *Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster, otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat; a chronicle of Irish affairs A.D. 431-1131: 1155-1541. Vol. II A.D. 1057-1131:1155-1378,* ed. B. Mac Carthy, 1st ed. (Dublin: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893). CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed May 1, 2018 http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100001A/.

[138] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B.503. R. I. Best and Eoin MacNeill, trans. *The Annals of Inisfallen*, reproduced in facsimile from the original MS Rawlinson B 503 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1933); and Seán Mac Airt, trans. *The Annals of Inisfallen MS. Rawlinson B. 503* (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1944 [1951]). CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T10004/. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 107-115.

In addition to the annals, one of the most important sources for the history of Clonmacnoise is that hagiography of St. Ciarán, the founding saint of Clonmacnoise. Four versions of his "Life" survive in manuscript form, three in Latin and one in Irish. Like the annals, linguistic and contextual details provide an approximation of when the stories were composed, but they only exist in later medieval manuscripts. Two manuscripts known as the *Codex Kilkenniensis* recorded the first "*Vita*," which is a thirteenth-century recension of an earlier version.[139] The second Latin "Life" is also recorded in two, thirteenth-century manuscripts, known as the *Codex Insulensis*.[140] Kehnel noted that the site-specific matters and geographical references have been omitted in this version.[141] The third *Vita* is a fragmented account, recounting only Ciarán's childhood, and differs from the first two Latin *Lives* which share a common source. It survives as the *Codex Salamanticenis*, a fourteenth-century manuscript, which also contains the hagiography of other saints located in south-central part of Ireland around the Slieve Bloom mountains, such as Ciarán of Saighir (Seir Kieran), Ruadán of Lorrha, Cainneach of Aghaboe, and Ailbe of Emly.[142] Although these *Vitae* only exist as later

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[139] Archbishop Marsh's Library, Dublin, MS V.3.4. and Trinity College Dublin, MS no. 175.

[140] Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 485 and Rawlinson B. 505.

[141] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 14. Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives: An Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1991), 247-273.

[142] Brussels, Royal Library, 7672–4. W.W. Heist, ed., *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi* (Brussels: Société de Bollendistes 1965). Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives,* 227-426. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 15. Although fragmentary, Kehnel observed that it is a "relatively original and unrevised work,

medieval copies, linguistic trends in early medieval Ireland place their composition in the

seventh or eighth century when Latin was the dominant language of monastic culture.

The fourth "Life of Ciarán" is composed in Middle Irish and preserved in the

fifteenth-century manuscript, the Book of Lismore.[143] This version was most likely

written after the dominant writing language shifted to the vernacular in the tenth century.

Macalister observed in his translation that the writing had a homiletic introduction and

tone, implying its public performance on the saint's holy day.[144] The focus on the role of

Flann Sinna's ancestor Diarmait mac Cerbaill in the co-founding of Clonmacnoise and

his rise to the High-Kingship of Ireland also points to a date of composition during the

late ninth and early tenth century.[145] Some of Ciarán's friendships in the Irish "Life" also

indicate this time period, as saintly relationships often equated to contemporary monastic

and political alliances at the time of the work's composition. Ciarán's favorable position

as a student of St. Finnian, founder of Clonard, may allude to their monasteries sharing an

abbot at the beginning of the tenth century. Likewise, Columba and Ciarán's friendship

pointed to the relaxing of tensions previously existing between Durrow and

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preserving many of the early elements of Irish hagiography." The codex was originally held in Salamanca, Spain before its current home in the Royal Library in Brussels.

[143] Brussels, Royal Library, vol. xi (4190-2100), fol. 149a.

[144] R.A.S. Macalister, trans., *The Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, ed. Eleanor Hull (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921), 4-5.

[145] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 18. Kehnel stated that there is "[n]o proof but [these elements point to] the Irish Life of Ciaran [being] composed sometime during the reign of Flann Sinna." She also highlighted parts of the narrative that alluded to eleventh and twelfth century redactions.

Clonmacnoise, partly engendered by Clann Cholmáin's patronage of both monasteries during the ninth and tenth centuries.[146] Kehnel described these kinds of textual manipulations as "contemporary and social political propaganda that makes use of traditional materials in a kind of code, adapting inherited traditions to contemporary needs, or initiation of new traditions where occasion demanded."[147] This dissertation supports that Flann Sinna and his monastic allies emphasized his forefather's role in the foundation narrative of the Irish "Life," and further argues that this network used the high cross as a similar apparatus to advance their political agenda in the same period. Through word and image, the tenth-century ruler drew parallels to his own patronage of the site and established ancestral claims that legitimized his own right to the high-kingship.

The pseudo-historical stories featuring Diarmait mac Cerbaill functioned in a similar manner.[148] Like other works in the "Cycles of Kings" genre, the episodes were developed at different times and places, and recorded in different manuscripts. Diarmait's "Cycle" features several episodes, including "*Aided Diarmata*" ("Death of Diarmait"), "*Cath Cúla Dremne*" ("The Battle of Cúil Dreimne"), and "*Comlond Diarmata meic Cerbaill fri Ruadan*" ("Diarmait's Contention with Ruadhán"), among others.[149] These

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[146] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 19.

[147] Ibid., 23.

[148] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 2.

[149] Dan Wiley, ed. and trans. "An edition of *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill* from the Book of Uí Maine" (PhD thesis: Harvard University, 2000). Wiley included the following stories in Diarmait's cycle: the "*Aided Bressail*" ("Death of Bressal"), "*Echtra Ambacuc*" ("The Adventure of Ambacuc"), "*Orgguin trui mac Diarmata*" ("The Slaughter of Diarmait's Three Sons"), "*Stair ar Aed Bacclam*" ("Story of Aed Bacclam"), and

accounts were written during the Middle Irish period between 900-1200 and variously

appear in such manuscripts as the "Book of the Uí Maine," (Dublin, Royal Irish

Academy, Dii 1, fourteenth century, ff.74ra-75rb), the "Yellow Book of Lecan" (Trinity

College Dublin, MS1318, fourteenth century), and the Egerton 1782 (based on the lost

"*Leabhar Sligig*" ("Book of Sligo") (London, The British Library, sixteenth century,

f.37ff-40vb)).[150] This dissertation considers the "*Comlond Diarmata meic Cerbaill fri*

Ruadan" and "*Cath Cúla Dremne*," which recounted the stories of Diarmait's encounters

with Saint Ruadán and Saint Columba, respectively, and the "*Aided Diarmata*," which

also recorded the story of an exiled Diarmait helping Ciarán to raise a church and

establish the monastery of Clonmacnoise. Apart from the foundation story, Diarmait's

saga expands to include his other dealings as high-king. The various and sometimes

inconsistent portrayals of his character reveal that his figure was used as an archetype for

Irish kingship on multiple occasions to make various political statements during the tenth

and eleventh centuries.

This study also considers the narrative poetry of Christ's life and sacrifice by the

ecclesiastic, and possible Culdee, Blathmac, as an analogue for examining the Cross of

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"*Suidigud Tellaig Temra*" ("The Settling of the Manor of Tara") among the extant stories, and two further examples now lost, "*Cenngalaur dogab Diarmait*" ("Headsickness of Diarmait") and "*Écht Maile Móir*" ("The Heroic Deed of Máel Mor").

[150] Wiley, *Aided Diarmata*; and Jan Erik Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung: The transformation of early Christian kings in three post-Viking tales from Ireland," in *Ideology and power in the Viking and Middle Ages: Scandinavia, Iceland, Ireland, Orkney and the Faeroes*, ed. Gro Steinsland, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, Jan Erik Rekdal, and Ian Beuermann (Boston: Brill, 2011), 211-267.

the Scriptures' passion imagery and associations with rulership. As elucidated by James

Carney, Brian Lambkin, and Matthieu Boyd, Christ's kingship and redemptive death are

central themes in Blathmac's work.[151] The works attributed to him pre-date Flann

Sinna's reign and patronage of the Cross of the Scriptures by a century or more, indeed

Blathmac's poetry is linguistically dated to the mid-eighth century. Evident in the number

of surviving Irish manuscripts featuring gospels and psalms, there were of course

numerous transcriptions of the scriptures available to readers and, by proxy,

congregations, but Blathmac's poetry was written for widespread appeal and

performance. His work provides one of the most comprehensive examples of Crucifixion

poetry from early medieval Ireland and is written in what Carney called "simple

unpretentious *deibide* obviously intended for a popular audience."[152] From translating his

poems, Carney described Blathmac as a monk, who had "had the regular ecclesiastical

training of his day. He had read the scriptures as well as a certain amount of apocryphal

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[151] Carney, *The Poems of Blathmac*. Carney discovered the poems in the National
Library of Ireland, MS G 50, in 1958, and argued that they belonged to the *Céli Dé*, a
reform movement that aimed to limit the laicization of monasteries. Gearóid Mac Eóin,
"The Review of the Poems of Blathmac *The Poems of Blathmac*, *Son of Cú Brettan:
Together with the Irish Gospel of Thomas and a Poem on the Virgin Mary*, trans. James
Carney," *Studia Hibernica* 7 (1967): 222-226. Lambkin, "The Structure of the Blathmac
Poems" and "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A Reappraisal;" Matthieu Boyd, "'The Poems
of Blathmac, Son of Cú Brettan,' and 'The Dream of the Rood,'" *Studies in medieval and
Renaissance teaching* 19/2 (Fall 2012): 49-80. Lambkin and Boyd have sought to reveal
aspects of the poetry affected by the cultural milieu in which Blathmac was writing.

[152] This type of verse is formed by quatrains consisting of two couplets with end-rhymes
that follow an aabb pattern.

material."[153] Blathmac's verses were also in Irish, which was both the teaching medium of the island's monasteries and an "important [mechanism] to aid memory."[154] This work is not an exegetical treatise, but a vernacular poem meant to be remembered and recited to inspire the emotional involvement and contemplation in its listeners. Jane Hawkes suggested that the carvings on monumental crosses may have functioned in the same way in the Insular tradition. She cited Bede's consideration of the relief carvings from Solomon's Temple in his argument that sculpted or painted "stories of the saints and martyrs of Christ" should be displayed in churches because they had the function of "living writing" and when placed before viewers they produced the "feeling of great compunction."[155] Essentially Blathmac's poems related the same narrative of Christ's life found in the gospels, but, as addressed in the following pages, he presented the story in terms of Irish society, considering concepts of Irish kingship, clientship, and customs. There are no written explanations describing the iconographic programs of high crosses,

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[153] Carney, *The Poems of Blathmac*, xiv.

[154] Ibid., xv, note 21.

[155] Jane Hawkes, "Venerating the Cross around the year 800 in Anglo-Saxon England," The Jennifer O'Reilly Memorial Lecture 2018 (University College Cork, 2018), www.ucc.ie/en/media/academic/history/JenniferOReillyMemorialLecture 2018 reduced.pdf., 1-24, here 17-19, notes 47-49. Hawkes cited Bede, *De Templo*. 2.824-843, specifically 2.832-833 and noted that Bede believed Christian figural imagery had a beneficial purpose for helping to move people to contemplation of God. He further justified their use by claiming that as Old Testament figures were allowed to be displayed in the Temple, so should Christian heroes. Hawkes also presented Gregory the Great's well-known letter to Serenus, the Bishop of Marseilles, in which the pope stated, "that from the sight of the event portrayed [in the image] they should catch the ardor of compunction."

nor direct references to the use and reception of the monument type involving the spoken

word, whether liturgic or poetic. However, there is an excellent example of the interplay

of poetry and monumental cross iconography in the Insular world, the eighth-century

Ruthwell cross of Northumbria.[156] As discussed below, the runic verses frame the images

of the passion, and most importantly, describe the events in local terms and concepts.

As with Blathmac's poetry, many of the texts used to consider the legal status of

kingship and boundary-marking in Ireland, such as the "*Audacht Morainn*" ("The

Testament of Morainn"),[157] "*Críth Gablach*" (the "Forked Purchase"),[158] "*Córus*

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[156] Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the rood tradition* (New York: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

[157] The "*Audacht Morainn*" is dated to the seventh century. Fergus Kelly, ed. and trans. *Audacht Morainn* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976); "Audacht Morainn," in *Celtic culture: a historical encyclopedia*, ed. John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford: ABC-Clio, 2006), 1.142–143. The text exists in two recensions, A and B, and in several manuscripts. Recension A: Trinity College Dublin, MS1339 (H 2.18, "Book of Leinster"), ff.293a-294b, 346a-c, twelfth century; MS 1318, section 5, cols 217-280, fifteenth century; MS 1298, fifteenth century; London, British Library, MS additional 33993, sixteenth century; and Dublin, University College, MS Franciscan A 9, fifteenth century. Recension B: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS23 N10 (Betham 145-967), sixteenth century; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.42, seventeenth century; London, British Library, MS Egerton 88, sixteenth century; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 N 27 (966), 1714; Trinity College Dublin, MS 1336, section 6, cols 710-831 (Copy of Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 N 27 (966)), eighteenth century; and MS1336, section 6, cols 710-831, sixteenth century.

[158] The "*Críth Gablach*," or the "Forked Purchase" dates to the eighth century. Transcriptions of the text are found in MS 1337 at Trinity College Dublin in the following sections: MS 1337, section 10, pp. 214–268, sixteenth century; MS 1337, volume 2, pp. 1-7a, sixteenth century; and MS1337, section 14, pp. 399-438, mid-sixteenth century, p. 419. Binchy, *Críth Gablach*; and CIH2.563.1–32 and 2.777.6–783.38.

Bésgnai" ("the regulation of proper behavior"),[159] and the "*Uraicecht Becc*" ("Small

Primer"),[160] may date to earlier centuries than the Cross of the Scriptures. A further

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[159] Another common spelling for this text is the "*Córus Béscnai.*" Liam Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai: an Old Irish law tract on the church and society*, Early Irish Law Series 7 (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, DIAS). CIH520.1-536.27, 903-5, 1812-21. The *Córus Bésgnai* is found in compilation "*Senchas Már*" ("The Great Tradition"), a collection of fifty anonymous law texts on a great variety of topics, written in the seventh or eighth century with later Middle Irish glosses and commentary. Most likely, the texts were compiled somewhere in northern Mide-southern Ulster, according to place-names and personal names referred to in the texts. It is said to be originally based on the work produced when Saint Patrick called for the compilation of Brehon Law to be written down in order to decide what laws were conducive to Christianity and could be kept. It included texts on dogs, cats, and bees to prescriptions on caring for the sick, couples, hostages, fosterage, and contracts. The "*Senchas Már*" also contains the "*Críth Gablach*" ("Branched Purchase"), "*Di Astud Chor*" ("On Binding of Contracts"), "*Uraicecht Becc*" ("Small Primer"), "*Bretha Nemed Toísech*" ("First Judgement of Privileged Ones"), "*Bretha Nemed Déidenach*" ("Final Judgement of Privileged Ones"), and "*Cóic Conara Fugill*" ("The Five Paths of Judgment"). The only continuous copy of the *Córus Bésgnai* is in the composite manuscript, Trinity College Dublin, MS 1316 (H 2. 15A), fourteenth century. The text appears on pages 59b-66b in the second of five volumes that make up the manuscript. A second version is also found in the Trinity College Dublin, MS 1336 (H 3. 17), dated to the sixteenth century. It consists of extracts of the text in large script and Middle Irish commentary and glosses in a smaller script. Breathnach included both a version of the Old Irish text with the glosses and commentary removed and a diplomatic version of the continuous version (Trinity College Dublin, MS 1316) with later glosses and commentary intact.

[160] Versions of the Irish law tract, "*Uraicecht becc,*" (or "small primer"), are found in five extant manuscripts: the Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P12 ("Book of Ballymote"), fourteenth-fifteenth century, CIH1591.1-1618.40; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS1337, pp. 88-111, CIH634.1-655.23; Trinity College Dublin, MS 1318 ("Yellow Book of Lecan"), cols 573-958, fourteenth-fifteenth century, CIH2318.1-2335.30; Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 3 (Phillipps 7022), fourteenth-fifteenth century, CIH2255.1-2282.27; and Trinity College Dublin, MS1432 (E.3.3), pp. 19a.33-21b.1, fifteenth or sixteenth century. D.A. Binchy, "The date and provenance of *Uraicecht becc*," *Ériu* 18 (1958): 48. Liam Breatnach, *A companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici*, Early Irish Law Series 5 (Dublin: DIAS, 2005), 315ff (§ 5.53). Although Binchy dated the "*Uraicecht becc*" to the eighth century or earlier, Liam Breatnach's recent evaluation argued that the language is datable to the "ninth century or even perhaps as late as the early tenth century."

problem is that these laws often survive only as fragments, also appearing in later manuscripts from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries and are undoubtedly revised.[161] Kelly's broad dating of Irish law tracts followed the general argument that Old Irish texts comprised of the examples written in the seventh through ninth centuries and Middle Irish texts occur in the tenth through twelfth centuries.[162] The Cross of the Scriptures believed date of creation occurred during the transition into Middle Irish dominance, at the end of the period in which the vast majority of these types of texts were written down. Conceivably there were also differences in law or custom based on regional governance or the nature of the source, i.e. ecclesiastical versus lay. However, Kelly surmised that "[i]n spite of such divergences and disagreements, our sources display an essential unity, we often find them confirming and complementing one another."[163] These texts nonetheless establish a foundation for approaching the high cross in relation to political and territorial claim-making.

These problems contribute uncertainty as to the actual implementation of the laws during the main period discussed in this dissertation - the ninth and tenth centuries. However, the extensive use of history and past traditions to guide conventions in early Irish society contributes to the applicability of these sources in the current discussion. References to bygone heroic saints and warriors are prevalent in writing, ritual, and

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[161] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 2.

[162] Ibid., 265

[163] Ibid., 2.

artistic production in the early tenth century. Although there was a noted fossilization of law texts occurring in the eighth century, inevitable innovations took hold. When this happened, secondary authors amended or annotated the legal texts instead of rewriting them. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín noted that those texts with glosses and commentaries "bear witness to the practice of expounding and interpreting laws."[164] Of course, this practice is not evident in all texts and may have very well been a pragmatic result of recording-keeping and manuscript production, but it also suggested that there was value in knowing the past and allowing relevant traditions to continue alongside advances. Resultantly, this dissertation uses these texts to recreate an approximation of the societal concerns contributing to the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures. It delineates possible motivations based on the history and customs of both the institution of kingship and the concept of boundary-marking found in these treatises, in spite of the temporal disjuncture between the creation of these texts and the construction of the high cross that precludes a more direct connection.

The pre- and early-Christian past, as source of inspiration and authority for early Irish society, is a principle theme with which this study continuously engages. Its extensive use is evident in both the historical and archeological record and warrants a reevaluation of the high cross with greater engagement with the heroic warriors and early saints of Ireland's antiquity. The study of the Cross of the Scriptures in relation to its historic and political landscape reveals medieval patrons either selectively continued or

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[164] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland,* 113. Ó Cróinín noted that some texts were annotated, however others, like the "*Críth Gablach*," were not.

periodically re-engaged with native Irish history and traditions. Those concepts selected from the past, however, did not critically threaten the tenets and customs of Christianity. According to the author of the "*Córus Bésgnai*," the "law of nature," i.e. pre-Christian law, reigned supreme among the men of Ireland before it was synthesized with the "law of the letter" upon the arrival of Patrick and acceptance of the new faith.[165] The text recorded the story of Patrick's decision regarding the "judgements of the men of Ireland" that previously ordered society:[166]

> What did not conflict with the word of God in the law of the letter and with the conscience of the faithful was combined in the order of judges by the church and learned poets. All of the law of nature had been proper except for the Faith and what is proper to it, and attaching the church to the lay people, and the due of both parties from each other and to each other. For there is a lay entitlement in relation to the church and a church entitlement in relation to the lay people.[167]

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[165] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 32-35, here 32-33, §30-37. §30: "Each law is to be secured. It is in this that the two laws have been bound together. It is the law of nature which held sway among the men of Ireland until the coming of the faith in the time of Loegaire son of Niall. It was in his time that Patrick came. It was after the men of Ireland accepted the faith from Patrick that the two laws, the law of nature and the law of the letter were combined."

[166] Ibid., 34-35. §35: "Dubthach maccu Lugair the learned poet stated the judgements of the men of Ireland [delivered] out of the law of nature and the law of the prophets. For prophecy in accordance with the law of nature had ruled in the judgement of the island of Ireland and in her learned poets, and prophets among them had foretold that the pure language of the *Beati* would come, that is, the law of the letter." For the discussion of the two bodies of laws, Breatnach (p.74) also cited his own work Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus iuris Hibernici*, 355-57; as well as D.A. Binchy, "Irish History and Irish Law," in *Studia Hibernica*, xvi (1975-6): 7-45; McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*; and John Carey, "The two laws in Dubthach's judgment," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 19 (1990): 1-29.

[167] Ibid., 34-35, §37.

The leadership of Ireland chose this course of action because there was much "in the law of the nature" that Christian law "did not cover."[168]

1.8   Conclusion

This select summary of the scholarship on Irish high crosses reveals that its intersection with Irish kingship had existed since the beginning of the type's study. Yet, for many years the high cross's devotional and didactic purposes went unquestioned and its political functions overlooked, as scholars preoccupied themselves with determining a stylistic chronology and identifying sources for the figural iconography on the monuments within the traditions of art in Ireland and the rest of Europe. The royal association of high crosses persisted as an underlying thread in scholarship until the present day. Recent studies increasingly gave attention to both environmental performance and the reevaluation of the patronage model of high crosses, as well as the monument-type's function in relation to its position in geographical and political landscapes. The discourse has even made inroads into popular culture with the recent video game "Total War Saga: Thrones of Britannia" (Figures 38-39).[169] In this strategy game focusing on the rulers of the British Isles and Ireland, as well as Viking incursions,

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[168] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, §36 "There is much in the law of nature which they (viz. the prophets) covered, and which the law of the letter did not cover."

[169] Sega, "*Total War Saga: Thrones of Britannia*," videogame developed by The Creative Assembly for Microsoft Windows (Tokyo: Sega, 2018). For video clips of the character of Flann Sinna and the faction of the Mide in Total War, see https://academy.totalwar.com/the-factions-of-thrones/ or https://academy.totalwar.com/thrones-of-britannia/.

building a high cross is a special option that only certain Irish high-kings can progressively use to increase their fame and maintain social order.

The subsequent pages draw from interdisciplinary research to address some of the gaps in traditional scholarship, while building upon current approaches. This dissertation studies the multivocality and multifunctionality of the high cross by addressing its alternative functions, as a witness to historical events and compacts, marker of boundaries, and expression of the identity and control of its patrons. It reevaluates the high-king's role in the patronage network by connecting iconographic messages of rulership and royal inscriptions to the cross's situation in geographical and political landscapes. Heeding Sims-Williams's advice, this project also attempts to strike a balance in addressing aspects of Irish and universally Christian ideas concerning kingship, land claims, and the function of monumental crosses. To accomplish this, it examines the role social custom, law, and governance played in the form and decoration of the monument. Finally, my dissertation reveals what a site- and context-specific driven approach to one high cross can lend to the methodology of the entire type.

In the following chapters, the Cross of the Scriptures serves as the pivot. It is the central point of focus for the exploration of the various messages of power and authority simultaneously expressed by the sculpture within the social and political context of early medieval Ireland. Chapter 2 describes the overall form of the Cross of the Scriptures, briefly summarizes its treatment by previous modes of scholarship, and posits the justification of its role as a significant and likely reliable historical witness. It then provides an in-depth investigation of the interaction between the Cross of the Scriptures' inscriptions, form, and selected imagery with contemporary historical events associated

with Flann Sinna's reign. Augmenting this discussion is the monument's location at Clonmacnoise, a powerful monastery strategically situated both within a politically-contested landscape between three overkingdoms and at an important threshold within the cultural topography of Ireland during this period. Chapter three examines the cross in relation to the nature of both universal Christian and Irish kingship to demonstrate further strategies used by the patronage network of the sculpture to bolster Flann Sinna's political claims. The monument displays an appropriation of Christian material culture and iconography, alongside the royal dedication and imagery connected to the history and location of Clonmacnoise, to legitimize the reign of High-King Flann Sinna by portraying it as an extension of Christian truth.[170] Chapter four considers how the monument's design and interaction with its immediate sacred landscape and built environment reflects a deference to heredity that was pervasive in early Irish cultural memory and collective understanding. Its deliberate evocation of illustrious ancestors promoted continuity, further reinforcing Flann's territorial claims and special relationship with the religious leaders of Clonmacnoise. The Cross of the Scriptures' messages persuasively worked together to solidify the legitimacy of Flann's right to rule in both a time and place of marked anxiety. Chapter five concludes the dissertation by commenting on further avenues of inquiry regarding the future and expanded study of the high cross as a boundary marker.

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[170] Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power. The medieval exemplum and the Chaucerian tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 37-54; and Nelson, "The Limits of Power in Medieval Europe," 3-18.

Unlike the contemporary boundary Border Monument 258 demarcates between the United States and Mexico, the early medieval border the Cross of the Scriptures marked and protected is no longer considered contentious. The high cross itself is no longer an active symbol of the potency of the governing monastery and kingdom it defined. Although the ephemeral and mutable quality of the Cross of the Scriptures' multivocality proves a challenging labor, it is the purpose of this study to recapture some of the context of creation and perception for this once powerful monument that was lost to the alteration of time and space.

Chapter 2

**"*OROIT DO RIG HERENN*" (A PRAYER FOR THE KING OF IRELAND):
COMMUNICATING AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY WITH THE CROSS OF
THE SCRIPTURES**

Upon entering the extensive grounds of the monastery of Clonmacnoise from the

west, the pathways and steps first direct visitors to engage with a freestanding stone cross

of remarkable aesthetic quality (Figures 6, 40). The resin sculpture is a modern recreation

among the medieval churches, tomb-slabs, and modern graves. It replaced an early

medieval high cross that once marked this spot, now relocated to the nearby

Clonmacnoise Visitor Interpretation Centre for preservation purposes (Figures 5, 41-

44).[171] In both cases, the sculpture's four-sided form prompts the viewer to progress

around it to fully admire its carefully-modelled figures and decipher its complex

iconographic program that led to its identification as the Cross of the Scriptures (Figures

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[171] "The Monastic City of Clonmacnoise and Its Cultural Landscape: Management Plan 2009-2014," Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG), in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW), accessed February 20, 2019, https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/ 2015/08/Clonmacnoise-Draft-Management-Plan.pdf. In 1992, the DEHLG relocated this important sculpture, along with two other high crosses and many cross-slabs datable to the early medieval period, to the visitor's center because of "deteriorating environmental conditions." Maggie Williams, *Icons of Irishness from the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 19-20, 152, note 3. The replicas were created with molds made of two layers of silicone rubber. After a water-soluble paper paste was applied to the sculpture for protection, the molds were applied. The resin molds were filled with "stone dust" to resemble the original sculpture. In 1990, David Little of the OPW and a team of German craftsmen led by Johannes Erichsen carried out the replication.

41-44).[172] On the western-oriented and dominant face, a now-obscured inscription calls out to the onlooker from the lowest portion of the shaft (Figures 21, 32a): "*OR DO RIG FL[A]IN M[AC] MAEL SECHLAINN, OROIT DO RIG HERENN OR*" (Pray for Flann son of Máel Sechnaill, Prayer for the King of Ireland, Pray).[173] Among the hundreds of examples of fully or partially intact large stone crosses across Ireland, the monument stands among the premier crosses for its artistic virtuosity. Yet, it is this appeal for the High-king Flann Sinna mac Máel Sechnaill, more commonly called Flann Sinna (of the Shannon), carved in stone that serves a key to unlocking expanded interpretations of the purpose and function of this cross and those of a similar character.

2.1   What's in a Name: The Form and Designation of the "Chrois na Screbtra"

Standing at nearly thirteen-feet tall, the size of the Cross of the Scriptures is substantial. Although imposing, its aesthetic form and decoration are perhaps meant to impress much more than its height, which is far less than towering examples such as the

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[172] This high cross is associated with the monument referred to in AT 1060.2: "The Éile and the Ó Fócarta plundered Clonmacnoise and took many prisoners out of *Chrois na Screbtra*, and two persons were killed, i.e. a student, and another a layman. So God and St Ciarán commanded the Delbna to pursue them and they left their slaughtered men, including the crown prince of the Uí Fócarta, for it was he that had killed the student. Now on the morrow, at sunrise, their cattlespoil came back to Clonmacnois through St Ciarán's miracles." ("*h-Eili & Ua Focartai do argain Cluana Mac Nois, co rucsad bruit moir o Chrois na Screbtra, & cor' marbadh dis and .i. mac leigind & oclach eli, co ro isis Dia & Ciaran Delbna ina* n-díaidh, *cor' laissed a n-ár am rigdamna h-úa Focarta, air is esidhe ro marb in fer leigind. Do-rocht tra a m-bu trath eirgi do lo arnamarach co Cluain tre fertaib Ciarain.*")

[173] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:357. Ó Murchadha, "Rubbings taken of the inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures, 47-51.

twenty-two-feet high Tall Cross at the monastery of Monasterboice (Figure 45). For the

most part representative of its type, the Clonmacnoise cross's iconic structure consists of

the following sections: 1) a truncated-pyramidal base (roughly 2½ feet high, and nearly 4

feet by 3¹ᐟ² feet at its widest), 2) a rectangular shaft (1¾ feet by 1½ feet wide), 3) a circular

cross-head with rounded perforations to clearly delineate and emphasize the intersection

of the cross arms (across horizontal arm 4¾ feet), and 4) a house-like capstone (cross

without base measuring over 10½ feet high).[174] The artists proved to be skilled masters at

visual proportions, carving the arms to slightly tilt upwards, an optical refinement that

renders them horizontal in appearance to avoid the appearance of sagging.[175] The width

of the arms appears to be balanced with the bottom of the monument's base, although the

arms measure slightly longer. The manner of the cross-head's design is also unique in the

corpus of high crosses. The alternating strands of interlace and bosses that form the cross-

ring are superimposed over the structure of the Latin cross that typically receives

preference and interrupts the circle (Figure 46).[176]

 Although sharing similar overall form and styles of ornamentation, the corpus of

high crosses is highly diverse, with decorative programs based in local preferences. Each

high cross is unique. The artists of the Cross of the Scriptures carved a combination of

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[174] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:48. Harbison listed the cross at 3.15m tall, 1.45 across the arms. The shaft measures 54cm wide and 38cm thick and rests on a base that is 75cm high and 1.20m by 1.07m at ground level.

[175] Idem. Harbison described the arms as "tilted noticeably upwards."

[176] Ibid.*,* 1:48. Harbison noted the unusual ring that "projects beyond the surface of the cross."

naturalistic, graceful figures, and intricate spirals and interlace into its form of relatively soft sandstone millstone grit.[177] The beautifully-rendered panels have attracted far more scholarly attention than many of the monument's counterparts because of its traditionally ascribed and somewhat substantiated epithet, Cross of the Scriptures, which invites iconographic investigation as a pre-eminent issue. As the subject of antiquarian, archeological, and art historical scholarship since the mid-nineteenth century, there have been numerous identifications and explanations of the forty-some scenes.

This study does not provide a comprehensive discussion of the entire iconographic programme; previous identifications can be found in Harbison's corpus and images of each panel are provided in this dissertation's accompanying appendix.[178] I provide here a list of the panels with the items I discuss in depth marked in bold. The western face displays a top panel with (W1) **five bosses surrounded by interlace**, followed downwards by the (W2-W4) **Crucifixion**, (W6) **Christ's seamless garment**, (W7) **the Arrest of Christ,** (W8) **Christ's Tomb**, (W9**) Flann's inscription**, and two registers on the base (W10) one with a seated, central figure flanked by three men in profile on each side and, due to erosion, (W11) an indecipherable bottom register.[179] The images on the northern side are less confidently assigned, they include a (N1) top arm decorated with **four bosses and fretwork to resemble the side of a house-shaped**

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[177] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:48. Harbison referred to Ó Murchadha, "Rubbings Taken of Inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures," 47.

[178] Ibid., 1:48-53.

[179] Ibid., 1:50-1.

reliquary, (N2-N3) interlace on the upper half of the ring and a tronco-pyramidal boss at end of the arm, (N4) a cat eating its prey on the underside of the arm above two heads within the circles of a figure-8 formed by a gripping snake, (N5) a figure wearing a large, circular object on his chest and holding a short staff between his knees while being tonsured by a monk who also presents a book, (N6) **a seated piper playing for a number of cats,** and (N7) another seated figure accompanied by a large bird and holding a book, who forces a staff into the face of a supine figure lying beneath him.[180] The northern shaft terminates with a (N8) rectangular panel of inhabited vine scroll and the (N9-10) two registers on the base display **fantastic and real animals, such as griffins, lions, and possibly cattle.** The panels located on the eastern face include the (E1) **a central figure with outspread arms and open palms who is flanked by two figures in profile (possibly the *Majestas Domini*)**, (E2-E4) the **Last Judgement,** (E6) the *Traditio Clavium et Legis***,** (E7) a **Compact between Two Kings,** (E8) **St. Ciarán and High-King Diarmait mac Cerbaill Founding Clonmacnoise,** (E9) the **inscription naming Colmán and Flann,** and (E10-E11) images of **horse riders** and **chariots** on the base registers.[181] Finally, the southern side displays a (S1) **top-arm with bosses and fretwork** (similarly-designed to the south arm), (S2-S3) interlace on the upper half of the

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[180] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:52-3. Harbison identified (N5) as Sts. Paul and Anthony, (N6) as the burial of St. Paul the Hermit, and (N7) as St. Anthony overcoming the devil in human form.

[181] Ibid., 1:48-9. Harbison provided obscure biblical explanations for two of the panels; he identified the two kings (E7) as the Chief Butler gives the cup into Pharaoh's hand, and the foundation panel (E8) as Joseph interprets the dream of Pharaoh's butler.

ring and a tronco-pyramidal boss at end of the arm, (S4) the ***Manus Dei* in front of a wreath or diadem**, two heads within the circles of a figure-8 formed by two gripping snakes, (S5) **an angel hovering above a seated figure holding a shepherd's crook**, (S6) **a figure seated in profile playing the harp above a large sleeping cat (possibly King David as Shepherd)**, (S7) two x-shaped interlace patterns with corners terminating in human heads, (S8) a rectangular panel of inhabited vinescroll, (S9) four men in profile who hold staffs or spears as they process towards two wrestling figures in the top base register, and (S10) two men hunting deer with their dogs in the bottom base register.[182]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Petrie, in his *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland* (1845), was the first to associate the "*Chrois na Screbtra*" mentioned in 1060 both in the *AT* and *AFM* with the west high cross of Clonmacnoise.[183] Although two other early medieval crosses also stand at the site, currently called the "North" and "South" Crosses (Figures 47-48, respectively), their decorative programs exhibit less

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[182] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49-50. Harbison identified (S5) as David as Shepherd.

[183] Petrie, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland,* 270-1. Petrie's observations yielded the following dedications and translations: on the western face, "A prayer for Flann, son of Máel Sechnaill" ("*OROIT DO FLAIND MAC MAELSECHLAIND*"); and on the eastern face, "A prayer for Colman who made this cross on the King Flann" ("*OROIT DO COLMAN DORROINDI IN CROSSA AR IN RI FLAIND.*") "*Chrois na Screbtra*" is also mentioned in the *Annals of the Four Masters* under the entry for the year 1060. See footnote 172 of this chapter for the AT reference. Harbison, "The extent of Royal Patronage in Irish high crosses," 82. Harbison wrote "In annals, high crosses are usually referred to by the saint or holy figure they are dedicated to or in relation to their location." The Cross of the Scriptures is also called the West Cross by those who prefer not to use Petrie's moniker.

figural decoration and iconographic intricacy than the one associated with Flann.[184] Although Petrie spent little time discussing this monument's rich iconography, his assigned moniker left a lasting impression by reinforcing the limiting misconception of the sculptural type as a mnemonic device for recalling biblical and hagiographic stories. The high cross continues to be primarily viewed as an illustration of the ideals, practices, and theology of the religious communities with which and within which the type is usually associated.

One notable distinction of the Cross of the Scriptures' among the majority of its type is the presence of its two inscriptions. Harbison recorded eighteen other crosses with medieval inscriptions among the corpus; it is impossible to confidently tie most of the group to historical personages, save those mentioning two other high-kings, Máel Sechnaill mac Máele Ruanaid and Toirdelbach Ó Conchobair.[185] Ó Murchadha's important work helped to decipher the badly eroded inscriptions of the Cross of the Scriptures and firmly associate the monument to two members of the patronage network responsible for its creation, most likely, Colmán mac Ailella (d.926), the abbot of Clonmacnoise, featured on the eastern face, and the High-King Flann Sinna, mentioned

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[184] There are also a number of cross fragments associated with the site that were decorated with abstract designs and animals, including the upper part of a shaft discovered by Liam de Paor in the wall of St. Ciarán's Church at Clonmacnoise (Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:56), a "pillar" (Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:57), and a fragment now at the National Museum of Archaeology, Ireland (Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:57-8).

[185] Harbison, *Irish High Crosses*, 1:355-366.

in both the eastern and western inscriptions (Figure 32a-b).[186] The CS recorded these two

men were also responsible for the great church at Clonmacnoise built in 909 (CS908,

recte 909).[187]

Although the inscriptions were integral to high cross scholarship, they were not

studied with the aim of exploring Flann Sinna's political motivations. The cross's

suggested reference in medieval documents and its inscriptions make the monument

datable, a rare quality among its type and works of early medieval period. The monument

has not only been called upon to verify the historical chronology of Clonmacnoise, but it

has also served as temporal landmark, a recognizable feature in a vast landscape of

seemingly perplexing objects that make up the corpus of Insular Art. Petrie treated the

Cross of the Scriptures in a subsidiary capacity, using it to support his main goal of

dating and attributing Clonmacnoise's "cathedral;" an approach still quite common in

interdisciplinary scholarship (Figure 49).[188] Scholars such as Henry and Harbison

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[186] Ó Murchadha, "Rubbings Taken of Inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures," 47-51. Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72. See note 40 of this dissertation for the references of Colman's involvement in the patronage of the church included in his death notice.

[187] CS908, recte 909; AFM904, 924 and AC901. See Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral, 71-75, for a discussion of the dates and use in scholarship. CS908 (recte 909): "The stone church of Cluain-mac-Nois was built by Flann, son of Maelsechlainn, and Colman Conaillech" ("*Damliag Cluana M Nois do denem la Flann mac Maoileclainn et la Colman Conaillech*"). Manning, *Clonmacnoise Cathedral*, 72. The introduction to the CS includes a table of corrections for dates. It notes that CS905-968, the chronology is "one year in arrear."

[188] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 153; and Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval* World, 190-1. "Cathedral" is not a direct translation of the Irish word *damliag,* which means stone church. Both terms,

advanced the designation as the "*Chrois na Screbtra*" in order to use the monument as a crucial reference point in the establishment of stylistic chronologies and tie its decoration to the Carolingian tradition.[189] Although this approach aided the study of artistic production during a time period when documentary evidence of purpose and creation was relatively scarce, it also limited the study of the various functions of the high cross at Clonmacnoise and elsewhere. Such discussion is an important part of art history, but the original purpose of Cross of the Scriptures was clearly not as a dating apparatus for other works of art and architecture, and this approach tells us nothing about the monument itself. The value of the Cross of the Scriptures should be recognized beyond formal classification purposes. This monument offers a rare opportunity to study the motivations and circumstances of its patronage, but also to expand upon the possible alternative functions of the monument-type and the nature of early medieval art production in general. Resultantly, the Cross of the Scriptures becomes a material expression of the authority of Christianity and Irish high-kingship, working to legitimate power and preserve memory long after the passing of the members of its patronage network.

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along with the "Church of Diarmaid," "Teampull Dermott," and the "Church of Kings," are common names referring to the largest church at Clonmacnoise.

[189] Henry, *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions*; *Irish High Crosses*; and "Around an Inscription: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise." Harbison, "The Inscriptions of the Cross of the Scriptures;" and "The Oliver Davies Lecture: Regal (and other) Patronage in Irish inscriptions of the Pre-Norman period."

2.2   The "Immovable Rock" (*Ail Anscuichthe*)

In Martin Carver's study of the "Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality," he argued that monuments "comprise the vocabulary of a political language, fossilized versions of arguments."[190] What were the specific arguments solidified in the Cross of the Scriptures? What were Flann Sinna's political aims, and why was the high-cross-type considered an effective apparatus in convincing viewers of the validity of claims related to ancestry and legitimacy? Although the original arguments offered by Cross of the Scriptures may be presently obscured, and less evident and convincing than in the monument's immediate historical context, the messages endure because of the chosen materiality of the high cross. Its permanence as a stone monument lends to its authenticity as a historical witness of the early medieval period, and its inscriptions let the viewer glimpse the ossified claims.

There was a legal precedent in early medieval Ireland for the use of stone monuments with inscriptions to mark out territory *and* support previously made agreements. Contracts ordered the everyday life of Irish society, as supported by Ó Cróinín's and Kelly's studies of the body of early Irish legal texts.[191] The opening section

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[190] Martin Carver, "Why that? Why there? Why then? The Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality," in *Image and power in the Archaeology of Early Medieval Britain: Essays in honour of Rosemary Cramp*, ed. Helena Hamerow and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001), 1.

[191] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 153. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 158. Neil McLeod, *Early Irish Contract Law*, Sydney Series in Celtic Studies 1 (Sydney: Centre for Celtic Studies, University of Sydney, 1992), 168-9, 224. McLeod pointed to a reference in the *Di Astud Chor,* §36 "For the great world is secured by contracts which are proclaimed." (*"Ar in bith an astaither / A coraib bel bertaigter."*)

of the old Irish law tract "*Córus Bésgnai*" ("The Ordering of Discipline") confirms this observation by inquiring: "[t]he arrangement of discipline, how is it secured? By contracts, for it would indeed be a chaotic world if contracts were not held fast?"[192] Ó Cróinín further observed "[i]n most cases, the law required that a contract be formally witnessed and bound by sureties."[193] Belief in the corroborative power of stone is attested in the *Berrad Airechta*, an Old Irish legal text describing such agreements.[194] The text stated that when an "immovable rock" (*ail anscuichthe*) acted as a witness, it would be impossible for the contract in question to be overturned.[195] The *Berrad Airechta* describes the nature of an "immovable rock," literally as "stone pillars" or "boundary markers," metaphorically as "scales," "measures," or "letters," and conceptually as "time" or "possession."[196] Triad 200 of the *Trecheng Breth Féne* ("A

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[192] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 27, 123, §1; 29, 133, §11. "There are three occasions when the world becomes chaotic: an epidemic of plagues, a deluge of warfare, dissolution of contracts."

[193] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 153. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 158, notes 3-5. CIH 459.14.

[194] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 163. The *Berrad Airechta* (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1337 (H 3. 18) [s. xv-xvi]) is an Old Irish legal tract on sureties.

[195] Idem. CIH 596.30. Rudolf Thurneysen, ed. "Berrad Airechta," in *Die Bürgschaft im irischen Recht*, Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 2 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der wissenschaften, W. de Gruyter, 1928), 21, §62.

[196] Ibid., 204, note 98. CIH 2199.5-6, CIH1376.2.

Triad of Judgments of the Irish") claimed: "the three rocks to which lawful behavior is tied: monastery, lord, kin" ("*Trí all frisa timargar béscna*: *mainistir, flaith, fine*").[197]

Statements from legal texts recorded that ogham stones, possible sculptural forerunners and contemporaries of the high cross, functioned as a witness and marker of agreements.[198] Kelly, Binchy, and Charles Plummer all highlighted a glossed passage from a legal text on land agreement that attested to this practice: "the ogam on the pillar

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[197] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 2. Versions of the triads are found in Trinity College Dublin, MS 1318, section 5 (1407); "Book of Ballymote," Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 12 (1384); "Book of Uí Maine," Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D ii 1 (1225) (1394); "Book of Lecan," Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2 (15th century); Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 10 (Betham 145, 967) (sixteenth century); "The Psalter of Tara," Trinity College Dublin, MS 1289 (H 1. 15) (1745); Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 N 27 (966) (1714); a copy in Rylands Library, Manchester, poor and corrupted copy written by Peter O'Longan in 1836; and Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.7. Excerpts of the triads are found in Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 1 (Phillipps 4169) (sixteenth century); Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 7; and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS C ii 3 (1218) (sixteenth century).

[198] Nancy Edwards, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2013, originally printed 1990), 161. Ogham is an early medieval alphabet in Ireland consisting of carved grouping of dashes organized on either side of a center line or stone edge (*droim*). Considered widely to be one of the variety of inspirations that led to the creation of the free-standing high cross, Edwards has also suggested that ogham stones and high crosses were contemporaries, subject to regional or economic differences rather than different stages in a stylistic development. Nevertheless, a dialogue seems to exist between the two sculptural types. Edwards referred to Henry's hypothesis that the ogham stone was early (fifth and sixth centuries) example in the development of the high cross, which progressed in "monumentality and elaborateness" until achieving its apex in the later early middle ages; 14% of ogham stones display inscribed crosses. Rather than Henry's stylistic chronology, Edwards approached the corpus of ogham stones regionally, stating the variety of shapes, inscriptions and ornaments "do not form a coherent group." She observed that stones with ogham may be contemporary to freestanding high crosses, as many of the former are found in the northwest of Ireland where there are few and late examples of the latter.

stone is like a witness" ("*int ogam isin gollán. i. amal fiadain hé.*")[199] Binchy translated

verses in an archaic legal poem that attested that they were "stone pillars of contest,

fighters who fasten [title]" ("*gaill comlaind / caithighthi istoda.*")[200] Further examples

that indicate this function include: "the ogham on the pillar stone has the force [title] of

ownership" ("*int ogam isin gallán…gebid greim tuinide*")[201] and "the ogam on the stone

is the joint memory of two borders" ("*comcuimne da crich .i. in cuimne cumaide bis itir*

da crichaib i. in togum issin Gollan.")[202] Prior to the general adoption of written charters

and coinciding with the long conversion to Christianity in Ireland, ogham stones marked

the landscape with the names and, subsequently, the rights of the landholder.[203]

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[199] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 204; and D.A. Binchy "An Archaic Legal Poem,"
160. Charles Plummer, "On the Meaning of Ogam stones," *Revue Celtique* 40 (1923):
388. Plummer and Binchy refer to MS H. 4. 22, p.67.

[200] Binchy "An Archaic Legal Poem," 157, 160; Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 204;
and Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland,* 161, 166. The poem begins "If you are a king
you should know the prerogative of a ruler." It appears at the end of the *Críth Gablach*,
which is recorded in a manuscript Trinity College Dublin, MS 1337, 2 volumes, sixteenth
century. The poem describes "*gaill comlainn / caithighthi astado / anagraitto rig / rith*
comairge," which Binchy translated as "Stone pillars of contest / fighters who fasten
[title]…from a king (?); the extend of protection." He interprets from the text that the
stones "establish the title of whom on whose boundary they stand."

[201] Ibid., 160, notes 17-18. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 204. Plummer, "On the
Meaning of Ogam stones," 388, referring to MS H 5.15, p.7a.

[202] Plummer, "On the Meaning of Ogam stones," 388, referring to MS H.3. 18 (p. 230b).

[203] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World*, 3, note 11; and Forsyth and Driscoll,
Symbols of Power, 8. Forsyth and Driscoll argued that ogham stones were an Irish
interpretation of a Roman tradition. "They are expressions of power on a local level by a
new social elite and represent a fusion of two strands of authority: the *Romanitas* invoked
via the Roman tradition of inscribed Latin memorial, and the indigenous context of a
landscape already articulated by prehistoric standing stones.

Acknowledging the very likely intention for high crosses to be immovable, along with their referenced use as topographic and boundary makers, a strong possibility exists that the monument-type may have also functioned as a contractual marker. According to the *Berrad Airechta*'s stipulations, the Cross of the Scriptures and the other stone crosses inscribed with "letters" and reflecting "possession" could be viable object-witnesses. Many of these monuments survive in their nearly original form, often in or near the area of their intended locations, albeit with considerable changes to the surrounding landscape and exposure to a millennium of weather erosion and human intervention. The possible references to this cross as the "*Chrois na Screbtra*" at Clonmacnoise in the *AT* and *AFM*, in addition to modern archeological excavations suggesting the monument replaced an earlier wooden cross (or at least a monumental wooden post) during the early medieval period, support that this sculpture resided in the same place in front of the great stone church since the early tenth century.[204] Its fixedness lends further authority to its role as a recounting witness. The purpose of the study that follows is to question how the patrons of the Cross of the Scriptures used the monument as a persuasive witness to promote

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[204] King, "Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise (Ireland)," 129. John Bradley, "The Monastic Town of Clonmacnoise" in *Clonmacnoise Studies Volume I: seminar Papers 1994*, ed. Heather King (Dublin: Dúchas The Heritage Service, 1998), 57-87. Bhreathnach, *Ireland and the Medieval World,* 188. Bhreathnach cited King's study stating the "[d]iscovery of six male burials with beef ribs and oriented on the Cross of the Scriptures, that replaced some form of a large wooden staff of pole." Douglas Mac Lean, "Technique and Contact: Carpentry-Constructed Insular Stone Crosses," in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1995), 167-176; "The Status of the Sculptor," 125-55; and Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, "A legal perspective on the *saer*" in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. Rachel Moss, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 110-125. Both Mac Lean and Ní Ghrádaigh presented evidence to show high crosses evolved from the monumentialization of wooden crosses.

Flann Sinna's legitimization. Subsequently, the investigation of the specifically chosen

messages enhances the understanding of the religious and socio-political context that

helped to create the monument. The high cross's impressive form, materiality,

inscriptions, and immovability work with references to biblical and historical events to

substantiate proof of the Flann Sinna's divine and hereditary rights to rule.

2.3   A Witness of Legitimacy and Landmark of Primacy: The Historical Events of Flann Sinna's Reign and Creation of the Cross of the Scriptures

There is no record explaining the exact nature of kingship in early medieval

Ireland, nor is there precise information describing the political motivations that informed

the Cross of the Scriptures' creation. Nevertheless, the arguments regarding the kingly

patronage of the high cross can be reconstructed with the support of annalistic references,

sagas, legal texts, hagiographies, and treatises on rulership, in addition to the art historical

and archaeological record. To reassemble Flann Sinna's possible intentions, it is first

necessary to establish the complex political structure of early medieval Ireland, as well as

the various positions he occupied within its hierarchy of kings and over-kings.[205] This

chapter then expands upon the specific historical events associated with the Cross of the

Scriptures, those consciously evoked by its patrons to advance Flann Sinna's agenda. The

interaction between the monument's placement and components of its decorative

program reveals a careful consideration of the cultural topography. Its situation facilitated

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[205] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings,* 41-2. This seminal text on Irish kingship provided an in-depth discussion of this hierarchy as well as specific historical examples to demonstrate the mechanisms of rulership during the early medieval period.

its role as a commemorative victory totem, but also allowed it to simultaneously function as a marker of boundary, political authority, and compact. From the investigation of the expanded performance of the Cross of the Scriptures in this and subsequent chapters, what emerges is a deeper understanding of the cultural values of those responsible for the monument's conception. In other words, this dissertation addresses how early medieval society in Ireland defined themselves in relation to their historic and ancestral landscape and projected this identity to contemporary and future viewers with a high cross.[206]

2.3.1 "Prayer for the King of Ireland:" Flann Sinna's Place in the Hierarchy of Irish Kings

The basic unit of governance in early medieval Ireland was the kin-group, or *fine*. A *dearbfhine* consisted of members of an extended kin-group that shared the same male ancestor up to four generations removed. These familial-based groups allied with those around them to form a larger polity called a *túath* (local-level), which could refer to both a *people* and the *land* upon which the group resided.[207] Within a *túath,* there existed several classes, ranging from unfree tenants (*saer céiles*), free tenants (*daer céiles*), free farmers (*féines*), cattle chieftains (*bó aires*), nobles (*flaiths* or *nemedh*), and various levels of chiefs and kings depending on the polity's size. Varying current estimations suggest a *túath* consisted of a range of 3,000 to 9,000 members governed by a recognized leader, or

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[206] Williams, Kirton, and Gondek, *Early Medieval Stone Monuments*, 8-9.

[207] Byrne, *Irish High Kings,* 7. *Tuatha* is often translated into "tribe" or "petty kingdom." Byrne estimated that at any given time during the early medieval period, there numbered 150 kings, and, thus, an equal number of *túatha*.

rí túaithe (king of a single *túath* or petty kingdom).[208] Several of these local polities

aligned to form a *túatha* (regional-level), governed by an *ard-rí* (high-king), sometimes

called the *rí túath* (king of a *túatha*) or *ruiri* (great king).[209]

Based on the strength of the *túatha*, these leaders could retain political autonomy

or submit to the primacy of an *ard-ard-rí* (over-king), or *rí ruirech* (supreme king).[210] To

be considered an over-king, the ruler in question must have secured control of one of the

five traditional provinces, or *cóiceda* (*cúig cuígi,* "the five fifths"): Ulster (Ulaid),

Munster (Mumu), Meath (Mide), Leinster (Laigin), and Connacht (Figure 50).[211] Over-

kings, such as Flann Sinna, bolstered their authority at these different levels of

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[208] Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 4. The author referred to CIH31.10, CIH1123.32. The latter law stated that "no tuath can be regarded as proper…unless it has an ecclesiastical scholar (*ecnae*), a churchman, a poet and a king." Kelly (p.17) also stated that the honor-price for this level of king was 7 *cumala* (the equivalent of 7 female slaves). As the terminology of the different levels of kingship can vary depending on the source, this study bases its descriptions on the different classifications presented by the scholarship of Byrne, Kelly and Binchy.

[209] Ibid., 17. Kelly recorded that this level of kingship can also be referred to as *rí buiden*, king of bands, and has the honor price of 8 *cumala*.

[210] Idem. CIH2305.7; 601.25; 1125.9. The highest legally-recognized level of kingship had the honor price of 14 *cumala*.

[211] Bhreathnach, *Ireland and the Medieval World*, 40. The island was traditionally divided into four to five provinces (each with its own traditional center of pre-Christian power), including Munster or Mumu (Cashel), Leinster (Dún Ailinne), Connacht (Rathcrogan or Crúachu), Ulster or Ulaid (Eamhain Macha), and Meath or Mide (Temair or Tara). The title of *cóiceda* implies that there were five parts. Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 17. CIH1617.33 These kings are sometimes referred to as *rí cóicid* or by the name of their province, for example *Rí Muman*, if the overking of Munster. Other references to this level of kingship in legal texts include*: ollam rig* (chief of kings) and *rí buniad cach cinn* (the ultimate king of every individual).

governance by acquiring many clients (*céilí*). They received submission through force by arms, or voluntarily through reciprocal bargaining, forming alliances with contractual obligations, exchanging goods and hostages, or making marital arrangements.[212] Bhreathnach summarized that "[r]oyal authority is based on the idea that there was a contract between the ruler and the client, and that a king's status, like that of other nobles, relied on men in clientship, and particularly in base clientship."[213] Although the limits of an Irish ruler's power depended upon his level of kingship, his fundamental concerns remained to protect the land and holdings of his *túatha*, make contracts on its behalf with other leaders, and host *óenacha*, or gatherings of both political and social significance, which occurred at important sites like Clonmacnoise, as well as Tailtiu (Teltown, Co. Meath), Carman (Co. Kildare), and Uisneach (Co. Offaly).[214]

Scholarly discussions of the patronage of the Cross of the Scriptures and the monastery of Clonmacnoise consistently mentioned Flann Sinna's (c.847/8-916) various political positions, as leader of the Clann Cholmáin family centered in the region of *Delbna Bethra*, over-king of the *Mide* (Meath) province, and head member of the

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[212] Flann exacted tribute and hostages in Leinster and made alliances and won wars in Munster, Ulster, and Connacht.

[213] Bhreathnach, *Ireland and the Medieval World*, 64.

[214] Charles Doherty, "Exchange and trade in medieval Ireland," *JRSAI* 100 (1980): 81-4. Doherty believed that *óenacha* were held at Clonmacnoise as early as c. 800 CE, which is supported by the "Life of Colmán Ela." The text claimed that the monastery, along with Teltown and Lynally, was one of the three great sites of trading events in Ireland.

Southern Uí Néill dynasty (Figure 51).[215] The amount of information recorded of Flann

Sinna's life alone hints to his importance, as the majority of the 30,000 persons

mentioned in the annals and genealogies of medieval Ireland list little more than names or

death dates.[216] From 879-916, Flann held the symbolic title, the "High-King of Tara,"

which equated to his primacy over both divisions of the powerful Uí Néill dynasty. The

Northern and Southern branches of this family controlled the northeastern and central

parts of the island, respectively, and sustained power through the authority associated

with Tara. This ancestral seat of kings was centrally-located between the two polities in

current-day Co. Meath (Figure 50-1, 55). The Uí Néill branches claimed a shared descent

and titular birthright from the sons of a legendary ancestor, Niall Noigíallach (Niall of the

Nine Hostages), the High-King of Tara in the late fourth-early fifth century.

On the basis of shared language, there was a sense that the Irish viewed

themselves as a nation separate from other groups of the Atlantic Archipelago, in other

words, the British, Angles, and Picts, as well as the "Foreigners" or the different groups

of Norse warriors and settlers on the island. There were also territorial divisions within

Ireland based on "collective identities relating to eponymous ancestors," as Elizabeth

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[215] For an in-depth discussion of the Uí Néill rise to power, see Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 163-4 and 254-74; and *The Rise of the Uí Neill and the high-kingship of Ireland*.

[216] The amount of 30,000 historical figures comes from Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland,* 86-7.

FitzPatrick noted in her study of medieval assembly places.[217] This is evident in the Uí Néill's self-definition in relation to their progenitor Niall and his kingship of Tara. Also informing the island's cultural topography, the peoples of early medieval Ireland perceived themselves as part of a larger "binary cosmography,"[218] characterized by a north-south territorial division. This partition of physical space and identity contributed to the selected location and intended message of the Cross of the Scriptures.

According to the origin mythology compiled in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ("The Book of the Taking of Ireland"), Ireland was conquered by six successive groups, the Cessiar, the Partholón, the Nemed, the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha Dé Danann, and the Milesians.[219] The Milesians were the last group to settle there and the supposed ancestors of the Irish people who eventually became Christians, while the previous group, the

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[217] FitzPatrick, "Assembly Places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," 53.

[218] Idem. FitzPatrick noted that the binary cosmography was recorded in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (The Book of the Taking of Ireland) compiled in the late eleventh or twelfth century.

[219] Scholars such as John Carey considered the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* to be the creation of medieval historians attempting to create an epic mythology connected to the more recent Christian past through the compilation of poems into Middle Irish prose sometime between 900 and 1200. The history is recorded in several manuscripts including the "Book of Leinster" (Trinity College Dublin, MS 1339), "The Great Book of Lecan" (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 2), and the "Book of Ballymote" (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 12). John Carey, *A new introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the taking of Ireland, edited and translated by R.A. Stewart Macalister* (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1993); "The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory," *Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History* (Cambridge, UK: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, Cambridge University, 1994); and "Lebor Gabála and the Legendary History of Ireland," *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. Helen Fulton (Dublin: Four Courts Press), 32-48.

Tuatha Dé Danann, became the pagan gods and resided in the earthen mounds called *sídhe*. Éremón and Éber, the sons of Míl of Spain, led the Milesians to settle Ireland; they divided the island in half and passed on their share to their respective sons, Conn Cétchathach and Mug Nuadat. The various *túatha* of early medieval Ireland traced their symbolic lineage back to these brothers and their descendants with the Uí Néill and Connachta of the northern half composing the *Leth Cuinn* (Conn's Half) and Munster and sometimes Leinster of the southern half comprising the *Leth Moga* (Mug's Half) (Figure 52).[220] As the Uí Néill leaders held preeminence over the provinces of Mide, Connacht, and Ulaid that made up the *Leth Cuinn* for the better part of the ninth and tenth centuries, their traditional dynastic title "High-King of Tara" became synonymous with the sovereignty of the northern half of the island. The essentially honorific title of "Árd rí Éireann," or, as it appeared on the western inscription of the Cross of the Scriptures, "Rig Herenn," was an achievable position and thought to be worth seeking. Nevertheless, the title of "High-King of Ireland" did not denote total territorial supremacy of Ireland with a monarchy and legal rights of succession.

There are mixed opinions about the extent of Flann Sinna's domain and status. Alex Woolf called him "one of the greatest of early Irish kings," but added that he is

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[220] FitzPatrick, "Assembly Places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," 53. FitzPatrick explained that the "powerful Uí Néill dynasty and the Connachta [peoples of the northern half] claimed Conn as their ancestor, whereas the Eóganachta dynasty of Munster [southern province] cited Mug as their progenitor."

"little known to students of early medieval history."[221] In *Irish Kings and High-Kings*,

Byrne gave him decidedly less attention than his father Máel Sechnaill mac Máele

Ruanaid, whose name appears as part of Flann's patronymic surname on the Cross of the

Scriptures' western inscription.[222] Unlike his father, Flann was not one of the eight kings

the AU unanimously considered to be a High-King of Ireland.[223] Máel Sechnaill

achieved primacy over both halves of Ireland after obtaining the submission of all five

provinces by force and negotiation.[224] Only some of the historical accounts indicate

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[221]Alex Woolf, "View from the West: An Irish perspective on West Saxon dynastic practice," in *Edward the Elder: 899-924*, ed. D. H. Hill and N. K. Higham (New York: Routledge, 2001), 90.

[222] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 254-274. In Chapter 12 of this work, Flann received far less attention than that of his father Máel Sechnaill in Byrne's discussion of the Clann Cholmáin kings, their control of Tara, and the high-kingship of Ireland.

[223] Ibid., 264.

[224] Ó Murchadha and Ó Murchú, "Fragmentary inscriptions," 53-66. Máel Sechnaill's death notice (AU 862.5) called him the King of all Ireland, *rí hÉrenn uile.* Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 264. Byrne recorded that Máel Sechnaill was considered the most powerful man in Ireland, called High-King of Ireland and Tara from 846-862. He explained that "[t]he brutal new age demanded kings whose dynastic power rested on compact and strategically placed territorial lordship. In 858, Máel Sechnaill came to Munster 'with the men of Ireland' a phrase which implied that he had contingents from all the other provinces; he encamped for the space of 10 nights on the banks of Blackwater, defeated the kings of Desmond at *Carn Lughdach*, and slew Máel Cron mac Muiredaig, *leth-ri* of the *Deisi*. He ravaged Desmond as far as the sea, the first Uí Néill king to reach the southern coast. He established the high-kingship of Tara over Leth Moga and exacted the hostages of Munster from *Belach Gabran* on the Leinster border to *Inis Tarbnai iar nEre* and from *Dun Cermnai* at the Old Head of Kinsale to the Aran islands." Máel Sechnaill's marriage to Flann's mother, Landingen Dúnlainge, was also a strategic alliance; she was the sister of Cerbaill mac Dúnlainge, King of Osraige. Ní Ghradaigh, "A Stone in Time," 227. Ní Ghradaigh referred to Máire Ní Mhaonnaigh, "Bréifne bias in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*," *Ériu* 43 (1992): 155, who noted that later

Flann Sinna succeeding in doing the same. Regardless, it certainly seemed that the son's

goal was to attain the position of superiority once held by his father. Flann Sinna reigned

for 38 years, proving to be a victorious military leader and important patron of art and

architecture, and, as suggested by Woolf, came close to consolidating rule and

establishing direct dynastic succession to the rule of Tara and the *Leth Cuinn*.[225]

Máel Sechnaill realized the ideal of the high-kingship of Ireland when all five of

the traditional over-kingdoms recognized his primacy. This accomplishment is

commemorated by two high crosses of his patronage at Clonmacnoise and Kinnitty

(Castlebernard), and a third high cross erected by him or in his honor at Durrow.[226] The

power consolidated by Máel Sechnaill did not pass directly to Flann Sinna, but rather had

to be earned. He established a ruling precedent for his son to attempt to attain, as well as

a model for advancing claims by appropriating the authority inherent in high crosses that

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sources consider Máel Sechnaill as the last of the high-kings of Ireland and those that
followed him were thought of as high-kings "with opposition" (*ríg cofressabra*).

[225] Woolf, "View from the West," 94-5. Benjamin T. Hudson, *The Prophecy of Berchán: Irish and Scottish High-kings of the Early Middle Ages* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 77, 28-30. The "Prophecy of Berchán," a Middle-Irish historical poem preserved in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 72.1.40, recounted Irish high-kings from the ninth to eleventh centuries, among other sections that include a short Viking narrative, passages on Saints Patrick, Brigit, and Columba, and a similar list of Scottish kings from the same time period. The account assigned to Flann Sinna (§49-51) recorded: "He will take the lordship of Tara, pleasant it will be which will be over the plain of Brega, without plunder, without conflict, without battle, without swift delighter, without death reproach. Twenty-five years, truly, will be the time of the high-king; Tara of pleasant Brega will be full, there will be its honor over every church. Neither spear nor sword will kill him, he will not fall by weapon-points in his going, in Lough Ennell he will die, it will be after him a noble fame."

[226] Ó Murchadha and Ó Murchú, "Fragmentary inscriptions," 53-66.

his son also adopted and attempted to outdo. For the overkingship of the Mide (Meath),

Flann's immediate kingdom, he first had to defeat his second-cousins, Lorcán mac Cathal

(r.862-4) and Donnchad mac Áed mac Conchobar (r.864-77), killing the latter

"deceitfully" in 877 (AU).[227] A further barrier to Flann's ascent to the premier kingship

was the tradition of alternating leadership of the northern half of Ireland, i.e. high-

kingship of Tara, between the two branches of the Uí Néill. Initially rulers from a variety

of dynasties and regions vied for the title, however, the kingship of Tara became

entrenched among Flann's Clann Cholmáin of the Southern Uí Néill and the Cenél

nEógain family of the Northern Uí Néill beginning in the mid-eighth century.[228] Enacted

to keep peace between the two powerful polities, the long-honored confederation between

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[227] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 261. AU 877.2 recorded that Flann deceitfully killed him. Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland,* 88-92. According to Eóin Mac Neill's theory on dynastic succession deduced from his study of annals and law texts: "1) In ancient Irish law, a person eligible to succeed to a kingship (*rígdomna*) must belong to the same *derbfine* as a king who has already reigned; 2) The *derbfine* was a family of four generations, a man, his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons; and 3) Among the persons thus lawfully eligible, the succession was determined by election." Although many men fit the theory, few were called *rígomnai* explicitly in text. Ó Cróinín analyzed Mac Neill's scholarship and discussed the "*Crith Gablach*'s" mention of the *tánaise ríg*, to which "the whole tribe looks forward to…for the kingship without dispute."

[228] Woolf, "View from the West," 92. This regular rotating succession between the two families had been in place since the mid-eighth century. Woolf referred to G.F. Dalton, "The Alternating Dynasties 743-1022," *Studia Hibernica* 16 (1976): 46-53, when he stated, "[o]riginally open to competition from the leaders of any of the segments of the Uí Néill lineage the overkingship eventually became monopolized by two dynasties, the Cenél nEógain, whose kingdom of Ailech lay about the shores of Loch Foyle in the far North, and Flann's own dynasty of Clann Cholmáin from Mide." Furthermore, he suggested that "[i]n order to ensure the success of their monopoly, the two dynasties seem to have agreed to alternate in the kingship of Tara and to co-operate in the exclusion of other segments."

the two regions and families severely inhibited the formation of a hereditary monarchy,

such as those developing in England and Francia.[229] Heir-apparents from both branches

of the Uí Néill were quick to remind the current King of Tara to honor the alternating

arrangement for succession when they felt the agreement was at risk.[230] Thus, it was not

until 879 and the death of his cousin and stepfather, Áed Findliath of Cenél nEógain

(r.862-879), leader of Northern Uí Néill, that Flann was in the position to equal the status

once held by his father.[231] Flann's quest for supremacy was also constantly challenged by

familial and intra-factional groups in the northern regions,[232] as well as incursions by

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[229] Woolf, "View from the West," 90-93. Flann Sinna was the contemporary of Alfred
the Great who died in 899.

[230] Idem. Regarding the agreed upon transition between the Northern and Southern Uí
Néill, the Cenél nEógain invaded the lands of Clann Cholmáin both at the end of Máel
Sechnaill's and Flann's reigns. Woolf suggested that an interlinear gloss in the AU 862.3
implied that Áed Findliath invaded territory of Máel Sechnaill, ending the latter's
kingship of Tara before his death in 864.

[231] Ibid., 90-93. To solidify succession, Irish kings took to marrying their predecessor's
queens or family members for legitimization purposes. Áed Findliath married Flann's
mother, Land, following Máel Sechnaill's death. Áed also happened to be the "son of
Gormflaith, the sister of Flann's paternal grandfather and was thus first cousin to his
predecessor." In turn, Flann married Áed's daughter Eithne, solidifying his succession
and ensuring the continuation of the Tara kingship remained in the bloodlines of the two
families. He took for his second wife Máel Muire, Áed's widow and the daughter of the
Pictish king (and possibly King of the Dál Riata), *Cináed mac Ailpín* (r.842-59), or
Kenneth I.

[232] Ibid., 93-4. Flann's son with his first wife Gormflaith, Donnchad Donn, rebelled
against his father. In response, the high-king entered the sanctuary of the monastery of
Kells to seek him out. According to the AU 904.2, "many were beheaded there around
the oratory." In 882.1 (AU), Flann Sinna invaded the territory of his extended family, the
Northern Uí Néill, governed by the King of Ailech. In turn, Domnall son of Áed half-
king of Ailech invaded Flann's Mide.

both Vikings and southern kings.[233] The Mide's central location created a precarious

geopolitical position that left the over-king open to attack on all sides. The inter-regional

contests often presented themselves in the form of encampments or attacks upon

important Clann Cholmáin and Uí Néill dynastic sites and affiliated monasteries, such as

Clonmacnoise. In this environment, this dissertation argues that Flann Sinna created the

Cross of the Scriptures as an impressive statement to claim land and primacy, both to

deter external competitors and consolidate rule over his locality, subjects, and allies.

2.3.2   To Offer Thanksgiving for Victory: The Battle of Belach Mugna

The Cross of the Scriptures' long association with the construction of the great

stone church (*damliag*) of Clonmacnoise (Figure 49) in scholarship is because of the

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[233] Woolf, "View from the West," 93. King Sichfrith, son of Ivar, and his Norsemen defeated Flann's allied forces of the Mide and Connacht at the Battle of Pilgrim (AU 888.5). CS888 (recte 889) recorded: "The foreigners of Duiblinn inflicted a battle rout on Flann son of Máel Sechnaill and there fell there Áed son of Conchobor, king of Connacht, and Lergus son of Cruinnén bishop of Cell Dara, and Donnchad son of Máel Dúin, superior of Cell Delca, and many others;" followed by CS889 (recte 890): "An expedition by Domnall son of Áed with the men of the north of Ireland against the southern Uí Néill." CS901 (recte 903) recalled that one of Flann's sons Máel Ruanaid, the "heir designate of Ireland," was burned and killed by Connachtmen and another son named Óengus tapped to be "heir designate of Temair (Tara)" died in 915/916 (CS and AU) from wounds he sustained in a battle in the previous December. His sons Donchadd and Conchobar both rebelled against their father's rule and, according to AU915, "they harried Mide as far as Loch Rí. Niall son of Áed, king of Ailech, brought a northern army and exacted a pledge from Donnchad and Conchobor that they would obey their father, and made a truce between Mide and Brega." Possibly sensing the end of Flann's reign, Niall, the successor to the high-kingship of Tara, hoped to consolidate the Mide and make for an easier transition for the primacy of the Uí Néill to move to its northern branch. Hudson, *Prophecy of Berchán*, 163. According to the *Prophecy of Berchán*, Flann died on May 25, 916. His son Conchobar was named king of Clann Cholmáin and the Mide, and the kingship of Tara shifted back to the Northern Uí Néill and Niall Glúndub.

correspondence of the names appearing in the cross's inscriptions and in the annalistic record of the church's establishment. CS908 (recte 909) states: "The stone church of Cluain-mac-Nois was built by Flann, son of Maelsechlainn, and Colman Conaillech" ("*Damliag Cluana muc Nois do denem la Flann mac Maoileclainn et la Colman Conaillech.*") [234] Thus, the patrons of these works are identifiable and their successful partnership is materially evident, however the motivations behind these benefactions remain unspecified. In his study of the construction phases of the "cathedral," Conleth Manning pointed to an entry in the year preceding the church dedication (CS 907, recte 908) recording Flann's victory over Cormac mac Cuilennáin, Bishop and High-King of Munster, at the Battle of Belach Mugna (or Ballymoon, near Castledermot, County Kildare).[235] With these historical references, the inscriptions, and the interpretations of the cross's panels on the eastern face, he provided persuasive and varied sources supporting the hypothesis that both the monument and church were most likely created in thanksgiving for Flann's victory at this decisive battle.

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[234] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 71-73. Manning identified the Clonmacnoise church as the largest pre-Romanesque building of its type surviving in the country. Three of the Irish annals associated with Clonmacnoise mention the building of this church: the CS dates it to 908 (recte 909), the AFM dates it to 904 (recte 909), and the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* (AC) dates it to 901. Manning dismissed the 901-date because of an unreliable translation of the AC and that the years of the AFM could be five years off at some places. *The Annals of Clonmacnoise, being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to A.D.1408, translated into English, A.D.1627 by Connell Mageoghagan*, ed. Denis Murphy (Dublin: University Press, 1896).

[235] Ibid., 57-86. Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 107, 121-3, and 153.

Apart from this dialogue between the inscriptions and historical records, discussions of the Cross of the Scriptures' placement and purpose in relation to Flann's life and political aims rarely extended to the overall decorative program. Past analyses of the monument tended to divorce the inclusion of the high-king's name from the monument's design and function, save the brief consideration of two eastern-face panels related to the history of Clonmacnoise, the so-called foundation and compact panels. Even in these studies that discussed the establishment of Clonmacnoise and Uí Néill quests for supremacy, the goal for identifying these particular scenes continued to be the dating of the cross and church.[236] The next part of this study develops these topics further by emphasizing the momentousness of Flann's victory at the Battle of Belach Mugna over Cormac mac Cuilennáin, Bishop and King of Cashel and Munster. It considers the cross a commemorative marker of the events surrounding the battle and explores its placement within the prevailing cultural and political topographies to demonstrate how Flann Sinna created it to advance his claims of territory and legitimate rule.

In the period leading up to the Battle of Belach Mugna, Cormac and Flann steadily provoked each other by setting out on warring expeditions and raising war bands

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[236] The panel displaying two kings exchanging a horn in compact is discussed later in this chapter, whereas the foundation panel is a focus of discussion in chapter four.

(i.e. holding hostings) in each other's or allied territories.[237] Cormac entered the northern

half of Ireland, transgressing the island's traditional line of division, the Eiscir Riada

(Figures 52-56).[238] This natural boundary formed by a series of eskers provided a

backdrop for Clonmacnoise, but also served as a point of access to the monastery located

in the adjacent meadow. The raised terrain of glacial deposits created a major overland

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[237] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72. AU906 and CS906: "Flann with the king of Leinster ravaged Munster from Gabran to Luimneach." AI907.3: "A Munster hosting [led] by Cormac, son of Cuilennáin, and by Flaithbertach, son of Inmainén, [went] to Mag na Cuirre, and they took the hostages of Uí Néill. And they proceeded shortly after that into Mag Aí and obtained their demands from Connachta. On Christmas Day they were in the east, and on the Kalends [1st] of January in the west. Hence Cormac said: Good fortune, O lakes of Luchar." AI907.4: "Eight score ferryings(?) [were made] by Cormac, king of Caisel, until they [his forces] arrived in Cluain Moccu Nóis during that Christmas."

[238] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings,* 214-5. Cormac belonged to the *Eóganacht Chaisil*, a branch of the larger Eóganachta dynasty, and followed Finguine Cenn nGécan as High-King of Munster (AU 902.1 and AI 902.1). He was considered a scholar and is the purported author of the *Sanas Cormaic*, an early glossary of Latin-Irish word translations and etymologies. Cormac was made a bishop prior to becoming the high-king of Munster and was renowned for his asceticism. He took a vow of celibacy (AI 902.1) and his marriage to Flann Sinna's daughter Gormlaith was reportedly never consummated. Prior to Cormac's death, the couple was divorced, and she was instead married to her father's ally in the Battle of Belach Mugna, Cerball mac Muirecáin, High-King of Leinster. After Cerball's death in 909, she wed Niall Glúndub, son of Áed Findliath and the successor to the kingship of Tara after Flann. Gormlaith's three marriages provide further evidence to her father's political maneuvers to consolidate rule of Ireland. Although sources such as the "Book of Leinster" portrayed her as merely a pawn in her father's plans and subject to unhappy (Cormac) and abusive (Cerball) marriages, Ó Cróinín pointed to the poem, *Cell Chorbbáin*, which placed her in the middle of the political intrigue and responsible for murders that aided Cerball's rise to power, and thus her father's ambitions. For further reading on Gormlaith, see: Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "Three weddings and a funeral: rewriting Irish political history in the tenth century," in *Seanchas. Studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 212–224; and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "Tales of Three Gormlaiths in Medieval Irish Literature," *Ériu*, 52 (2002): 1-24.

travelling route among the surrounding boglands that ran from modern-day Dublin to

Galway, roughly equivalent to the current M6 motorway.[239] Also commonly referred to

as *An tSlí Mhór*, or "The Great Highway," the AFM (123.2) included the route among the

"five principal roads *leading* to Teamhair [Tara]" (Figure 54).[240]

Cormac rallied troops in Flann's territory (modern-day, northern Co. Offaly)

before defeating the Uí Néill king at Mag Lena in 908, a plain between the monasteries of

Tullamore and Durrow (Figure 55).[241] Like Clonmacnoise twenty-three miles to its west,

Mag Lena was located just off of the Eiscir Riada. The place already had historical

significance for people in the early medieval period. Conn Cétchathach, the documented,

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[239] Consisting of a series of eskers, or long ridges formed by glacial deposits, the Eiscir
Riada runs 200km (125m), linking the coasts, Dublin and Galway, as well as important
monastic sites such as Durrow and Clonmacnoise. The elevated road made travel easier
across the bogs of the midland region during the medieval period. The M6 motorway
passes through the larger town of Athlone rather than the now defunct Clonmacnoise,
located six miles to its south.

[240] AFM123.2 "The night of Conn's [of the Hundred Battles] birth were discovered five
principal roads *leading* to Teamhair, which were never observed until then. These are
their names: Slighe Asail, Slighe Midhluachra, Slighe Cualann, Slighe Mor, Slighe Dala.
Slighe Mor is *that called* Eiscir Riada, i.e. the division line of Ireland into two parts,
between Conn and Eoghan Mor." Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming: a study based
mainly on the law-texts of the 7th and 8th centuries AD* (Dublin: Dublin Institute of
Advanced Studies, 1997), 390. "The 'highway,' *slige*, on which two *carpait*/
carpenta [chariots] could pass without one having to give way to the other."

[241] CS907 (recte 908): "An expedition of the men of Mumu *led* by Cormac son of
Cuilennáin and by Flaithbertach to Mag Léna, and Leth Cuinn assembled against them
under Flann son of Máel Sechnaill, and Leth Cuinn were defeated." "Another expedition
by Cormac and by Flaithbertach against the Uí Néill and the Connachta, and they took
the hostages of the Connachta and plundered the islands of Loch Ríbh from their fleet."
Thomas Westropp, "Promontory Forts and Traditions of the Districts of Beare and
Bantry, Co. Cork," *JRSAI* 10, no. 2 (Dec. 31, 1920): 151.

second-century high-king and legendary ancestor of the Uí Néill and Connacht, won a decisive battle there for the north against Mug Nuadat, also known as Eóghan Mór, the legendary King of Munster and eponymous ancestor of Cormac's Eóghanachta dynasty. These two legendary kings sparred on numerous occasions, but when Mug ended a fifteen-year peace by purposely "violat[ing] the right of division," i.e. crossing over into the northern half of Ireland, the forces of the *Leth Cuinn* assembled to avenge the insult.[242] At Mag Lena, Conn's spear ultimately felled Mug and his army was defeated.[243]

It is impossible to confirm if Flann knew of the legendary history of Mag Lena and its significance to his own political aims, but a case can be made that the significance of the battle was well known in the early medieval period. It was the decisive event in which the progenitor of his line defeated the ancestor of his great enemy. As FitzPatrick observed, "[i]n Ireland, territory and landholding [were] framed by the concept of geography of lineage," which was also discernible in the "names of eponymous ancestors

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[242] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72; and FitzPatrick, "Assembly Places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," 53. The defeat of Mug by Conn at Mag Lena is recorded in Eugene Curry, ed. and trans., *Cath Mhuighe Léana, or The Battle of Magh Leana together with Tochmarc Moméra, or The Courtship of Momera* (Dublin: Celtic Society, 1855); as well as *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, ed. David Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen, 1st ed. (London: David Nutt for the Irish Texts Society London, 1902–1914), 2.40. CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/ T100054/. See *Cath Mhuighe Léana,* xv-xvii, for other medieval Irish sources that mention this pivotal battle.

[243] Curry, *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, 141-145. The battle account recorded the death of Mug in a confrontation with Conn on the battlefield, whereas Keating's "History of Ireland" claimed Conn killed a sleeping Mug in his bed prior to the battle.

and mythological heroes with whom ruling dynasties aligned [and] were ascribed to particular monuments and landscapes in medieval toponyms."[244] The battle appears in a later poem combining Irish history with world events featured in the "*Lebor Gabála Érenn*" section of the "Book of Ballymote" (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 12): "Antonius Comadus…it was in the fifth year of his reign the Battle of Magh Lena was fought, in which Mogh Nuadhad [or Eoghan Mor] fell."[245] Likewise, both a section from the "Book of Leinster," called the "Pedigree of Eber" (fol. 222), and the AU recorded the division of Ireland by Conn and Mug and the latter's defeat at Mag Lena.[246] An excerpt from the "Book of Lecan" (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2, fol. 167)[247]

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[244] FitzPatrick, "Assembly places and Elite Collective Identities," 52-3. FitzPatrick cited Joep Leersen, *The Contention of the Bards and its Place in Irish Political History*, Irish Texts Society, Subsidiary Series No. 2, (London: Irish Texts Society, 1994), 47.

[245] Curry, *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, xv-xvi. Scholars often attributed the poems to Flann Mainistreach (d. 1056), a renowned Monasterboice scholar (*fer legend*, man of letters). He is also considered the author of the "*Themra dia tesbann tnú*" and "*Ríg Themrea toebaige íar ttain*," which are histories associated with the Uí Néill kingship of Tara, as well as the Clann-Cholmáin-centric text "*Mide maigen clainne Cuind*."

[246] Ibid., xvii. The "Book of Leinster" recorded: "Mogh Neid was king [of Mumhain, or Munster] and Mogh Nuadhat, from whom Mog's Half is named, in co-reign with Con Cet-chathach [Conn of the hundred battles] until he was slain at Magh Lena," whereas the AU stated in two entries: "Erinn was divided in two parts from the one Áth Cliath to the other between Conn of the hundred battles and Mogh Nuadhat" and "Conn Cet-chatach slew Mogh Nuadhat in Magh Lena."

[247] The "Book of Lecan" (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2) is manuscript of texts compiled between 1397 and 1418 by Ádhamh Ó Cuirnín for Giolla Íosa Mór Mac Fhirbhisigh. The text is in Middle Irish, datable to 900-1200, and the original written source is considered to be an eleventh century text. The texts are copied from the "Book of Leinster," along with later versions of the "*Lebor Gabála Érenn*," "*Lebor na gCeart*" ("Book of Rights," twelfth century), and *dindshenchas* and *banshenchas* poetry.

describes the rivalry using the geographical terms of the medieval period, rather than the

preceding archaic era in which the events actually took place:

> A great war grew…between Conn of the Hundred Battles and Mogh Nuadhat…
> So that after that Eire was divided between Conn and of the Hundred Battles and
> Eóghan Mór; and their boundary was the ridge upon which Cluain Iraird
> [Clonard], and Cluain Mac Nois [Clonmacnois] and from Ath Cliath Meraidhe
> [on the Bay of Galway] to Ath Cliath Duibhlinne [Dublin]. And they adhered to
> that division until the battle of Magh Lena was fought between Conn and Mogh
> Nuadhat, in which Mogh Nuadhat fell by Conn, and there was a slaughter of the
> Munstermen.[248]

Recorded in a seventeenth-century manuscript, a more detailed account of the battle

appears as part of a saga describing the ancestors of the high-kings of Cashel; the text is

named after the event, *Caith Magh Leana* (Battle of Mag Lena).[249] Apart from the battle

account surviving and evolving into the medieval period, knowing the history of a place

was required information for both the military elite to carry out campaigns and for their

legal and historical advisors, the Brehons.[250] Originally performed orally, the "lore of

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[248] Curry, trans., *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, xvi-ii.

[249] Ibid. The detailed battle account may reflect a later medieval-early modern trend of
taking terse records of important events found in the annals and using creative license to
elaborate upon them. Curry noted that there is a vellum copy of the book in the College
of St. Isidore, Rome.

[250] Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 166–167. Hughes discussed the importance of the
dindshenchas (lore of land) tradition in early medieval Ireland. In modern Irish,
dindshenchas translates as "topography." Charles Bowen, "A historical inventory of the
Dindshenchas," *Studia Celtica* 10-11 (1975-1976): 113-137, here 116. Bowen stated the
"name of every place was assumed to be an expression of history." Bhreathnach, *Ireland
and the Medieval World*, 3. Bhreathnach emphasized the formative role of history
(*senchas*) in the shaping of early medieval Irish identity. One of the most important
bodies of knowledge was dedicated to the study of the history of places (*dindshenchas*),
which was drawn upon in legal matters "concerning landholdings, boundaries and

places" (*dindshenchas*) genre recorded the origin of place-names often associated with legendary and mythological figures. Although it does not mention the battle, the *Metrical Dindshenchas* includes Mag Lena and the source of its name among its significant places.[251] Finally, Mag Lena also served as the site of a great synod held in 632-3, regarding the question of the dating of Easter. Cummian, the abbot of Durrow, wrote to Segene, abbot of Iona, that the successors (abbots) of the monasteries of Ciarán of Clonmacnoise, Brendan (most likely Birr), Nessán, and Lugaid, as well as the *ailbe episcopis*, Imblech Íbair of Munster, were represented at the debate.[252]

Similar to his legendary ancestor, Flann consolidated control of the north and attempted to protect it from southern incursions. Remembering FitzPatrick's association

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[disputes]."[250] Subjects of these writings also included boundaries, settlements, roads, monuments, graves, springs wells, churches, crosses, sites of battles or famous events.

[251] Edward Gwynn's translation of the metrical *dindshenchas* does not discuss the battle, only recounted the story of the place-name, which is common for the genre. Featured in a story from the saga of Mac Dathó's Pig, Lena, son of Mesroeda, found the eponymous animal in the woods and raised it until one day the swine buried him alive as he slept. That place was thence called Mag Lena. For the story and notes on "Mac Dathó's Pig," see Nora Kershaw Chadwick, *Early Irish Reader* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 6. Edward Gwynn, trans., "Mag Léna I" and "Mag Léna II," in *Metrical Dindshenchas* (1906, repr., Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1991), 4.92-94, poems/stories 4.47-8.

[252] Nora Kershaw Chadwick, "Early Culture and Learning in North Wales," in *Studies in the Early British Church*, ed. by Nora Kershaw Chadwick (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 51-3; and Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's Letter: De controversia Paschali*, Studies and Texts 86 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 91

of the Eóghanachta dynasty of Munster with their ancestor Mug,[253] the battle of Flann and Cormac at Mag Lena paralleled the combat of their renowned ancestors, continuing the long-held rivalry between the two overkingdoms. Yet, in this instance Flann was met with defeat, and adding insult to injury, Cormac spent that Christmas at Clonmacnoise, at least according to the record in the Munster-biased AI.[254] Thus, the next meeting between the two kings at Belach Mugna in 908 was a highly-charged occasion. The preceding events intimately tied the victory to beliefs about Uí Néill ancestry, present claims of legitimacy, and future rule, in addition to the collective identity and collaboration of the peoples of "Conn's Half." The AU, AFM, and the *Fragmentary Annals* (FA) all provide a detailed account of the tenth-century battle in which the joint forces of Flann mac Máel Sechnaill (High-King of Tara), Cerball mac Muirecáin (High-King of Leinster), and Cathal mac Conchobair (High-King of Connacht) united against Cormac mac Cuilennáin (High-King of Cashel).[255] Cormac sought to force Leinster back under *Leth Moga's*

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[253] FitzPatrick, "Assembly Places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," 5. Curry, *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, 3.

[254] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 73. Innisfallen Abbey, on Innisfallen Island, is located on Lough Leane, near Killarney in Munster and was under the Munster sphere-of-influence. The AI provided the lone account of this Christmas court at the Uí Néill stronghold. AI907.4: "Eight score ferryings(?) [were made] by Cormac, king of Caisel, until they [his forces] arrived in Cluain Moccu Nóis during that Christmas."

[255] AU908: "A battle was fought between the men of Mumu, the Leth Cuinn, and the Laigin in Mag Ailbi on the feast of Dagán of Inber Dáile, i.e. on Tuesday the Ides 13th of September, the thirteenth of the moon, and Cormac son of Cuilennáin, king of Caisel, was killed there together with other distinguished kings. These are: Fogartach son of Suibne, king of Ciarraige, Cellach son of Cerball, king of Osraige, Ailill son of Eógan, superior of the Trian of Corcach, and Colmán, superior of Cenn Eitig. Flann son of Máel Sechnaill, king of Temair, Cerball son of Muirecán, king of Laigin, and Cathal son of Conchobor, king of Connacht, were victors." AFM903.7 (recte 908): "The battle of

sphere of influence. Although located in the southern half of the island and the traditional

ally of Munster and the kingdom of the Osraige, Leinster would at times side with the

north, even inventing a genealogy that tied them to Conn's ancestry. In this occasion,

Leinster high-king Cerball mac Muirigen gave his allegiance to Flann Sinna when he

married the High-King of Tara's daughter. Led by Flann, the northern coalition came to

their ally's aid when Cormac positioned his army in Leinster and attempted to take

hostages and force the submission of the kingdoms of Leinster and the Osraige.[256]

      Demonstrating the complexity of the alliances during the time period, Dallan mac

More, Cerball's *ollamh* (chief poet and wise-man), celebrated Flann's victory in his

description of the battle at the same time as he lamented the death of the respected

bishop-king Cormac:

Bealach-Mughna *was fought* by Flann, son of Maelsechlainn, King of Ireland, and
Cerbaill, son of Morgen, King of Leinster, and by Cathal, son of Conchobar, King of
Connaught, against Cormac, son of Cuilennáin, King of Caiseal. The battle was gained
over Cormac, and he himself was slain, though his loss was mournful, for he was a king,
a bishop, an anchorite, a scribe, and profoundly learned in the Scotic tongue." An
extensive account of the battle can be read in the Joan Newlon Radner, ed., *Fragmentary
Annals of Ireland* (FA) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978). CELT:
Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed October 31, 2017,
https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100017/index.html. FA423: 908 CE.

[256] FA423 (908CE): "908 Anno Domini 900. A great army of the men of Munster was
gathered by the same two men, that is, by Flaithbertach and Cormac, to demand the
hostages of the Laigin and Osraige, and the men of Munster were all in the same camp."
Dallán described the fallen king as such: "the holy person who was the most skilled that
ever was or will be of the men of Ireland(?) A scholar in Irish and in Latin, the wholly
pious and pure chief bishop, miraculous in chastity and in prayer, a sage in government,
in all wisdom, knowledge and science, a sage of poetry and learning, chief of charity and
every virtue; a wise man in teaching, high king of the two provinces of all Munster in his
time."

They perished with many thousands in the great battle of Belach-Mughna. / Flann of Teamhair, of the plain of Tailltin, Cearbhall of Carman without fail, / On the seventh of *the Calends of September*, gained the battle of which hundreds were joyful. / The bishop, the souls' director, the renowned, illustrious doctor, / King of Caiseal, King of Iarmumha; O God! Alas for Cormac![257]

Several bad omens preceded the battle, sowing the seeds of discord among the Munstermen, including a rejected offer for temporary peace with Leinster, Cormac's prediction of his own death, and Flann Sinna's arrival to the camp of the Leinstermen with "a huge army of foot and horse."[258] The account further elaborated that "the men of Munster came to the battle weak and in disorder. The noise in this battle was grievous…the noise of the one army being slain, and the noise of the other army exulting in that slaughter."[259]

Facing imminent defeat, many of Munster's leaders fled, Cormac among them. As detailed in the *FA*, many of the leaders of the southern forces died along with six thousand men in the great battle.[260] The AFM recounted that Cormac was knocked from

[257] AFM903.7 (recte 908). See FA423 (908 CE) for a similar poem attributed to Dallán.

[258] FA423 (908 CE).

[259] Idem.

[260] Idem. "At the very beginning of the battle, Cellach mac Cerbaill, King of Osraige, and his son had immediately been killed. Both laymen and clergy were killed several from then on: many noble clergy were killed in this battle, and many kings and chieftains. Fogartach, son of Suibhne, the sage in philosophy and theology, king of Ciarraige, was slain, and Ailill son of Eógan, the distinguished young scholar and nobleman, and Colmán, abbot of Cenn Éitig, distinguished master of jurisprudence in Ireland, and many others, whom it would be a long task to write down. The laymen, moreover, were Cormac, king of the Déisi; Dubucán, king of Fir Maige; Cenn Fáelad, king of Uí Conaill; Connadar and Aineslis of the Uí Thairdelbaig; and Éiden, king of Aidne, who was in

his horse in the fray, falling to the ground breaking his back and neck, but not before

repeating Christ's last words "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."[261] Many

clergymen shared in the victory and defeat of the warriors, as Dallán explained "grievous

and great was the slaughter throughout Mag Ailbe after that. Clergy were spared no more

than laymen there; they were equally killed and beheaded."[262] At the battle's conclusion,

Flann's men presented him with the head of Cormac.[263] Instead of denigrating the head

in the usual fashion of victors, Flann chose to honor the remains of the bishop-king

Cormac, kissing it and passing it around him three times prior to having it reunited with

the body and transported to nearby Disert-Diarmada (Castledermot) for burial.[264] In

addition to Cormac's supposed emulation of Christ's last words, his burial also resembled

the Old Testament account of the demise of Saul and David's ascent to power (1 Samuel,

31-8-13, 1 Chronicles 10-12). Facing defeat at the Battle of Mount Gilboa, Saul

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exile in Munster; Máel Muad; Matudán; Dub dá Bairenn; Congal; Catharnach; Feradach; Áed, king of Uí Liathain; and Domnall, king of Dún Cermna."

[261] AFM903.7 (recte 908).

[262] Idem.; FA423 (908).

[263] Idem. The AFM attributed the task of beheading the bishop-king to the soldier Fiach Ua Ugfadan of Denlis.

[264] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:105. In Harbison's study, he included references to the previous scholarship of the Kells Market Cross, and referred to Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland*, who interpreted one of its panels on the south face as Flann kissing the head of Cormac. FA423 (908 CE): Cormac requested to be buried at Cluain Uama, but the *comarba* of Coemgall, Móenach, "preferred to bury him at Dísert Diarmata, for Dísert Diarmata was one of Comgall's places, and Móenach was successor of Comgall." Herity connected the Davidic imagery on the crosses at Castledermot to Cormac. Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare."

committed suicide. The Philistines decapitated and erected the remains of the king and his son on the walls of Beth-shan as victory trophies. The people of Jabesh-Gilead recovered the bodies, then cremated and provided a proper burial of their bones. However, David hearing of his predecessor's demise, brought up the bones and transported them to Zela to be buried near the deceased king's father (2 Samuel 21:12-14).

Byrne noted the loss at Belach Mugna marked the waning control of the Eóghanachta, Cormac's dynasty, over Munster.[265] Flann Sinna's crushing victory over his most powerful rival and ancestral adversary enhanced his claim of primacy and justified the inclusion of the title of "King of Ireland" on the Cross of the Scriptures. Through the exploration of this pivotal battle and the territorial and ancestral rivalries that fueled it, commemoration and thanksgiving become all the more convincing motivations for the patronage of the monument and the *damliag*. The Cross of the Scriptures celebrated and facilitated the remembrance of the victory that resulted in Flann's supremacy, but its placement within the cultural topography at a powerful monastic site immediately north of the Eiscir Riada also provided a clear statement of the high-king's stronghold over his region and the northern half of Ireland. It impressed upon Flann's subjects the power, wealth, and legitimacy of their ruler, and simultaneously deterred future confrontations from opposing powers and southern invasions.[266]

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[265] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 266.

[266] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 73-74. "The use of the title Rig Herenn king of Ireland to describe Flann could most appropriately be used after the battle of Belach

2.3.3 The Cross on the Border: The High Cross as Marker of Territory and Compact

The theme of victory can be interpreted from several other scenes featured on the

Cross of the Scriptures, most notably the monument's representation of the universal

symbol of Christian triumph, the Crucifixion. However, as Christ's victorious death also

relates to notions of early medieval kingship on this cross, it requires greater attention

than this section allows; the following chapter addresses the topic at length. More

pertinent to the immediate topic of the monument's location at the border between the

traditional halves of the island is the cross's relationship to other major boundaries within

Ireland. The current section explores the interaction of the placement of cross with the

aforementioned central panel on the shaft of the eastern face of the Cross of the

Scriptures. The inclusion of this image of a compact supports the role of the high cross as

a witness to territorial agreements in the vein of other monumental inscribed stones in

Ireland. It represents another pivotal event that resulted in Flann Sinna's victory and

premier kingship (Figure 57).

Ó Floinn convincingly argued that the high cross's ability to function as a

boundary marker could extend beyond monastic confines to demarcate entire regions.[267]

Mugna and raises the question of whether both the cross directly west of the west door of
the cathedral suggests an association between the two monuments."

[267] Ó Floinn, "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artifact, and Methodology." In his discussion of
high crosses, Ó Floinn investigated the "relatively obscure" placement of two crosses, the
Bealin/Twyford Cross and the Ahenny Cross. Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval
Ireland*, 58. Bradley, "The Monastic Town of Clonmacnoise," 58-9. Stokes, *The High
Crosses of Castledermot and Durrow*, vi. Hermann Wasserschleben, *Die irische
Kanonensammlung* (Giessen: J. Ricker'sche Buchhandlung, 1874), 201.
Wasserschleben's work is a copy of the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* (CCH), a

He opposed a prevailing theory that explained the dominating non-figural aesthetic of the

Ahenny and other Ossory (Osraige) region crosses was the result of the group's early

stage in the development of the monument type. Instead of relying upon a stylistic

chronology, he looked to the historical context of the crosses and, more specifically, their

locations along the boundaries of the Kingdom of the Osraige to posit a justification for

the style (Figure 35). Ó Floinn connected their differences in decoration and form to their

function as territorial markers. The high crosses were acts of defiance erected by High-

King Cerball mac Dúnlainge in resistance to the expansion of Máel Sechnaill, Flann

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combination of canon law, scripture, patristic writing, and Irish decrees compiled by two
men, Cú Chuimne of Iona (d.747) and Ruben of Dairinis (d.725), in the seventh or eighth
century. A number of manuscripts record the CCH in various conditions, including, but
not limited to: St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS243, eighth century; Paris, Bibliothèque
municipale MS679, eighth century; Orléans, Bibliothèque municipal, MS221, eighth
century; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 42, section 1, ninth century; and Paris,
Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 3182, ninth century. CCHXLIV.3: "*Sinodus
Hibernensis: Terminus sancti loci habeat signa circa se. Sinodus dicit: Ubicunque
inveneritis signum crucis Chrisi, ne laeseritis. Item: Tres personae consecrant terminum
loci sancti: rex, episcopus, populus.*" ("The Irish Synod: Let the boundary of the
Sanctuary have signs around it. The Synod saith: Wherever you may find the sign of the
Cross of Christ, injure it not. Also: Three persons consecrate the boundary of the
Sanctuary, the King, the Bishop, the People.") CCHXLIV.5: "*Quatuor terminos circa
locum sanctum posuit, primum, in quem laici et mulieres intrant, alterum, in quem clerici
tantum veniunt. Primus vocatur sanctus, secundus sanctior, tertius sanctissimus. Nota
nomen quorto defecisse.*" ("There ought to be two or three termini around a holy place:
the first in which we allow no one at all to enter expect the priests, because laymen do not
come near it, nor women unless they are clerics; the second, into its streets the crowds of
common people, not much given to wickedness, we allow to enter; the third, which men
who have been guilty of homicide, adulterers, and prostitutes, with permission and
according to custom, we do not prevent from going within. Whence they are called the
first *sanctus*, the second *sanctior*, the third *sanctissimus*, bearing honor according to their
differences.") It was Adomnán, in the *Vita Columbae* (Book 1, chapter 3) who first
mentioned a *vallum*, or rampart, in ca. 697, which separated the Clonmacnoise sanctuary
from the outer enclosures.

Sinna's father, into Munster and Leinster.[268] The cross sites at Ahenny and Kilkieran

straddle the River Linguan, the traditional boundary between Munster and Osraige, which

also served as a major travelling route through the Sliabh Dile mountain-region.[269]

Likewise, Lorrha and Seir Kieran and their crosses occupied the northern boundary of the

Osraige, a point in which the Osraige touches Leinster, Mide, and Munster. Similarly,

Flann and his supporters not only used the high cross's sacred and monumental form to

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[268] Ó Floinn, "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artifact, and Methodology," 8-13, 14; and Harbison, "A high cross base from the Rock of Cashel and a historical reconsideration of the 'Ahenny Group' of crosses," 1-20. Ó Floinn supported Harbison's later dating of the Ossory crosses to the mid-ninth century instead of their traditional earlier dating to the eighth and early ninth century. Nevertheless, he rejected Harbison's argument that this group was erected as a sign of "domination" over the Osraige by Máel Sechnaill, who in 859 "succeeded in gaining the submission of Cerball mac Dúnlainge…wrestling his kingdom from the overlordship of Cashel and bringing it under the control of the northern half of Ireland." Ó Floinn believed these crosses are more characteristic of Cerball, who "was a skilled manipulator of political alliances…related by marriage to both Máel Sechnaill and to…Áed Findliath… [Cerball's] submission to Máel Sechnaill in 859 was a political expedient which enabled him to concentrate his efforts against the Norse." He later gained control of Dublin through marriage alliances and became its protector from 870-888, which "would have provided him with the necessary resources to endow churches in Ossory, in particular churches affiliated with its patron saint, Ciarán [of Saighir], such as Seir Kieran and Kilkieran."

[269] Ibid., 9-10. The crosses ability to mark and claim land may have also been related to their ties to Osraige ancestors. From his study of the eighth-century text, "The Expulsion of the Déisi," Ó Floinn also observed that the crosses placed near the "River Linguan, on either side of which Ahenny and Kilkieran are situated, [held] a particular place in the origin legend of the Osraigi." When the people of the Ossory were expelled from their ancestral lands by the Déisi of Co. Waterford, they fled east until they crossed the River Linguan. This was to be "the boundary between the Déisi and the men of Ossory 'till doom." He suggested that "Ahenny being endowed by Cerball as a confident statement of his reclaiming the territories east of the Linguan lost ignominiously in early times," especially when facing an encroaching Clann Cholmáin dynasty. For the "The Expulsion of the Déisi" passages, Ó Floinn referred to Kuno Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Desi," *Ériu* 3: 141; and Patrick Power, ed., *Life of St. Declan of Ardmore and life of St. Mochadi of Lismore* (London: Irish Text Society 16, 1914), 157.

commemorate his military victory that made him the primary high-king of the island, but they also embedded it as a marker of his power and protection at an influential monastery, strategically-located on the border of three major provinces.

Controlling the physical location of Clonmacnoise was of great importance to Clann Cholmáin, notably underscored by the patronage of monumental architecture and art by Flann Sinna, his father Máel Sechnaill, and subsequent Clann Cholmáin generations. The monastery was situated in the western part of the highly-contested *túatha* of the Delbna Bethra, at the southwestern corner of the Mide, the larger region that served as the dynasty's locus of ancestral power.[270] Strategically-positioned near the center of the island, the Delbna Bethra shared borders with three major overkingdoms, Connacht, Munster, and Leinster, as well as the formidable kingdom of the Osraige (Figure 50, 55). Its location on the margins enmeshed this powerful and prosperous institution in the thick of contentious political rivalries. Further compounding the

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[270] Bhreathnach, *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, 34-5; and I. Best, Osborn Bergin, and M.A. O'Brien, ed., *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1954), 196–8. The Clann Cholmáin dynasty claimed the Hill of Uisnech, northeast of Clonmacnoise and Athlone, as their ultimate locus of power. It always remained in their control and was not alternated to the northern branch of the Uí Néill as was Tara. According to a regnal list in the *Book of Leinster*, the first Clann Cholmáin *Ríg Uisneach* was Flann's ancestor Domnall Midi mac Murchadha (d.763). Prior rulers also included Flann's earlier ancestors Colmán Már (d.555/8) and Diarmait mac Cerbaill (d.565), as well as its first recorded king of thy dynasty, Conall Cremthainne mac Néill (c. 480). Uisneach was a prehistoric ceremonial site considered the center of Ireland in mythology, and also like Tara, continued to be a place of power after the island's conversion to Christianity and into the modern era. The *Ail na Míreann* (Stone of Divisions) is said to mark where the four traditional provinces of Ireland come together to access a mythical fifth, and later actual, province, i.e. Mide. It has been associated with the fire festivals of Bealtaine, the earth goddess of Ireland, Ériu, and the sun god, Lugh, among other mythological and legendary figures.

liminality of its position was the monastery's placement at the crossroads of early

medieval Ireland. Clonmacnoise was not only located near a major overland travel route

that ran east-west, the Eiscir Riada, but also it sat adjacent to the Shannon, Ireland's

longest river and chief artery flowing north-south (Figure 56). Supporting the high-traffic

generated by these two great travel routes was a wooden bridge at the site, which

maritime archeological evidence revealed dated to the early medieval period.[271] Partially

because of its strategic political and trading position, Clonmacnoise was considered one

of Ireland's major monasteries and one of the most powerful in the midland region from

the seventh century to the thirteenth century.[272] It developed into a complex settlement in

the medieval period with paved roads, stone buildings, and ramparts. Extending out from

its ecclesiastic core was a flourishing proto-town renowned for its academic community

and craft workshops. This status, along with its pivotal position in domestic and inter-

regional trade networks, made it a major gathering location.[273]

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[271] Colin Breen and Aidan O'Sullivan, "Underwater Archaeological Excavations of the Clonmacnoise Wooden Bridge" in *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology*, ed. Carol V. Ruppe and Jane F. Barstad (New York: Springer Science, 2002), 405-6. The bridge dates to 804 and was excavated 1995-1998 by Aidan O'Sullivan and Donal Boland.

[272] Bradley, "The Monastic Town of Clonmacnoise," 42-3. Bradley pointed to Tírechán's consideration of Clonmacnoise being a major rival to Armagh near the end of the seventh century. Its prominence continued throughout the early medieval period, as it was patronized by a series of powerful high-kings. However, it fell into decline in the beginning of the thirteenth century when the Anglo-Norman lord William de Burgh took control of Clonmacnoise and Athlone became the major crossing point of the Shannon in 1210.

[273] Idem. More recently, Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 42-55.

Another example of a monument used in a similar capacity as a boundary marker is the Kilnassagart pillar, a 2.8-meter standing stone with inscribed crosses, abstract decoration, ceremonial blade marks, and a dedication (Figure 58-60). Conor Newman translated the Old Irish inscription at the center of the pillar as "Ternoc son of Cernan, who bequeathed the place to the protection of Peter" and tied it to an abbot listed in AFM714.[274] Among the many rudimentary crosses carved into the stone, the words appear between a Latin-style cross (above) and an encircled Greek-style cross with curling terminals (below) (Figure 59). Observing that no ecclesiastical community was connected to the pillar's placement, Newman associated the monument with a cemetery occupying "the Gates of the North," a narrow pass in *Sliabh Gullion* mountain that formed the southern boundary of Armagh (Figure 60). The *Sli Midhluachra*, one of the five roads from Tara, followed this pass on its way to the northeast part of the island. Thus, the Kilnassagart pillar was a highly visible boundary marker associated with territorial claims at pivotal and contested place in the landscape, similar to the Cross of the Scriptures. The "Pillar of Eliseg," discussed more fully in the next chapter, may provide another example of this phenomenon occurring in early medieval Wales.

Clonmacnoise's situation at the island's main crossroads was economically advantageous and physical dangerous at the same time. Although the monastery's

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[274] Conor Newman, "The Sword in the Stone: previously unrecognized archaeological evidence of ceremonies of the later Iron Age and early medieval period," in *Relics of Old Decency: Archeological Studies in later Prehistory, Festschrift for Barry Raferty*, ed. Gabriel Cooney, Katharine Becker, John Coles, Michael Ryan and Susanne Sievers (Dublin: Wordwell, 2009), 426. The inscription reads: "*In loc so Taninmarni Ternoc mac Cernan Bic er cul Peter Apstel.*"

location facilitated in its development from a community founded on ascetic ideals to one of the wealthiest centers of trade and culture in early medieval Ireland, it also subjected the site to raids by various Irish and Viking parties, as well as inter-monastic conflicts throughout the eighth to tenth centuries. Thus, the messages intended by the patrons of the Cross of the Scriptures reflect its situation at a locus of extreme anxiety, as well as the group's ambitions to claim the place and ensure stable rule. Supporting this notion of unease is a canon discussing the three types of necessary "patrolling" (*ruba*), all of which pertain to the cross's location at Clonmacnoise: "i.e. patrolling along borders, patrolling along crossroads, patrolling alongside a kingdom" ("*.r. fri crīcha, .r fri bēlatu, .r fri tūath*.")[275]

As the Eiscir Riada symbolically separated the north from the south, the Shannon served as the traditional boundary between Connacht and Mide, two of the great over-kingdoms of Ireland. Flann Sinna claimed a special relationship with Clonmacnoise and emphasized the important role his ancestry played in the foundation and success of the monastery, however, evidence from the annals and tomb-slab epigraphy from the eighth and early ninth centuries both suggest it was also once the burial site for the Uí Briúin and Uí Maine kings of Connacht.[276] The first recorded royal burial at the monastery was

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[275] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 69, notes on section 23. CIH890.6.

[276] Ó Floinn, "Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage in the Early Medieval Period," 87-100. The burial of Uí Maine kings at Clonmacnoise is also referred to in Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 92, and further information about their control of Connacht, 230-53. Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the medieval world*, 187. Macalister, *Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, 15, 71. The first Latin "Life" and the Irish "Life" state he was born in Connacht, although his father came from the Mide.

Guaire Aidne (d. 663), a king of Connacht.[277] Ó Floinn's investigation of the different

periods of royal patronage of Clonmacnoise revealed that Connacht stated its allegiance

to Clonmacnoise's founding saint, Ciarán, by proclaiming the "Law of Ciaran" (*Cáin*

Ciarán) three times in the eighth century.[278] Although Ciarán's family came from either

the Mide or Ulster, his hagiography claimed he was born and raised in Connacht on the

plain of Mag nAí near Connacht's ancestral seat of kingship, Ráth Cruachan.[279] It was

not until the middle of the ninth century, following a forty-year period of instability in

which the monastery was attacked nine times, that the kings of Clann Cholmáin became

the primary lay patrons of Clonmacnoise.[280]

Kehnel highlighted CS823 as evidence of a shift in the royal patronage from the

Uí Briúin to the Uí Maine. The king of the Uí Maine, Cathal son of Ailil, of the Cenél

Cairpre Cruim, attacked the monastery of Clonmacnoise and killed its vice-abbot, Flann,

son of Flaithbertach of the Uí Forga of Munster.[281] She noted that this event either

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[277] The death is recorded both in CS659 and AFM662 and is referred to by Byrne, *Irish Kings and High King*, 51. Annette Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 94. Kehnel also noted that King Indrechtach mac Muiredaig (707-723) of the Uí Briúin dynasty is said to have been the first king to be buried there (AT722).

[278] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 87. Submission to *Cain Ciarán* was declared in the years 744 (AU744.9), 775 (AI775), and 788 (AU788.9).

[279] Ibid., 101. Macalister, *The Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, 110.

[280] Ó Floinn, "Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage in the Early Medieval Period," 91.

[281] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 95. CS823: "Ronan, Abbot of Cluain-muc-Nois, left his abbacy. The profanation of Cluain-mic-Nois by Cathal son of Ailill, king of Uí Maine, against the Munster vice-abbot, viz. Flann, son of Flaithbertach of the Uí Forga, whom he threw into the Shannon, so that he was drowned. Seven churches were adjudged in

signaled hostility between the monastery and the dynasty when superiority shifted among the kings of Connacht, or it documented a defensive maneuver against the infiltration of Munster into the traditional northern leadership of Clonmacnoise. Regarding the latter, High-King Feidlimid mac Crimthainn of Munster (r.820-846, d.847) had previously attacked the monastery in 832 and 833. With the death of Diarmait mac Tomaltach, the Uí Briúin king of Connacht in 833, Cathal of the Uí Maine stepped in to keep Munster from taking over Clonmacnoise. He defeated Feidlimid on the plain of Mag Aí and seemingly ousted the Munster agent, the vice-abbot Flann, from Clonmacnoise's ecclesiastical hierarchy.[282] According to the entry CS846, Feidlimid again attempted to sack the monastery, but St Ciarán punished him and he "died in consequence of a mortal stroke" by the saint.[283] The chronicle also recorded that Cathal donated seven churches and their revenues to Ciarán in atonement for killing the vice-abbot Ronan, an action traditionally signaling a new relationship between a royal family and a monastery.[284] The "Book of the Uí Maine" and the "Book of Lismore" provide further evidence of Clonmacnoise's relationship to Cathal's family by tying their history to that of the monastery. Cairpre Crum, the progenitor of the dynasty, also submitted to Ciarán and, in

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atonement, A victory was gained by Cathal, son of Ailill over Feidhlimidh, son of Crimthann in Magh Aí, in which many fell."

[282] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 98-99.

[283] Ibid., 99. CS846, AU847, AFM845.

[284] Ibid., 99.

return, the saint resurrected him following his death by beheading.[285] Whether allied with

the over-kings of Connacht or Mide, Clonmacnoise remained a target for Munster

incursions that were as symbolic as they were geographically practical. As the

aforementioned encampment of Flann's enemy Cormac mac Cuilennáin at the monastery

before Belach Mugna, those associated with Clonmacnoise most likely regarded the

attacks and invasions as direct assaults on the prestige of the monastery and its allied

high-kings.

The central panel on the eastern shaft featuring two members of the warrior

nobility may record an agreement that occurred in the year 899 or 900 between Flann

Sinna and Cathal mac Conchobair, over-king of Connacht (d. 925) (Figure 57).[286]

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[285] Kehnel*, Clonmacnois*, 23, 93. Kehnel referred to R.A.S. Macalister, ed., *The Book of Uí Maine, otherwise called the Book of the O'Kelly's*, Facsimiles in Collotype of Irish Manuscripts 4 (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1942), fol. 126c. After a life of wickedness, Cathal's ancestor Cairpre Crum submitted to St. Ciarán right before his decapitation and death. His remains were brought to the saint, who brought him back to life. During the resurrection, however, the stone upon which his dead body was lain left him with a twisted neck, hence the name "Crum," or "Crooked." In thanksgiving, he gave a great amount of land to Ciarán and the monastery of Clonmacnoise. Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D ii 1 ("Book of the Uí Maine"). The "Book of Lismore" is in a private collection in the Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.

[286] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72. Manning previously identified this scene as a pact between Flann Sinna and Cathal mac Conchobair. Other identifications are listed in Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49, including: "Stokes – King Flann, Crawford and Henry - two neighboring chieftains, Brandt-Förster - St. Ciaran and Diarmait mac Cerbaill, Multhaupt-a peace pact, Porter - Dermot and Moel-Mor, and Harbison's own interpretation of "The Chief butler gives the cup into Pharaoh's hand." In his survey, Harbison's extensive knowledge of early medieval imagery in western Europe was entrenched in identifying high cross imagery with known *exempla* established in Carolingian patronage. Manning stated that the "scriptural interpretations [Harbison suggested are unlikely], being neither as obvious nor as well-known as would be expected on such a prominently placed panel [and they] have no convincing parallels in Ireland." See also Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 110. AFM896, CS899. As Clann Cholmáin

Although it remains somewhat controversial to contend that contemporary historical events appeared alongside biblical and saintly figures in the corpus of high crosses, site- and context-specific details involving the Cross of Scriptures' creation support this hypothesis; these include the Cross of the Scriptures' location on the border of Connacht and Mide, the monastery's shared past and protection by these overkingdoms, and its association with elite kingship, as well as the eventual, "divinely-sanctioned" supremacy of Clann Cholmáin. According to AFM895 (recte 900), "Cathal came into the house of Flann under the protection of the clergy of Ciaran so that he was afterwards obedient to the king," a traditional trope representing the Connacht king's submission to Flann's primacy.[287] According to CS897 and the AFM892 and 894 (recte 897 and 899), the two over-kingdoms were at odds prior to this important pact. Though the dates vary slightly, both sources recount Flann Sinna's attack on Connacht in which he took hostages.[288] Connacht sought retribution and raided the western part of the Mide, before being routed at Athlone (Figure 55).[289] In what can be interpreted as another example of a symbolic

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kings claimed lineage from Niall of the Nine Hostages, the Síl Muiredaig family to which Cathal belonged traced their ancestry to Brian, the older brother of Niall.

[287] Kehnel*, Clonmacnois*, 72. To come into a high-king's house was to show deference, i.e. submission, to his superiority. AFM895.11 (recte 900): "A meeting at Áth Luain between Flann, son of Maelseachlainn, and Cathal, son of Conchobhar; and Cathal came into the house of Flann under the protection of the clergy of Ciaran."

[288] CS897: "Connacht was attacked by Flann son of Máel Sechnaill and its pledges exacted" and AFM892.10 "The plundering of Connaught by Flann, son of Maelseachlainn; and their hostages were taken."

[289] CS897: "The Connachta made a raid into the west of Mide." "The Connachta were defeated at Áth Luain by the west of Mide…and they left a number behind dead." AFM894.11, 13: "An army was led by the Connaughtmen into Westmeath." "A victory

attack upon Clonmacnoise and its associates, the Connachtmen interrupted an important synod at Inis Angin prior to their defeat at which a different Cairpre Crom, the Bishop of Clonmacnoise, and the shrine of Ciarán were present.[290] Finally, Flann's son, Máel Ruanaid, the "heir designate of Ireland," was burned and killed by Connachtmen in 902 (CS901, recte 902).[291] The compact between the two high-ranking leaders a few years following these conflicts was instrumental in Flann's consolidation of the *Leth Cuinn* and perceived legitimacy, placing him in contention for overkingship of the island. This particular relationship facilitated the success of Flann's military campaign against High-King Cormac and Munster, as several of the annals recorded Cathal fought alongside the High-King of Tara at Belach Mugna. Similar to Munster's encroachment on the Mide, the southern forces clashed with Cathal in 908. Cormac sent fleets up the Shannon, invading the plain of Mag nAí and carrying away hostages from Connacht.[292]

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was gained … over the Connaughtmen, at Áth Luain, by *the men of* Westmeath, and a slaughter of heads left behind with them."

[290] CS897: "Inis Aingin was profaned, and one man was slain in the middle of it, whereas the shrine of Ciarán was there and an assembly of elders, including Cairpre Crom, bishop, of Cluain moccu Nóis." AFM894.12 (recte 899): "An army was led by the Connaughtmen into Westmeath." "Inis Aingin was profaned, and a man was mortally wounded in the middle of it, and the shrine of Ciaran there, and a synod of seniors, with Cairbre Crom, Bishop of Cluain Mic Nois."

[291] CS901 (recte 902): "Mael Ruanaid son of Flann of Mael Sechnaill was killed by the Luigne of Connacht, that is, he was burnt in a house set on fire, i.e. by the sons of Cernachán son of Tadc and by the son of Lorcán son of Cathal."

[292] AFM902.7 (recte 907): "Another army was led by Cormac and Flaithbheartach against the Uí Néill of the South, and against the Connaughtmen; and they carried away the hostages of Connaught in their great fleets on the Shannon, and the islands of Loch Ribh were plundered by them." CS907 (recte 908): "Another expedition by Cormac and

The high cross does not represent the specific action recorded of Cathal's

submission, but rather portrays the exchange of a horn between two warriors (Figure 57).

The men stand side-by-side and sport large, handle-bar mustaches, and plaited beards.

Dressed in long garments with embroidered hems and cloaks pinned at their right

shoulders with large, circular brooches, they are clearly elite members of society. The

sword grasped at each man's hip unmistakably labels them as warriors. The two

noblemen stand frontally with their positioning allowing for the simultaneous actions of

the giving and the receiving of the horn. Centrally-placed on the dominant eastern face of

the cross, the horn is integral to the specific panel and a pivotal point in the overall

decorative program.

No horns of this type survive intact from the early medieval period in Ireland, but

their metal fixtures do. A variety of terminals, mouth-fittings, and suspension chains have

been discovered at Sutton Hoo and Taplow in England; Burghhead, Moray, and

Pierowall, Westray in Orkney, Scotland; Lismore (Co. Waterford) and Blackwater,

Clonmore (Co. Tyrone) in Ireland; and in gravesites in Norway (Figures 61-62).[293] There

is also evidence of the elite usage of horns recorded by works of art across different

media in the centuries surrounding the turn of the first millennium of the current era.

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by Flaithbertach against the Uí Néill and the Connachta, and they took the hostages of the
Connachta and plundered the islands of Loch Ríbh from their fleet."

[293] Vivian Etting, *The Story of the Drinking Horn: Drinking Culture in Scandinavia
during the Middle Ages*, Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology
and History (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 2013); and Martin Carver,
Sutton Hoo: Burial Grounds of Kings? (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,
1998).

Most commonly the vessels appear in the context of drinking, with such notable examples as the Gotlandic Picture Stones, the Bayeux Tapestry, and the Bullion Stone (Angus, Scotland) (Figures 63-66).[294] Compositionally-similar to the Clonmacnoise panel of compact is the Monifieth Cross-shaft, now at the National Museum of Scotland, which also displays two frontal figures, placed side-by-side (Figure 67).[295] However, each of the latter example's more schematically-rendered figures holds a horn. What the horn-exchange on the Cross of the Scriptures specifically represented is debatable, but both the historical and archaeological record reveal a close association between the object-type and kingship in northwestern Europe.

The later medieval concept of the "horn of tenure," or the presentation of a ceremonial drinking horn representing a gift of land and revenue to a recipient, had not yet entered the written record by the time of the creation of the Cross of Scriptures.[296] The earliest documented example still in existence is the Ulph Horn, given to the

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[294] James Graham-Campbell, *Viking Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013); Martin Foys, Karen Overbey, Dan Terkla, ed., *The Bayeux tapestry: new interpretations*, Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2009); and Joanna Close-Brooks and R.B.K [Robert Barron Kerr] Stevenson, *Dark Age Sculpture* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1982).

[295] John Romilly Allen and Joseph Allen, *The early Christian monuments of Scotland: a classified illustrated descriptive list of the monuments with an analysis of their symbolism and ornamentation* (Edinburgh: Neill and Co., 1903), 3:228-30.

[296] Avinoam Shalem, *The Oliphant: Islamic Objects in Historical Context* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 115. In his research, Shalem found that "the majority of the ivory horns were recorded in the inventories of church treasuries in Europe between the second half of the eleventh century and the end of the thirteenth."

Cathedral at York in 1036 by the Danish nobleman Ulph, son of Thorald (Figure 68).[297]

Instead of dividing his holdings among his disputing sons, Ulph presented the *oliphant*,

or elephant's tusk, carved and furnished with mountings of precious metals, to the altar of

a church.[298] Other examples of twelfth century English kings donating *oliphants* to

cathedrals include King Richard I's (d.1199) gift to Canterbury in 1189 and Henry I's

(d.1135) offering to Carlisle.[299] The giving of prestigious horns to monasteries also

occurred in Ireland, although it is unclear whether these donations represented land

holdings. Particularly relevant to this study, the AFM1129 (recte 1134) recorded that a

Dane, named Gillacomhgain, robbed the treasury of Clonmacnoise. Two of the objects he

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[297] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 114-5. "The Excellent consul of York, Ulfus, Donated to the cathedral's chapter his estate. By handing over an ivory horn and seal of Peter, He constituted a firm investiture. The signal horn, spotless, white and shining, testifies the outstanding donation of this generous giving [of this] Count." ("*Consul et insignis Eboracensis, come Ulfus / Praedia praebendis praebuit ille sua. / Tradens ex ebore cornu Petrique sigillum, / Investituram constituit solidam. / Cornea buccina, candida, lucida testificatur / Munus et eximium largiflui comitis.*") The reference to the *oliphant* appears in a chronicle written during the time of Archbishop Arudnel (1388-97). The horn has silver-gilt ornament with the inscription, "The gift of Ulph, son of Thorold," which was attached to the horn by the treasurer John Neweton. See Samuel Gale, "An Historical Dissertation upon the ancient Danish Horn kept in the Cathedral Church of York," *Archaeologia* 1 (1770): 168-182; Cyril Bunt, *The Horn of Ulf* (York: 1935); and Thomas D. Kendrick, "The Horn of Ulf," *Antiquity* 11 (1937): 278-82.

[298] The decoration of the horn has been traced to a workshop in southern Italy that produced other *oliphants*.

[299] Shalem, "Oliphants in Church Treasuries," 115. The author referred to Ernst Kühnel, *Die islamischen Elfenbein-skulpturen VIII-XIII Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1971), 85. Kühnel provided the record of the gift: "*ecclesiam praedictam* [*beatae Mariae Karliol*] *inde feoffavit per quoddam cornu eburneum quod dedit ecclesiae suae praedictae, et quod adhuc habet.*" ("Therefore, he enfeoffed the above-mentioned church [St. Mary in Carlisle] with an ivory horn, which he has given to this mentioned church and which is still in the possession [of the *church*].")

absconded with were a gold drinking horn given by Toirdhealbhach Ua Conchobhair,

King of Connacht (1088-1156, "High King of Ireland," r. 1120-1156), and the drinking

horn bequeathed by Ua Riada, the King of Ara in Tipperary (c.1129). At least in name

the "Kavanagh Charter Horn" (twelfth century with fifteenth-century mountings) implied

the use of "horns of tenure" eventually came to the island, in addition to written sources

referring to its use in ritual and as a royal insignia (Figure 69). According to Byrne, the

Kavanagh Charter horn belonged to the Caomhanách kings of Leinster and that "only

those who drank from the buffalo horn of Cualu could succeed the kingship of

Leinster."[300]

There is no explicit record of a horn representing land grants in the historical

record of Ireland for the early medieval period. However, there are numerous accounts of

the object-type functioning as a high-status gift, facilitating the creation and maintenance

of alliances among elites in a social structure that highly valued reciprocity. Carol

Neuman de Vegvar noted copious examples attesting to the prevalence and various uses

of horns, gleaned from a variety of textual sources across the British Isles. In Ireland, the

horn was a symbol of hospitality and object worthy of both tribute and *largitio*.[301] When

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[300] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 152-3; Carol Neuman de Vegvar, "Drinking Horns in Ireland and Wales: Documentary Sources," in *From the Isles of the North; Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain* (proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Insular Art), ed. Cormac Bourke (Belfast: HMSO, 1996), 81-87, quote on page 82; and Rachel Moss, "The Book of Mulling and the Kings of Leinster," accessed September 1, 2017, https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/the-book-of-mulling-and-the-kings-of-leinster/#easy-footnote-2.

[301] Neuman de Vegvar, "Drinking Horns in Ireland and Wales," 81-87.

a king travelled on circuit to assess the condition of his holdings, one of the client's basic

responsibilities was to offer the lord and his entourage hospitality in the form of drinks

and vessels.[302] The story of the *Three Drinking Horns of Cormac ua Cuinn* found in the

Liber Flavus Fergusiorum connects a high-status horn to Clann Cholmáin's quest for

primacy and royal offerings to the monastery of Clonmacnoise.[303] Angal, a king of Corca

Tri (Co. Sligo), fortuitously came upon three of the greatest horns in Ireland hidden in the

mouth of a flue. The lesser king presented the horns filled with mead to Áed mac Néill

"Oridnide" ("Ordained"), member of Cenél nEógain of the Northern Uí Néill, who held

the titles of the High-King of Ailech and Tara, as well as the high-kingship of Ireland

from 797 to his death in 819. In turn, Áed gifted "the Litan-Horn" to the High-King of

Ulster, "the Eel-Horn" to the High-King of Connacht, and kept for himself and Tara, the

"Twisted Horn." The last record of the "Twisted-Horn" placed it in the possession of

High-king Máel Sechnaill (II) mac Domhnall, great-grandson of Flann Sinna, and the last

of Clann Cholmáin kings to reign over Tara, implying that it was a ritual object of Uí

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[302] Neuman de Vegvar, "Drinking Horns in Ireland and Wales," 81. The "*aire désso*" (lord of clients) was owed vessels for himself and his entourage. The stipulations are based on the reading of Binchy's translation of the *Críth gablach*, 14, lines 338-9; and Eóin MacNeil, "Ancient Irish Law: the law of the status or franchise," *PRIA* 36 C (1923, 1921–1924): 265–316, here 296-8, 300.

[303] Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 O 48 ("The Yellow book of the Ó Fearghuis"), c.1437-40. Neuman de Vegvar, "Drinking Horns in Ireland and Wales," 82. Neuman de Vegvar argued that "[s]uch a legend and the object associated with it could ably support dynastic claims."

Néill high-kingship. The latter Máel Sechnaill offered the horn "to God and to Ciaran, till

the day of Judgement."[304]

Neuman de Vegvar also highlighted the Middle Irish text, "*Lebor na Cert*"

("Book of Rights"), which listed drinking horns "among the *Buada*, or prescriptive rights

of the upper ranks of society."[305] They were also acceptable items exchanged as *tuarastal*

(later defined as "wages" in the twelfth century), "or regular distributions of wealth owed

by overlords to their vassals," along with other high-status "objects," such as horses,

hounds, weapons, shields, horse mountings, and personal ornament.[306] Accordingly, an

account details the High-King of Cashel as owing "a hundred horns to the king of

Cruachain, another hundred to the king of Ulaid, fifty to the king of Ailech, and so on

through the ranks of vassal kings."[307] Providing further evidence that prestigious objects

performed as both witnesses and contractual binders are the changing etymological

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[304] E. J. Gwynn, "*The three drinking horns of Cormac úa Cuinn* [*From the Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*]," *Ériu* 2 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1905): 186–88. CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed October 31, 2017, https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100044A/index.html.

[305] Neuman de Vegvar, "Drinking Horns in Ireland and Wales," 81. Copies of the *Lebor na Cert* are found the following manuscripts: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D ii 1 (1225) ("Book of the Uí Maine), 1394; MS 23 P 12 ("Book of Ballymote"), 1384-1406; and MS 12 P 2 ("Book of Lecan"), fifteenth century; Chatsworth (Derbyshire) ("Book of Lismore"), fifteenth century; and Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.6. Myles Dillon, ed. and trans., *Lebor na Cert: The Book of Rights*, Irish Texts Society 46 (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1962).

[306] Idem. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings,* 153; FitzPatrick, *Royal inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, 1, 10; Stalley, Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 161-2.

[307] Ibid., 81.

associations of the word *tuarastal.* In the early medieval period, it expressed the concept

"eye-witness report" or "conclusive evidence," while *ráth* served as the term for "wages"

or "payment."[308]

The panels immediately above and below the compact image on the eastern face

of the Cross of the Scriptures are also object-focused and depict the use of material

culture to actualize an agreement. Explored in chapter four, the lower scene portrays a

warrior and clergyman jointly planting a stake in the ground, which denoted a territorial

claim and the foundation of Clonmacnoise (Figure 23). The composition of the

uppermost shaft panel conforms to the standard iconography of the *Traditio Clavium et*

Legis, in which Christ entrusted Peter and Paul to build and care for the Church on earth

(Figure 70).[309] The long robes and tunics appearing on all three figures of this image,

along with the tonsured haircut of the central person, indicate these are holy men. Christ

is seated and frontally-facing, as his two smaller-scale followers flank him in profile. He

extends both arms outwards to present each man with an object, a long key to the figure

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[308] Katherine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1987), 103.

[309] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49. Harbison identified the scene as the *Traditio Clavium et Legis*. The beards and hair of the figures are far too eroded to be discernible for certain identification. The location of the earliest surviving example of the *Traditio Clavium et Legis* is an early ninth-century wall-painting at Müstair, Switzerland. Although the equal treatment of Peter and Paul is known from an earlier reference in Ireland. Henry discovered a seventh-century description attributed to the Irish abbot Cellach of a chapel at the Irish monastic settlement of Perrone, France. He wrote: "The Saviour shows an equal friendship to the two Apostles to Peter giving the keys, to Paul the law." Henry, *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions*, 185.

on his right, presumably Peter, making the figure on his left, Paul, and the small book being exchanged, most likely the gospels.

In Bede's (672-735) account of the Synod of Whitby (664), he cited Matthew 16:17-19 to emphasize his allegiance to Rome. He rationalized Peter was the rock upon which Christ built his Church and it was through the guidance of his representatives that Christians would reach heaven.[310] In turn, Christ gave Paul the inspiration to write the new laws of the Church, which man must follow to attain salvation. As Stalley indicated of the decision regarding the dating of Easter at Whitby, the key that passed to Peter played an important role in persuading the Anglo-Saxon, yet Ionian-educated, King Oswy (c. 612 –670) to side with those supporting the Roman Church against the "Celtic" Church. Bede wrote:

> [T]he king [Oswy] said "Is it true, Colman, that these words were spoken to Peter by our Lord?" He answered, "It is true, O king!'' Then says he, "Can you show any such power given to your Columba?" Colman answered, "None." Then added the king, "Do you both agree that these words were principally directed to Peter, and that the keys of heaven were given to him by our Lord?" They both answered, "We do." Then the king concluded, "And I also say unto you, that he is the doorkeeper, whom I will not contradict, but will, as far as I know and am able, in all things obey his decrees, lest, when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven,

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[310] Matthew 16:17-19 "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jane Hawkes, *The Sandbach Crosses: sign and significance in Anglo-Saxon sculpture* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 58. In her study of the Sandbach North Cross and its image of *Traditio Legis cum Clavis,* Hawkes emphasized the importance Bede and his contemporaries placed on Peter.

there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is proved to have the keys."[311]

It is not until the presentation of a material object to serve as physical proof of the agreement between Christ and Peter that the king accepted the Roman Church over Columba and the "Celtic" Church. Likewise, the book in the uppermost shaft panel, like the keys, horn, and stake, presents a tangible expression of a contract, in this case, Christ's bequest of the law to Paul.

As a final consideration of the compact panel, it is difficult to identify which of these figures is Flann Sinna (Figure 57). As demonstrated above, there was precedence for both a superior king and a client king to give a horn as a gift. There is little differentiation between the two figures on the Cross of the Scriptures except for the left man's more pronounced beard plaiting. As a larger portion of the horn appears in front of the right man, he may be the recipient of the gift. Kelly's study of the early Irish law texts revealed the "usual method of acknowledging over-lordship [was] to accept gifts from the superior king.[312] In his *Confessio*, Saint Patrick acknowledged his understanding of the social and political significance of gift-giving in Ireland by stating that he did not accept gifts from kings as to not submit himself or the Church to another power.[313] However, he

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[311] A.M. Sellar, trans., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England; a revised translation with introduction, life, and notes* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912), 200-2, Book 3, chapter 25. This source from here on is abbreviated Bede, EH.

[312] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 5.

[313] Ibid., 139-40. St. Patrick, *The Confession of Saint Patrick*, §49, 52-3. Digital addition accessed through Celtic Literature Collective on May 1, 2018,

did give gifts to both kings and judges and allowed members of the king's family to travel with him. Alternatively, the nature of *tuarastal* or *rath* meant a horn could be given by a superior king to a client king in response to the latter's support. A gift by a king was among the seven *tabarta* (gifts) listed as non-rescindable in the law-tract, "*Coibnes uisci thairidne*" ("Kinship of conducted water.")[314] Irish society considered these offerings as legally-binding contracts (*cor*). Another observation that may point to the left king being the superior ruler is that he appears in a vertical line with the other favored figures of this face of the cross, e.g. the saved souls of the Last Judgement in the crosshead, St. Peter in the *Traditio Clavium et Legis*, and St. Ciarán in the foundation panel. Regardless of the panel's lack of identifying characteristics, the horn represented an agreement between two important men, a momentous occasion featured on an impressive sculpture among the images of Christ and his saintly followers at a premier monastery.

The multi-faceted oath represented by the Cross of the Scriptures recognized the territorial and political superiority of Clann Cholmáin in the region at the same time as it celebrated the friendship and ancient familial ties of overkingdoms of Connacht and Mide. Most likely, it was also one that entailed a reciprocal military alliance, as evident in Connacht and the Uí Néill's assemblage under Flann against Munster forces at Belach

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www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/ctexts/p01.html. The text can be found in the "Book of Armagh" (Trinity College Dublin, MS 52) and Cotton MS Nero E.I.

[314] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 121, referring to CIH459- 460.2. The list can also be found in D.A. Binchy, "Irish Law Tracts re-edited," 66-7. The other *tabarta* listed in the "*Coibnes uisci thairidne*" that cannot be overturned include: an offering to the Church for the soul, payment to a poet, lawyer, messenger, or craftsmen, and gift by a bishop.

Mugna, Mag Lena, and Loch Rí/Connacht. The oath called upon both sides to defend their ally when attacked. This was also the mechanism that brought Flann Sinna and the allied kings of the north to Leinster's aid when Munster attempted to force their submission. Failing to do so resulted in the loss of personal honor and the decline of legitimacy in the eyes of subjects and peers. Such a loss of status would also adversely affect the prosperity of his people. Discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, the essential role of a ruler was to provide for his *túath, túatha,* or province, depending on his status in the political hierarchy, and act on the group's behalf. Part of this duty was to make beneficial *cairde* (treaties) with the kings of other *túatha*.[315] On the Cross of the Scriptures, two great kings appear on behalf of their people, binding such an agreement upon a horn. At the same time as it demarcated the boundary between Connacht and Mide, the high cross memorialized the beneficial agreement that brought peace to the beleaguered region and led to the joint military victory of the *Leth Cuinn* over Munster, both of which also helped to legitimize the perception of Flann's primacy and maintain his control over the contested area.

2.4   Summary

This chapter began by providing the historical background of Flann Sinna's patronage of the Cross of the Scriptures and his position in the prevailing political

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[315] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 5. Niamh Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015), 177. The Irish term is sometimes glossed as the Latin *pactum* and the act is often recorded as occurring at official assemblies, or *óenacha.*

hierarchy. Within this context, the high cross functioned as both a commemorative victory totem and eyewitness to compact. Its placement at the monastery of Clonmacnoise was significant within the cultural topography of early medieval Ireland, further aiding Flann's quest of the premier kingship among the island's various leaders. The interaction between the cross and its landscape reveals an attempt by Flann Sinna and Abbot Colmán to embed the Cross of the Scriptures as a marker of divinely-sanctioned kingship. The message appears on the boundary dividing the combative northern and southern halves of the island, as well as at the border of Connacht and Mide at the monastery from which both provinces claimed their hereditary legitimacy. Through this dialogue between placement and form, the monument recalled the contemporary agreement made between High-King Flanna Sinna and High-King Cathal mac Conchobair, resulting in victory over southern forces at Belach Mugna and the Uí Néill leader's premier kingship of Ireland. The representation of the exchange of a great horn in the compact panel provided further evidence of the role of object-witnesses and contractual markers in early medieval Ireland, as well as inviting a discussion of their use as emblems of kingship and high-status gifts in Northwestern Europe. The Cross of the Scriptures simultaneously reminded the viewer of the renewed amity between the northern provinces and the entrenched animosity between the peoples of the *Leth Cuinn* and of the *Leth Moga*, as it memorialized Flann Sinna's victory over the High-King of Munster and provided evidence of his legitimacy as "*Rig Herenn*."

Chapter 3

KING, WARRIOR, AND JUDGE: THE MODELS OF HIGH-KINGSHIP ON THE CROSS OF THE SCRIPTURES

3.1   *Rig Herenn* and *Christus Rex*

The monumentality, materiality, and aesthetic value of the Cross of the

Scriptures' form all convey its association with venerable and wealthy persons to the

early medieval viewer. For the more learned levels of society, the inclusion of Flann

Sinna's name and title of "King of Ireland" invited an immediate comparison between the

symbol of the cross and *imperium*. The Cross of the Scriptures' decorative program

displays both universally Christian and characteristically Irish motifs of kingship that

further support the expanded function of the type. With these intended messages, the high

cross moves beyond a didactic or devotional instrument of religious institutions to

perform as a means of legitimization and evidence of divinely-sanctioned power.

Whereas the previous chapter investigated the historical situation of Flann Sinna's reign

and the events that surrounded the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures, this chapter

assembles broader connections between the symbol of the cross and kingship. It

establishes the precedent for the royal patronage of prestigious and monumental crosses

with important examples from across Late Antique and early medieval Christendom, as

well as discussing selected iconography on the Cross of the Scriptures as it relates to

prevalent models of Christian kingship. Informed by early medieval "wisdom-texts,"

biblical exegesis, and the poetry of the eighth-century ecclesiastic Blathmac, this chapter

also reconstructs how such universal Christian scenes and themes could be interpreted through the frame of Irish kingship and the prevailing social order to corroborate Flann's authority.

3.2   The Cross: Expressing Imperial Victory and Christian Kingship

Promoting an association with divinely-sanctioned Christian kingship became a fundamental tactic of rulers soon after the Roman Empire's recognition of the faith in the fourth century.[316] *Romanitas* had served leaders for centuries in creating and maintaining a vast empire, however certain late antique emperors recognized the concept was no longer as effective in overcoming social and cultural cleavages.[317] Although the Roman state religion was generally more inclusive of other religious persuasions, it was the monotheistic Christian faith that came to be the new unifying concept of the empire and many of the western European sovereignties that followed in its wake. Open to all followers accepting of its tenets, the catholic nature of the faith theoretically transcended ethnicity and class. Likewise, the Christian identity was not tied to a specific culture or any one place; the faith had multiple centers of power in the early Middle Ages, with Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople numbering among the most influential. Apart from Christianity's capability to function as a tool of unification, the strict

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[316] Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire A.D. 100-450* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[317] Although Tertullian first used the term "Romanitas" in his third-century work "De Pallio" to negatively describe the Carthaginian imitation of Roman culture, modern scholars later employed the term to define the common social and political concepts guiding Roman life.

hierarchy of the Church also appealed to Roman emperors emerging from the period of tetrarchic governance.

The Christian symbol of the cross became closely associated with imperial victory through Eusebius's claim that Constantine (272-327) chose a type, the labarum (the symbol formed by overlaying the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek, or the *Chi-Rho*), for his military standard at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312. He also recorded that the cross replaced previous *tropaea* (trophies consisting of the armor of defeated enemies set up upon wood that could be stationary or mobile) displayed in military expeditions and triumphal processions.[318] The lore surrounding the True Cross's discovery by Constantine's mother Helena in 326 further strengthened the connection between the emperorship and cross, both as a symbol and relic.[319]

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[318] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, Clarendon Ancient History Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1:28 and 31 (p.80-82), II: 4 (p.96) and 16 (p.101). John Cotsonis, *Byzantine Processional Figural Crosses*, ed. Susan Boyd and Henry Maguire (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 8, 118.

[319] Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of The True Cross In Text And Image* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 24-36. Baert highlighted the funeral oration for the Emperor Theodosius (*De obitu Theodosii*) by Ambrose (339-397) as the first mention of Helena's discovery of the cross. Other early references to the *Inventio* include Rufinius's (b.345, Aquileia) statement in his *Church History* that Helena discovered the True Cross in 403. Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, III, 35-47 (p. 133-139). In the pilgrim Egeria's account of her travels in the Holy Land from 381-84, she recorded that the ceremony of the *Inventio Sanctae Crucis* took place in Jerusalem, although Helena's role is not mentioned. Eusebius did not attribute the finding of the cross to Helena, but rather mentions the building of the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and its dedication in 335. The Church adopted other feast days celebrating the holy cross in the early medieval period. The "Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross" (September 14th) commemorated the finding of the True Cross by Helena, the dedication of the Constantine's churches at the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary, and Heraclius's restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem in 629. On the feast day of the "Procession of the Cross" (August 1st), the relic of the

The cross was a lesser Christian symbol prior to the reign of Constantine, but soon after became a foremost instrument of denoting divinely-sanctioned rulership.[320] Eusebius wrote that Constantine took to wearing the Chi-Rho on his helmet following the battle, as represented on the Ticinium medallion dated to 315 (Figure 71).[321] It further entered into the vocabulary of Roman imperial iconography with Constantine's labarum-emblazoned battle standard occupying the reverse of a bronze coin minted in Constantinople dated to 327 (Figure 72).[322] The cross became an iconographic staple of imperial coinage during the reign of Theodosius II (r.408-450) and appeared in a variety of new forms, such as the cross-scepter, the *globus cruciger*, and a Latin cross with a pearl-like outline held by the figure of Victory; the last example was an image adapted from previous iconography of a Nike presenting a Roman battle trophy (Figures 73-4).[323] Theodosius II's proclivity for the image of the victory-bringing, imperial cross was likely tied to the emperor's military triumph over the Sassanian ruler Bahram V (r.420-438) in

True Cross was processed from the Great Palace throughout the city to ensure the protection of Constantinople. The third day dedicated to the cross, the "Veneration of the Cross," took place on the third Sunday of Lent.

[320] Robin Jensen, *The Cross: History Art, and Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[321] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 82, 1:31. M. Braun, ed. *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Volume 7: Constantine and Licinius, A.D. 313-337* (London: Spink and Son, 1966). RIC VII Ticinum 36. http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.7.cnp.36.

[322] RIC VII Nr. 19. http://numismatics.org/ocre/id/ric.7.cnp. 19.

[323] James Breckinridge, *Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II (685-695, 795-711 A.D.)* American Numismatic Society New York (Glückstadt, Germany: JJ Augustin, 1959), 34-5.

422, as well as the peace agreed upon by the two leaders that assured the toleration of

Christians in the Persian domain.[324] Although varying in form and prominence, the cross

consistently appeared on coinage in the centuries following Constantine's reign. It

became one of the standard numismatic representations in each area where Christianity

became the religion of the state or of the ruler, including, but not limited to, this

dissertation's particular area of interest, Northwestern Europe.[325]

Besides elevating the symbol of the cross to one of his insignia, Constantine is

said to have erected a wooden replica of the True Cross on the rock of Golgotha in the

space between the emperor's basilica and the Anastasis rotunda at the site of the Holy

Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Figure 75).[326] The fourth-century pilgrim Egeria attested to its

existence through several references that mentioned the congregation's gathering at or

near a cross in the courtyard to partake in ritual worship, to listen to the telling of Christ's

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[324] Breckinridge, *Numismatic Iconography of Justinian II*, 35-6. For Theophanes's
account of the peace and the Persian emperor's agreement to halt the persecution of
Christians, see Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, trans., *Chronicle of Theophanes the
Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813* (New York: Clarendon
Press, 1997), 136-7.

[325] Philip Grierson, *Byzantine* Coins (London: Methuen, 1982); and *Medieval European
Coinage 1: The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries) with a Catalogue of the Coins in
the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth
Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[326] Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood*, 148. Joan Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places:
The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 113
and 115. Taylor provided a plan of the Constantinian Holy Sepulchre complex featuring
the memorial cross. The cross and the rock of Golgotha were located in the triportico, an
enclosed and colonnaded atrium between the basilica and the Anastasis rotunda (the
alleged place of Christ's tomb).

Passion, and to venerate the relic of the True Cross.[327] Theophanes, writing in

Constantinople in the early ninth century, recorded in his *Chronicle* of the Eastern Roman

empire that Theodosius II (r.408-450) again followed suit and also donated a cross, in this

case a *crux gemmata* (a jewel-encrusted cross), to the Holy Sepulchre in the first quarter

of the fifth century.[328] By the time the Ionan abbot Adomnán (c.624-704) wrote his

description of the Holy Lands in "*De locis sanctis*" ("Concerning Sacred Places"), a

great, silver cross stood on Golgotha, which presumably had replaced the previous

monument that the Sasanians destroyed during their sacking of Jerusalem, along with

their looting of the relic of the True Cross in 614.[329]

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[327] Jensen, *The Cross*, 100. Taylor, *Christians and Holy Places*, 122. Ezio Franceschini and Robert Weber, ed. and trans., *Itinerarium Egeriae et alia Geographica*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 175-6. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 27-90, xxiv:7; xxv:9,11; xxvii3,6; xxx.1,2; xxxi.4; xxxv.2; xxxvi.4; xxxvii.1,4,5,8; and xxxix.2. Egeria recounted that the congregation gathered "behind the cross," enacted rituals "before the cross," listened to the story Christ's Passion on Holy Thursday "before the cross," and venerated the actual relic of the True Cross on Golgotha "behind the cross."

[328] Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, 135-6. AM5920: AD 427/8: "In this year the pious Theodosios, in imitation of the blessed Pulcheria, sent much money to the archbishop of Jerusalem for distribution in need. He also sent a golden cross, set with precious stones to be fixed on the holy site of Calvary." Ian Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," in the *Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Sarah Larratt Keefer, and Karen Louise Jolly (Rochester, NY: Bowdell and Brewer, 2006), 9. Wood noted the scholarly debate on the authenticity of Theophanes's account of the cross at Calvary. He cited a rejection based on the arguments of: Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, 123, note 16; and Christine Milner, "'Lignum Vitae' or 'Crux Gemmata'? The Cross of Golgotha in the Early Byzantine Period," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 20, no.1 (1996): 77-99. Milner argued that the lack of description of a memorial cross (wooden or jeweled) by pilgrimage narratives provided the most persuasive evidence for its absence.

[329] Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. and trans. Denis Meehan (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958), 1:5. In Adomnán's story of the pilgrim Arculf's visit to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, he talked of another cross, a wooden one on the Jordan

Written sources documenting the official protocol for the court of the Eastern

Roman empire also alluded to the close association between crosses and rulership. *De*

ceremoniis ("The Book of Ceremonies"), attributed to the Emperor Constantine VII

Porphyrogennetos (r.913-915), referred to the use of processional crosses in the

coronations of the emperors Leo I (457) and Nikephoros II Phokos (963), as well as the

adventus ceremonies of the emperors Theophilos (831) and Basil I (879).[330] An earlier

work, the sixth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Theodorus Lector, further attested to

the use of a large, jeweled cross of Constantine containing a relic of the True Cross in

imperial processions.[331] The victory-bringing and legitimizing properties of the cross are

also extolled in a *De Ceremoniis* reference to the emperor's presentation of trophies to

the winners of Hippodrome chariot races. Among the many proclamations protocol

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River at the spot where John baptized Jesus ("in the sacred spot a tall wooden cross is
implanted.") Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 11. Adomnán presented a
copy of his work to the Northumbrian king Aldfrith in 698. For a discussion on the
historicity of Adomnán's informative witness, "Arculf," see Lawrence Nees's chapter,
"The Problem of "Arculf" and the Earliest Mosque in Jerusalem," in his *Perspectives on
Early Islamic Art in Jerusalem*, Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World Series 5
(Boston: Brill, 2016), 33-57. Milner, "Lignum Vitae or Crux Gemmata?," 97. John
Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, England: Aris &
Phillips, 1977), 91, n. 15; and 177. The emperor Heraclius recovered the relic of the True
Cross from the Sasanians and restored it to Jerusalem in 629, before relocating it to
Constantinople in 635 for protection.

[330] John Cotsonis, *Byzantine Figural Processional Crosses*, ed. Susan Boyd and Henry
Maguire (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 8-11.
Constantine Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, trans. by Ann Moffatt and
Maxeme Tall, Byzantina Australiensia 18 (Boston: Brill 2017), 414-5, 502-6.

[331] Ibid., 8. Cotsonis cited Theodore Anagnostes, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Günther
Christian Hansen (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), 13, lines 5-8.

required to be recited at the awards ceremony of the morning races was the response:

"Life-giving cross, help the rulers…Through this you have been crowned, benefactors…

Through this, you reign and conquer…Through this, may you reign over all the

nations."[332]

Possibly in part because of the strong symbolic relationship between the cross and

Roman emperorship, the cross consistently remained one of the few suitable depictions

expressing Christ's sacrifice and redemption on both sides of the iconoclastic

controversies in the early medieval period (726-787 and 814-842); albeit, its proper

depiction, i.e. the figural crucifix versus the aniconic cross, remained an important point

of contention. After the Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia in 815 (Constantinople),

Emperor Leo V substituted a monumental cross for the icon of the Virgin with Child

above the Chalke Gate, the ceremonial entrance to the Great Palace. Iconoclasts

considered its form to be the only legitimate symbol (*typos*) of Christ.[333] Theodore of

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[332] Cotsonis, *Byzantine Figural Processional Crosses*, 10, referring to *The Book of Ceremonies,* 2:324-327. Likewise, at the afternoon races ceremony, the following recitation took place: "Divine archetype, help the rulers…Through this you have been crowned, benefactors…Through this, rule and conquer! Through this, may you destroy all foreign nations."

[333] Ivan Drpić, *Epigram Art, and Devotion in later Byzantiu*m (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 225-6. Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon:* Space, *Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 77-83. The poems were assigned to the iconoclast writers, Ignatios, John the Grammarian, Sergios, Stephen, and an anonymous writer. The poem assigned to John the Grammarian stated: "They [the iconophiles] trample openly upon the resurgent error of those that make images, as it is an abomination to God. In agreement with them, they who wear the crown gloriously raise the cross high with pious resolve." The verses ascribed to Ignatios said: "For behold the great rulers engraved [*encharattou*si] it [the Cross] as a victory-causing *typos*." The poem attributed to Sergios recounted: "Having conquered the enemy, now the Cross, the glory of the faithful, stopped the mighty torrent

Stoudios, a leading iconophile theologian, documented that five, iconoclast poems surrounded the cross Leo erected. Placed in a cruciform shape, the words proclaimed the superiority and suitability of the victory-bringing cross among all other symbols and figural representations and offered praise to the rulers who erected them.[334]

Depictions of the *crux gemmata* symbolizing Christ's glorious victory appeared in a variety of media during the early medieval period, including the apse mosaics at Santa Pudenziana in Rome (late fourth-early fifth century),[335] and, known only through a letter

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of error [*planes*]." The anonymous poem recorded Leo's and his son's patronage of the image and text of the Chalke Gate: "Leo with his son, the New Constantine, engraves [*charattei*] the thrice-blessed *typos* of the Cross, the glory of the faithful, on the gates of [the place of] the rulers." See Marc Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometers: Text and Contexts* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 274-84.

[334] Charles Barber, *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 91-104. Theodore of Stoudios recorded in his *Refutatio et subversion* (p.99, cols. 436B-477A) that the cross was surrounded by five poems also creating the shape of a cross.

[335] Jensen, *The Cross*, 103. Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 3-13. Wood cited Josef Engemann, "Zu den Apsos-Tituli des Paulinus von Nola," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 17 (1974): 21-46, especially 34-6; Liz James, *Mosaics in the Medieval World: From Late Antiquity to the Fifteenth* Century (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 171-2; and Taylor, *Christians and Holy Places*, 123. Taylor does not support that Theodosius II donated a monumental, jeweled cross to stand on Golgotha, instead she suggested his benefaction was a reliquary for the True Cross. However, she stated Theodosius was "very likely responsible for the depiction of a glorified, gold and bejeweled, 'True Cross' on an idealized Rock of Calvary in the apse mosaic of Sta Pudenziana in Rome, but not for an actual rock." Milner, "Lignum Vitae or Crux Gemmata?," 85. Milner noted that several scholars supported that the apse displays an imperial cross, including: K.J. Conant, "The Original Buildings at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem," *Speculum* 31, no.1 (1956): 5-7; and Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium*, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte, Supplement 42 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1987), 66. However, she argued that a problem exists with the generally-accepted dating of the mosaic and

from Paulinus of Nola to Sulpicius Severus, those of the churches of Nola and Fundi

(Figure 76).[336] Possible representations of jeweled crosses also appeared in manuscripts

across northwest Europe, such as the ornately-decorated and richly-colored depictions in

the Book of Durrow (fol.1v, 2r),[337] the Lindisfarne Gospels (fols. 2v, 26v, 94v, among

others),[338] the Book of Kells (fols. 27v, 34r), [339] and the Gelasian Sacramentary

(frontispiece and incipit) (Figures 77a-80).[340] Examples of *cruces gemmatae* with more

Theodosius's cross, the latest possible date of the mosaic being 417 and the Theodosian cross being 421 at the earliest.

[336] Caecilia Davis-Wyer, *Early Medieval Art, 300-1150: Sources and Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and The Medieval Academy of America), 20-23. Jensen, *The Cross*, 103 and note 12. Jensen highlighted that Paulinus "specifies that the cross was wreathed [making it] conceivable that it was a modified *crux invicta* type, as opposed to a *crux gemmata.*" Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 10. Engemann, "Zu den Apsis-Tituli." The Fundi apse mosaic featured a *crux gemmata* on a throne.

[337] Trinity College Dublin, MS A 4. 5 (57), seventh-early eighth century. Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Durrow: A medieval masterpiece at Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin: Town House and Country House, 1996), 14-5, 46-47. Meehan referred to Martin Werner's argument that the cross and its base represented a *crux gemmata* upon Golgotha and tied the "form and coloring" to a similarly stepped cross in a Syriac manuscript from 1177 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library: Syriac, MS 703, folio 11r.)

[338] British Library Cotton MS Nero D.IV, eighth century. Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality, and the Scribe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 312-325. Brown (p.324) stated that the "Lindisfarne Gospels' cross-pages are the embodiment of the *crux gemmata*, the symbolic representation of the Godhead by means of the abstract, symbolic situation which had been favoured in the Early Christian tradition."

[339] Trinity College Dublin, MS 58, ninth century. Bernard Meehan*, Book of Kells* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2012); Heather Pulliam, *Word and Image in the Book of Kells* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).

[340] Vat Lat Reg. Lat. 316 VIII, eighth century. For the text of sacramentary, see Henry Austin Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary: Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae*

direct imperial connotations are the reliquary, processional, and altar crosses gifted by

royals to churches across western Europe. These include such opulent examples as the

Cross of [Emperor] *Justin II* (r. 565 to 578) in the Vatican's collections;[341] two crosses

presented to the Cathedral of San Salvador Oviedo, the *Cruz de los Ángeles* dedicated in

808 by King Alfonso II of Asturias and the *Cruz de la Victoria* in 908 by King Alfonso

III;[342] and two Ottonian examples from c.1000, the *Cross of Lothair II* given to Aachen

Cathedral by Emperor Otto III (r.996-1002) and the *Cross of Otto and Mathilde* offered

to the Abbey (now Cathedral) of Essen (Figures 81-85b).[343] The *Cross of Justin II*,[344] the

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(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894) and for the images visit the Digital Vatican Library, MSS Reg.lat.316, folios 3v, 4r, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/ MSSReg.lat.316.

[341] Jensen, *The Cross*, 111. Cotsonis, *Byzantine Figural Processional Crosses*, 58.

[342] Helmut Schlunk, "The Crosses of Oviedo," *Art Bulletin* 32 (1950): 91-114. Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1972), 72-3. Raquel Alonso Álvarez, *"El origen de las leyendas de la los Ángeles y la Cruz de la Victoria (cathedral de Oviedo): *cruces gemmatae* al servicio de la propaganda episcopal," *Territorio, Sociedo, y Poder* 5 (2010): 23-33.

[343] Lasko, *Ars Sacra*, 99-104.

[344] The inscription on the Cross of Justin reads: "*Ligno quo Christus humanum subdidit hostem dat Romae Iustinus opem et socia decorum*" ("With the wood with which offers Christ conquered man's enemy, Justin gives his help to Rome and his wife offers the ornamentation.") Sometimes called the "Crux Vaticana," it is held by the Treasury of St. Peter's Basilica. The cross measures 15 3/4 inches high and 11 4/5 inches wide. Gems and pearls outline its form and the inscription fills the interior of the cross arms. A smaller image of a cross is encircled by a ring of pearls at the crossing of the arms.

Cruz de la Victoria,[345] and the *Cross of Lothair*[346] all display inscriptions of royal

patronage, as does the Cross of the Scriptures, whereas the artist labelled the figures of

the patrons, Mathilde and Otto, on the cross at Essen. Among this group, the only

example unequivocally tied to a royal, Christian victory is the *Cruz de la Victoria*.

According to lore, Prince Pelagius of Asturias (r. 718-737) carried the wooden core of

this now-gilded and bejeweled cross into the Battle of Covadonga and triumphed against

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[345] Alonso Álvarez, *"El origen de las leyendas,"* 31. The "Cruz de la Victoria" displays a dedication that: 1) names the patrons King Alfonso II and Queen Jimena, 2) states its date and place of creation, Gauzon Castle, and 3) describes its donation to Santo Salvador: "*Svsceptvm placide maneat hoc in honore Di qvod offervnt Famvli XPI Adefonsvs Princes et Scemena Regina qvissvis avferre hoc donaria nostra presvmserit fvlmine Divino intereat ipse hoc opvs perfectvm et concessvm est Santo Salvatori oventense sedis hoc signo tvetvr pivs hos signo vincitvr inimicvs et operatvm es in Castello Gavzon anno regni nsi XLII Discvrrente era DCCCCXLVI A.*" King Favila and his wife Froiluba first donated the cross to the Church of Santa Cruz de Cangas de Onís in 737. It was later gilded and covered with 152 gems and imitation stones before its dedication to San Salvador in 908. The cross measures 36 x 28 inches and consists of four pieces of oak covered in gold and held together by a circular central disk.

[346] Although credited to the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III, the Lothair cross is a named for a rock crystal that displays the image of the ruler's ancestors and predecessors, Lothar II and Charles the Bald, which most likely served as Lothair's seal. It is this stone that displays an inscription that reads: "+XPE ADIVVA HLOTARIVM REG" ("O Christ, help King Lothar.") The cross stands 50cm high, measures 38.5cm in width and 2.3cm in depth. It consists of an oak core surrounded by gold and silver. One side is ornamented with numerous gems, pearls, enamels, and filigree, while the other side displays an etched image of the crucifixion. The less ornate side displays common iconographic motifs of Christ's death that also appear on the Cross of the Scriptures. In this case, a suffering Christ dressed in a kilt is nailed upon a cross. A serpent coils around the bottom stake, as the hand of God descends with laurel wreath and the dove of the Holy Spirit from above. At the end of the lateral cross arms are personifications of the sun and moon circumscribed in medallions. Among the gems on the ornate side of the Lothair Cross is the cameo of Augustus Caesar depicted in profile and holding an eagle-topped scepter. As demonstrated more fully in chapter 4, Flann Sinna also alluded to illustrious rulers of the past and royal ancestors on the Cross of the Scriptures in order to associate his rule with them, and subsequently legitimize his kingship.

the Muslims of Al-Andalus, an event later recognized as the initiation of the

Reconquista.[347]

The idea of the cross as a standard of Christian rulership was also widely spread,

as evident in the hymn composed in 569 for the procession of the True Cross relic given

by Emperor Justin II to the Merovingian princess Radegund (c. 520-587) and her

foundation of the Church of Sainte-Croix at Poitiers. One of many poetic compositions

by Venantius Fortunatus, the Bishop of Poitiers, the hymn began with the phrase "The

Standard of the King Advances" ("*Vexilla Regis prodeunt*") and proceeded to describe

the cross as a shining emblem of Christ, adorned with purple majesty.[348] The poem also

referred to it as the "Tree" through which God rules the nations, a prophecy stated by the

Old Testament king David.[349] Another work by Venantius, a figure poem (*carmina*

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[347] Alonso Álvarez, *"El origen de las leyendas,"* 31-33. Recent radiocarbon dating placed the wooden core in the late-ninth century, closer in date to the metal encasing. Alonso Álvarez traced the earliest written documentation of the legend of Pelagius carrying the cross into battle to the sixteenth century and the writings of Ambrosio de Morales and Tirso de Avilés. However, she noted an iconographic reference to the event in a twelfth-century manuscript (Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS 2805) that also features copies of the *Corpus pelagianum* and *Adefonsi tertii chronica*, and a fragmentary copy of the Mauregato. Within an illuminated initial "P," beginning the word "Primum," a prince holds a cross in his hand while standing atop his castle; the invading forces with swords and spears attempt to scale the wall/bottom part of the letter. The image begins the chapter titled "*Ordo gotorum obentensium regum*," which describes the manner of victory obtained by the Asturians against the invading Muslim forces.

[348] Michael Roberts, ed. and trans., *Poems: Venantius Fortunatus*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2017), 2:6, 80-83, 847, quote 82-83. "O glorious and shining tree, adorned with purple of a king, and chosen worthy with your trunk to touch so sacred a body!" ("*Arbor decora et fulgida, ornate regis purpura. Electa digno stipites tam sancta membra tangere!*")

[349] Ibid., 80-84. "Thereby the Prophecy was fulfilled that David sang in truth verse, by proclaiming to all the world: 'God has reigned from wood.'" ("*Impleta sunt quae concinit*

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figurata) forming the shape of the cross, described the True Cross as "the jeweled and noble standard of the great king! Bulwark and weaponry for men."[350] Several other notable representations of the cross composed by the combination of text and image appeared in "*De Laudibus sanctae crucis*" ("In Praise of the Holy Cross"), a collection of *carmina figurata* accompanied by descriptive commentary, ingeniously created by Hrabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda (822-842) and Bishop of Mainz (847-856).[351] His most important poem, regarding this chapter's discussion of the cross as a visual representation of Christian rulership and victory, is the dedication to Louis the Pious, which depicted the Frankish emperor in the guise of a *Miles Christi* (Figure 86a-b). Hrabanus dressed Louis in a lorica and helmet and placed a shield and cross-staff in his hands, as he implored the emperor to use the spiritual armaments granted to him by

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*David fideli carmine, dicendo nationibus 'regnavit a ligno Deus.'")" Roberts noted that the words "*a lingo*" do not appear in Psalm 95:10 in the Hebrew or Vulgate texts, however they are often included when cited by patristic authors. Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland*, 186-187. The presence of the hymn and other works by Fortunatus reached Ireland by the late sixth century. This date was questioned by both: Alfred Cordoliani, "Fortunat, l'Irlande et les Irlandais," in *Etudes mérovingiennes. Actes des journées de Poitiers* (1953): 35-43; and Jane Stevenson, "Irish Hymns, Venantius Fortunatus and Poitiers," in *Aquitaine and Ireland in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jean-Michel Picard (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995), 101.

[350] Roberts, *Poems: Venantius Fortunatus*, 2:74-79, 846, quote, 76-77. "Again, on the sign of the cross" ("*Item de signaculo sanctae crucis*"), "*En regis magni gemmantem et nobile signum! Murus et arma viris.*"

[351] Elizabeth Sears, "Louis the Pious as *Miles Christi: The Dedicatory Image of Hrabanus Maurus's De laudibus sanctae crucis*," in *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 605-628. Hrabanus Maurus, *De Laudibus sanctae crucis*, "Louis the Pious Miles Christi," Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, Reg. lat. 124, fol.4v.

Christ to protect himself and his people against their enemies.[352] Elizabeth Sears noted

the strategic placement of the words "*dextra invicta*" beginning at Louis's right, cross-

bearing hand, as well as the verse "On the Cross, Christ, your victory and true salvation,

you rule all things properly" (*In cruce, Criste, tua victoria ver salusque omnia rite regis*")

contained within the red outline of the cross-staff.[353] Another instance of a Frankish

emperor's portrait depicting the cross that associated a leader's terrestrial power with

Christ's spiritual authority appears in the small prayerbook of Charles the Bald (840-877)

(Figure 87).[354] In a representation that is decidedly more self-abasing than the previous

examples, a magnificently-dressed Charles (38v) prostrates himself before the Crucified

Christ (39r), an accompanying inscription above the emperor's head reads "O Christ ,

you who on the cross have absolved the sins of the world, absolve, I pray, all wounds for

me."[355] In his study of these images, Robert Deshman argued that the emperor's

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[352] Sears, "Louis the Pious as *Miles* Christi," 619-23. Throughout the study, Sears discussed the significance of the other aspects of what she called Louis's "allegorical armament," i.e. the "breastplate of justice," "the shield of faith," and the "helmet of salvation."

[353] Ibid., 605. The poem begins "Jesus Christ, your power shall bestow the blessed helmet upon the emperor's head. And may your excellent virtue, Jesus render his hand invincible, and grant the just man triumphs."

[354] Munich, Treasury of Residenz, c.850-869. Robert Deshman, "The Exalted Servant: The Ruler Theology of the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald," *Viator* II (1989): 385-417. Lawrence Nees, *Early Medieval Art* Oxford History of Art Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 171.

[355] Deshman, "The Exalted Servant," 390-1. The images preface a "Prayer for the Adoration of the Cross."

subjugation to Christ and veneration of the crucifix signified that sacrifice and humility were considered model attributes of good rulership, in addition to victory and majesty.[356]

3.3 The Prestigious Crosses and Monuments of the Insular World

The widespread concept of the cross denoting divinely-sanctioned rulership and victory also made its way to the northwestern isles of Europe. However, beliefs and customs particular to the local society, especially regarding notions of kingship, may have contributed to the symbol's exceptional expression in the Cross of the Scriptures, in addition to other examples of monumental crosses from the region. An example of this melding occurs in the story of Oswald of Northumbria (c. 604/5-64/642), the first recorded Anglo-Saxon king to set up a monumental cross. He allegedly raised a wooden cross before the Battle of Heavenfield (c.633-4) versus Cadwallon ap Cadfan (d.634), the king of Gwynedd and the Britons.[357] Calling it a "heavenly trophy," Bede explained that

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[356] Deshman, "The Exalted Servant," 390-1. Celia Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155-158.

[357] Bede, EH, 134-5, book 3, chapter 1. "Then, when [Cadwallon] had occupied the provinces of the Northumbrians for a whole year, not ruling them like a victorious, king but ravaging them like a furious tyrant." Book 3, chapter 2 (p. 136-8), Bede discussed the Battle of Heavenfield and that raising of the cross, writing "Oswald, being about to engage in this battle, erected the symbol of the Holy Cross, and knelt down and prayed to God that he would send help from Heaven to his worshippers in their sore need. Then, we are told, that the cross being made in haste, and the hole dug in which it was to be set up, the king himself, in the ardour of his faith, laid hold of it and held it upright with both his hands, till the earth was heaped up by the soldiers it was fixed. Therefore, uplifting his voice, he cried to his whole army, "Let us all kneel, and together beseech the true and living God Almighty in His mercy to defend us from the proud and cruel enemy." The cross continued to be revered as a sign of the faith and token of victory after the battle. As recorded by Bede: "[in] the place where they pray very many miracles of healing are known to have been wrought, as a token and memorial of the king's faith; for even to this

the king's action aided his triumph and eventual establishment of supremacy over Britain, akin to Constantine and the Roman Empire.[358] As Christ allegedly visited the emperor in a dream the night before the battle at the Milvian Bridge and advised him to fight under his sign, so too did St. Columba appear to Oswald in a vision prophesizing the king's victory.

The name of Constantine and the story of his conversion remained prevalent in England, Wales, and Scotland in the early medieval period. Of course, Constantine's father Constantius Cholorus lived for a time in York when he ruled as Caesar of the western half of the tetrarchy of the Roman Empire at the end of the third century. Constantine and Helena's association with the True Cross, as well as his conversion to Christianity were also known to Bede, who had access to both Rufinius's account of Constantine's "Life," as well as Jerome's *Chronicle* among his sources at Jarrow to write his great histories.[359] The English poet Cynewulf recounted Constantine's victory and

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day, many are wont to cut off small splinters from the wood of the holy cross, and put them into water, which they give to sick men or cattle to drink, or they sprinkle them therewith, and these are presently restored to health.

[358] Bede, EH, 137, book 3, chapter 2. Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 3-28. Douglas Mac Lean, "King Oswald's Wooden Cross at Heavenfield in Context," in *The Insular Tradition*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 79-97. Bede referred to it as the "Battle of *Denisburna* near *Hefenfelth.*" He recorded that Cadwallon was caught and killed at a place called the Brook of Denis. J.M Wallace Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 89. Hadrill noted a comparison between Bede's account of Oswald's victory and Rufinius's account of Constantine's victory in his *Historia ecclesiastica.*

[359] Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* 89.

conversion and Helena's discovery in *Elene*.[360] Derivations of the name Constantine also appeared in the lists of Pictish and Scottish kings and it is perhaps no coincidence that one of the earliest inscribed monumental crosses of royal patronage, the ninth-century Dupplin Cross, bears the name of "Custantin filius Fircus," or Constantine son of Fergus (Custantin mac Forcussa, king of the Picts and Dál Riata (Picts, r.789-820, Dál Riata, r.811-820) (Figure 88).[361]

In addition to its Constantinian allusion, the interaction of Oswald's cross with its conjectured location is also crucial to understanding its intended purpose and function, as demonstrated by the Cross of the Scriptures in the previous chapter. In Oswald's case, the wooden cross marked the site of a pivotal battle between regional forces, as well as a strategic and contested location near the historically-famous boundary, Hadrian's Wall. Bede wrote that Heavenfield was "near the wall in the north which the Romans formerly drew across the whole of Britain from sea to sea, to restrain the onslaught of the

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[360] Cynewulf, *Elene*, ed. and trans Robert E Bjork, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 23 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[361] Katherine Forsyth, "The Inscription of the Dupplin Cross," in *From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain*, ed. by Cormac Burke (Belfast: HSMO, 1995), 237-44, especially 242. Forsyth and Driscoll, "Symbols of Power," 33-34. Isabel and George Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in early medieval Scotland* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 189-91. The Dupplin cross is a sandstone, Latin cross on a base that stands 2.5m tall. Forsyth and Driscoll wrote that Constantine's family controlled northern Britain in the eighth and first half of the ninth century before being defeated by the Vikings. The cross's estimated date of creation is sometime between 800 and 850, making the name either evidence of his patronage or a posthumous memorial.

barbarous nations."[362] The site was also five miles from Corbridge, where the major

north-south route of Dere Street (the modern name for the main Roman route to Scotland

from York (*Eboracum*)) crossed both the River Tyne and Stanegate (another Roman road

that ran east-west between Coria and Carlisle (*Luguvalium*)).

In his study of Oswald's Cross, Douglas MacLean argued that "[i]t is increasingly

becoming a matter of general agreement that freestanding sculptured stone crosses first

appeared in the Insular world in Northumbria, where they were predicated upon wooden

precursors of the type first erected by King Oswald at Heavenfield."[363] Although the first

half of this statement continues to be a topic of debate, the second half offers further

evidence of the proposed association between monumental crosses and Christian

rulership in the Insular world. It also contributes an additional theory to the creation of

high crosses. MacLean presented archeological evidence from royal Anglo-Saxon sites to

suggest that the use of freestanding wooden posts served as royal monuments prior to

Christianity. He posited that this pre-existing phenomenon facilitated the transition to

viewing monumental wooden crosses as objects of deference during the conversion

period. Along with other scholars, such as Ian Wood and Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, MacLean

attempted to trace wooden crosses as prototypes for Irish high crosses through legal texts

dealing with carpentry, stonemasons, and various carving techniques, as well as

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[362] Bede, EH, 137, book 3, chapter 2.

[363] Mac Lean, "King Oswald's Wooden Cross at Heavenfield," 83. Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 4. Wood also made a connection between Oswald's Cross and the stone altar crosses.

highlighting decorations on the stone crosses that appear to be aesthetic citations of wood and metal crosses, such as bosses.[364]

An alternative theory attributes the genesis of the high cross to the ingenuity of continental models or artists. As attested by the current study, there are numerous examples of prestigious crosses across Europe in the early medieval period, however, stone crosses that are monumental and freestanding are absent outside Ireland and the British Isles.[365] Scholars have yet to provide a completely satisfactory answer as to why these monuments appeared seemingly out of nowhere and how they attained such a high level of aesthetic quality in a relatively short amount of time. Although, this study cannot provide conclusive answers to these questions, it contributes further observations for consideration.

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[364] Mac Lean, "Technique and Contact," 167-176; and "The Status of the Sculptor," 125-55; Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria;" and Ní Ghrádaigh, "A legal perspective on the *saer*," 110-125. These scholars presented evidence in the form and decoration of crosses, as well as from legal texts, which attests to the monumentalization of high crosses and monastic architecture.

[365] One type of monumental stone cross emerging in the ninth-century is the Armenian khachkar. Although these crosses depict intricate vegetal and solar symbols and interlace like the Irish high cross, they are upright cross-slabs and not carved in the round. The earliest khachkar dates to the late ninth century with the height of examples produced in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries. They also appear to be multifunctional, being commemorations of military victory and church dedications, serving an apotropaic function, and, their most common purpose, performing as memorial stones. For example, King Ashot I Bagratuni erected the earliest known example for his wife, Katranide I, in Gami, Armenia. See Christina Maranci, "Khachkars," in *Armenia: Art, Religion, and Trade in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Haven, Connecticut Yale University Press, 2018), 90-5.

A promising link between the development of high crosses and the continental

tradition are the inscribed or historiated stone columns that may have supported crosses,

such as the "Pillar of Eliseg" and the "Masham Column" of York,[366] as well as their

predecessors, the "Jupiter columns" of Roman Germania and the great imperial columns

of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in Rome (Figures 36-37, 89-92).[367] Cylindrical and

placed on four-sided bases, a Jupiter column was topped with the statue of an enthroned

or mounted god, which victoriously trampled its enemy in the form of a snake. The

massive columns in Rome represented the emperor in question's ascent to divine status,

as his great deeds carved into the stone spiraled upwards towards the statue of the deified

emperor at the top. A similar idea is visible in the Cross of the Scriptures' decorative

program discussed later in this chapter, as the events of Christ's Passion represented on

the western shaft-face of the monument allowed him to reveal his divinity represented by

the crucifixion on the crosshead. In his *Topography of the Holy Land* (530 CE),

Theodosius recorded an adaption of the Jupiter-column-type for Christian use in his

description of an marble column topped with iron cross that marked the site of Christ's

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[366] Jane Hawkes, "The Non-Crucifixion Iconography of the Pre-Viking Sculpture in the North of England: Carvings at Hovingham, Masham, Rothbury, Sandbach, and Wirksworth," (PhD diss., Newcastle University, 1989); and "The Art of the Church in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England: The Case of the Masham Column," in *Hortus Artium Medievalium: Journal of the International Research Center for Late Antiquity and Middle Ages* 8 (2002): 337-348.

[367] Greg Woolf, "Representation as Cult: the case of the Jupiter columns," in *Religion in den germanischen Provinzen Roms*, ed. Wolfgang Spickermann et al (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001): 117-134; and Penelope Davis, *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

baptism on the bank of the River Jordan.[368] Like the Cross of the Scriptures, the Christian

pillars of "Eliseg" and "Masham" are monoliths, the former displaying royal inscriptions

related to lineage and land ownership in medieval Wales, and the latter having imagery of

the Old Testament model of kingship, David.

Similar to the continental tradition of royal patronage of prestigious crosses across

early medieval Christendom, there was also a long-held affiliation in Ireland between

monumental stones and the institution of kingship. Although emphasizing the continuity

of "Celtic" practices is controversial, stone seemingly possessed a sacral quality both

prior to and after the wide acceptance of Christianity. Whether or not this custom

persisted uninterrupted is unknown and heavily debated. There was certainly a change in

the type of monument venerated in order to reflect Christian values and practices,

indicated by the prevalence of monumental cross-slabs and crosses across Ireland and the

British Isles. At the same time, evidence also exists indicating the selective use of

monumental stones in rituals and commemorations for the purpose of legitimation,

regardless of the imposed break in time or cultural shift. However, modern scholars are

often quick to question the historicity of stones associated with kingship in Ireland.

FitzPatrick aptly summarized some of the more problematic aspects facing their study:

> The intertwining of the real and the imagined has created a certain
> incredulity where inauguration stones are concerned and has in a sense
> retarded an appreciation of the prominent role they played in the
> ceremonial of king-making. Their poor survival, lack of definition and

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[368] Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria," 11.

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infrequent mention in reliable historical sources all the more compound the skepticism with which they are viewed in modern scholarship.[369]

Conor Newman and Francis Byrne discussed the role stones play in an account of the legendary inauguration of an archaic king of Tara recorded in a *dindshenchas* poem.[370] When Conn Cétchathach "approached the graves of three druids, Máel, Blocc and Bluicne, each of which was marked by a stone…If he was the rightful king, the stones on the graves of Blocc and Bluicne would part magically and allow his chariot to pass between them."[371] The king-elect could then cross the liminal boundary of the site into a foremost seat of ancestral and sacred Irish kingship. FitzPatrick identified that the legendary *Lia Fáil*, or the stone commonly considered the "Coronation (or Destiny) Stone" of the archaic Kings of Tara, was one of a handful of inauguration stones mentioned in texts during the medieval period, along with *Leac na nGíall* of Eamhain Macha and the *Leac Phádraig* associated with Grianán Ailech (Figure 93).[372] The Eóghanachta kings of Munster also reportedly had a celebrated stone of inauguration at

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[369] Elizabeth FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c.1100-1600: A Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), 99.

[370] Conor Newman, "Procession and symbolism at Tara: analysis of Tech Midchúarta (the Banqueting Hall) in the context of the sacral campus," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 26, no.4: 415-438.

[371] Ibid., 432. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 63.

[372] FitzPatrick, *Royal Inaugurations in Gaelic Ireland,* 99-100. The stone that is currently believed to be the *Lia Fál* is an upright stone, but accounts refer to the stone as being underfoot.

their seat of power in Cashel, the *Leac Chathraighi* or *Leac na gCéad*, given the gift of prophecy by St. Patrick, rather than by some pre-Christian divinity.[373]

When considering the Cross of the Scriptures' royal inscriptions, one should remember that writing across early medieval Europe was intended to be read aloud. Instances of speaking stones were common among the northwestern islands of Europe and at times they possessed the ability to prophesize and recognize kings, most notably the *Lia Fáil*. In another story involving Conn Cétchathach, the ninth-century saga, "*Baile in Scáil*" ("Phantom's Frenzy"), recorded that this once-lost stone screamed out when the warrior accidently walked across it on the ramparts of Tara.[374] Conn's druidic advisor interpreted the speech of the "*fo ail .i. ail fo rig*" ("the stone under, that is a the stone under a king"); it identified itself as Fáil, referring to "the Island of Fál, [its] place of origin and [that] it was placed in Tara of the land of Fál."[375] The number of screams the

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[373] FitzPatrick, *Royal Inaugurations in Gaelic Ireland*, 101.

[374] Myles Dillon, *The Cycle of Kings*, (Oxford: OUP, 1946): 12-3. See also Kevin Murray, ed., *Baile in Scáil 'The Phantom's Frenzy'* Irish Texts Society 58 (London: Irish Texts Society, 2004), 50 §2-4.

[375] Murray, *Baile in Scáil,* 50 §2-4. FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland,* 103. "*Fo ail .i. ail fo rig*" translates literally to "a stone under that is a stone under a king." FitzPatrick had stated that it translated to "a fortunate stone, a stone under a king." Murray noted (p.68) that the *Baile in Scáil's* incipit stated the name of Dub dá Leith (d.1064), *fer léiginn* (man of letters) of Armagh in 1046 and abbot of Armagh from 1049-60. The book is "cited" in AU629, 963, 1004, and 1021. Dillon, *The Cycle of Kings*, 12-3. As the druid explained to Conn, the "Fáil [destiny] is the name of the stone. It is the island of Fáil from which it was brought. It is in Tara of the land of Fáil that it has been placed. It is in the land of Tailtiu that it will remain until the Day of Judgment. And it is in that land that there will be a festive assembly for as long as there is kingship in Tara; and the ruler who does not find it [or leave it?] on the last day of the assembly will be a doomed man in that year. Fáil cried out beneath your feet today and prophesied. The number of cries which the stone uttered is the number of kings that there will be of your

Fáil cried out under Conn's feet equated to the number of his descendants that would

reign over Ireland.[376] Bhreathnach and Newman recently asserted that this screech may

be a "metaphorical allusion to [the ritual] striking" of the stone by the next king with a

sword.[377] Alternatively, in the *De Shíl Chonairi Móir* ("The Race of Conaire Mór,"

eighth-century), the recognition of the rightful king occurred on the chariot course of

Tara, when the king's wheel axle clashed with the upright *Lia Fáil* and emitted a loud

screech.[378]

Those wary of the lingering antiquarianism of the comparison between these

speaking stones and the Cross of the Scriptures' inscriptions should also consider the

aural quality of monuments just across the Irish Sea. The Ruthwell Cross in Galloway

mournfully delivers excerpts in runic form as a conflicted thane taking part in the death

of its lord, and the "Pillar of Eliseg" proclaims the lineage of the ninth-century Kings of

Powys in its inscription and placement at a strategic point in the landscape (Figures 94a-

b).[379] The voice of the inscription of the Cross of the Scriptures implores the reader to

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race until the Day of Judgment." The stone was unknown to Conn as it had not cried out
since the legendary hero Cúchulainn had struck it with a sword. Conn later met with the
god Lugh and the female personification of the "Sovereignty of Ireland." The woman
named the successors of Conn and told him the length of his reign as king of Tara**.**

[376] Murray, *Baile in Scáil,* 50 §2-4. FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland,*
103.

[377] Newman, "The Sword in the Stone," 432.

[378] FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland,* 103; and Lucius Gwynn, ed. and
trans., "*De Shil Chonairi móir*," *Ériu* 6 (1912): 138-40.

[379] Edwards, "The Early Medieval Sculpture of North Wales." Edwards argued that the
"Pillar of Eliseg" functioned as a site of royal inauguration or place of assembly

pray for the king of Ireland. It also implicitly asks for the acknowledgement of the

authority of his station that he gained through military victory, and powerful ecclesiastic

and temporal alliances that was further bolstered by the inscribed reference to his lineage

as the son of Máel Sechnaill. According to the "*Audacht Morainn*" ("Testament of

Morann"), a seventh-century text offering advice to the mythological king Ferdach Finn

Fechtnach, "he whom the living do not glorify with blessings, is not a true ruler."[380] The

inscription set in stone attempted to ensure the continuance of prayers by the living, long

after Flann departed, and further attest to the legitimacy of his reign.

Byrne observed the most commonly recorded aspect of the inauguration of Irish

kingship was the "*do garim rig*" or "the calling/proclaiming the king."[381] An acclamation

or pronouncement comparable to the entreaty asking for a prayer for the king on the

Cross of the Scriptures would also be characteristic of what is known of early ordination

ceremonies of Ireland and Scotland.[382] Very rarely are the specific details of

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connected to a "heroic past." It occupied a dominant location in the early medieval
landscape of Powys and was placed on an Early Bronze Age, multi-phase burial cairn. Ó
Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood*.

[380] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 18-9 §59. "*Ar ní fírflaith nad níamat bí bendachtnaib.*"

[381] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 21. Byrne wrote that "the calling aloud of his
name and title was the essential part of the ceremony. It would seem that kings could thus
be legally proclaimed without the elaborate apparatus of the inauguration site."

[382] See Enright, *Iona, Tara, and Soissons*, for ordinations in the early medieval period.
Enright is primarily concerned with establishing the "royal unction ritual, its origins,
transmission and reception" during the early medieval period. Although popularized by
Charlemagne and other Frankish kings, Enright made the case that high-ranking
ecclesiastics revived the Old Testament biblical practice as an apparatus to control the
right to consecrate kings and, thus, legitimate their own power. Edwards, *The
Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, 170-1. Cathy Swift, "Sculptors and their

inaugurations of Irish kings extolled in documentary evidence, but references to royal

ceremonies and blessings appear in the texts *De Shíl Chonairi Móir*, *Baile Chuinn*

Cétchathaigh ("Frenzy of Conn of the Five-Hundred Battles"), and *Baile in Scail*.[383]

FitzPatrick also highlighted passages in later medieval texts that record the rites of

proclamation and acclamation, along with the other inauguration practices of ceremonial

(dis)robing, clockwise turns (*deiseal*), the bestowal of *slat na ríghe* (rod of kingship), the

reading aloud of genealogy, and ritual drinking and feasting.[384]

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customers: a study of Clonmacnoise grave-slab," in *Clonmacnoise Studies, Volume 2, Seminar Papers 1998*, ed. Heather King (1998, repr., Dublin: Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2007), 108-9. "OR DO," the initial words of the western inscription on the Cross of Scriptures, as well as those featured at Durrow, Kinnitty, and possibly the South Cross of Clonmacnoise, are traditionally translated as "Pray For" or "A Prayer For," following a common inscription formula found on medieval Irish grave slabs from the eighth to twelfth centuries. It is generally accepted that "*Or*" (sometimes appearing with suspension stroke above the "o") is contracted from *oroit* (or *oráit*, pray) and is joined with "*do*" (or *ar*, meaning for) and the name of the person.

[383] The *Baile Chuinn Cétchathaigh* is a list of 30 kings that are named in the *Baile in Scail* as "drinking the ale of sovereignty" after Conn Cétchathach. The last identifiable king is Fínnachta Fledach mac Dúnchado of the Síl nÁedo Sláine (d. 695), although four unsubstantiated kings followed him. The complete list is featured both in the Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 N 10 and British Library, MS Egerton 88, and featured in the scholarship of Rudolf Thurneysen, ed., "Baile Chuind Chétchathaig nach der Handschrift von Druim Snechta," *Zu irischen Handschriften und Litteraturdenkmälern* (Berlin: 1912), 48-52; and Gerard Murphy, ed. and trans., "On the Dates of Two Sources used in Thurneysen's Heldensage: I. *Baile Chuind* and the date of *Cín Dromma Snechtai*," *Ériu* 16 (1952): 145-151. Dan M. Wiley, "The Cycles of the Kings Web Project," last updated June 4, 2004, accessed May 29, 2018, www.hastings.edu/academic/english/Kings.htm. Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir."

[384] FitzPatrick, *Royal Inaugurations in Gaelic Ireland,* 5, 9. The word "*deiseal*" or clockwise derives from the combination of the words meaning "right" (*dess*, or some variation) and "stone" (ail).

There are four well-known references to ordained kings from the early medieval

Ireland, including: Artrí mac Cathail, King of Munster (AU 793); Áed mac Néill, called

"Áed Oirdnide" ("the Ordained," AU787-819); Áed mac Domnaill (AU993); and Áedán

mac Gabráin, King of Dál Riata.[385] There are no early medieval documents fully

detailing the events of these investitures, but guidebooks possibly existed. In his account

of Áedán mac Gabráin's ordination in the "Life of Columba," Adomnán noted that the

saint was aided by a "glass book of the ordination of kings" ("*qui in manu vitreus*

ordinationis regum habebate librum") given to him by an angel.[386] Adomnán also

referred to Diarmait mac Cerbaill, the High King of Tara (death c. 565) in this work, as

"ordained, by God's will, as ruler of all Ireland."[387] Michael Enright considered Áedán's

anointing and other reported Christian ordinations in Ireland as attempts by the Church to

create a new concept of kingship, in which the clergy could influence royal behavior for

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[385] FitzPatrick, *Royal Inaugurations in Gaelic Ireland,* 4-5. FitzPatrick provided the references and language used to describe the ordinations: "Artrí mac Cathail (*ordination artroigh m. Cathael in renum mumen*), Áed mac Néill, (*Oirdnide*), Áed mac Domnaill (kingly orders (*gradh righ*) from the abbot of Armagh), and most famously Adomnán's account of the ordination of Áedán mac Gabráin in the *Life of Columba.*"

[386] Ibid., 5, note 25. Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, 7, 20-3. Alan Orr Anderson, Majorie Ogilvie Anderson, ed. and trans., *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (New York: Oxford Press, 1991), 188-189. Book 3, chapter 5, Adomnán told of the angel that appeared to Columba and ordered him to ordain Áedán as king. The angel presented him with a glass or illuminated (*vitreum*) Book of Kings, but when Columba refused, preferring instead to ordain Áedán brother Iogeann, the angel struck him and returned to him for three nights until Columba agreed "and laying upon Aidan's head he ordained and blessed him."

[387] *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 64-67, Book 1, chapter 36. Adomnán referred to Diarmait twice as "the ruler of all Ireland."

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their own benefit and prestige.[388] In turn, the ordination appealed to lay rulers as it

provided a justification to expand their land and elevate their position in the political

hierarchy. However, the chosen rulers presumably had already exhibited their legitimacy

through competent political, military, and societal rule prior to being tapped for

ordination in order for this proposed ecclesiastical manipulation of their authority to be

effective. Enright's larger motivation sought to tie a canon law (*Collectio Canonum

Hibernensis* (CCH) XXV ("De Regno")) dealing with royal unction to later Carolingian

ordination ceremonies, notably Pope Stephen II anointing Pippin in 754.[389] In contrast to

the sparse evidence for Irish kingship ceremonies, there is an elaborate record of the

liturgical rites of ordination, or *ordos*, written for ninth- and tenth-century Frankish kings

and queens, assignable to particular historical figures.[390]

    Although there are no records for the ordinations of Flann or his father Máel

Sechnaill, the two men used the potent, stone form of the high cross to assert their claims

of primacy gained through God's providence and their ruling competence. Apart from the

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[388] Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, 53. Enright considered the divine unction as deriving from biblical precedents, i.e. the anointings of Saul and David from the Old Testament "Book of Kings."

[389] Ibid., 39. Wasserschleben, *Die Irische* Kanonensammlung, 92-97.

[390] Richard A. Jackson, ed., *Ordines Coronationis Franciae*, *Volume 1, Texts and Ordines for the Coronation of Frankish and French Kings and Queens of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955). For contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon instances, see P.E. Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937) and Janet Nelson, "Ritual and Reality in the Early Medieval *Ordines*," in *The Materials, Sources, and Methods of Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1975), 41-51.

Cross of the Scriptures, there are several monuments associated with their reign,

including the two other high crosses still standing at Clonmacnoise (Figures 47-48, 34d),

the Kinnitty Cross (Castlebernard, Figures 33-34a-b) and the Durrow Cross (Figure 9,

34c) both inscribed with the father's name, the Killamery cross which Macalister alleged

once had an inscription naming Máel Sechnaill (Figure 16), and Harbison's position that

the Ahenny crosses were also erected by the elder king (Figure 26-27).[391] The high cross

at Durrow is also stylistically similar to the Cross of Scriptures, perhaps even carved by

the same hand, and displays some of the same iconography, certainly in the case of the

Passion scenes on the western face (Figure 9).[392] Flann Sinna was a known benefactor of

the institution. He gave a *cumdach* (book reliquary) to protect the "Book of Durrow,"

which he believed was a holy object once belonging to the monastery's founding saint,

Columba.[393] The book-shrine is now lost, but Bernard Meehan pointed to Roderick

O'Flaherty's surviving description of it from 1677, written on folio 2v.[394] Adorning the

book-shrine was a silver cross inscribed in Irish on one arm with the name of the artist;

the inscription along the length of the cross is a request for St. Columba to bless King

Flann, who caused the shrine to be made.

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[391] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:53-56, 35-6. The Kinnitty Cross is called the Castlebernard Cross in Harbison's corpus due to its current location.

[392] Ibid., 1:79-82.

[393] Meehan, *Book of Durrow*, 13.

[394] Ibid., 13, note 7. Meehan referred to the facsimile of the Book of Durrow: Arthur Aston Luce, George Otto Sims, Peter Meyer, and Ludwig Bieler, *Evangliorum Quattor Codex Durmachensis* (New York: P.C. Duschnes, 1960), 17-24, 32.

There are several other examples that lend support to the monumental cross's association with kingship in the northwestern isles. As Herity argued, the Davidic imagery on the high crosses of the monastery of Castledermot, the site of burial for Munster High-King Cormac mac Cuilennáin, points to their possible royal patronage (Figure 10-11).[395] More explicit references to kingship appear on the twelfth-century Tuam cross fragments, inscribed with the name of Toirdhealbhach Ua Conchobhair (High-king of Connacht (r.1106–1156) and later Ireland (c.1120-1156)) (Figure 95),[396] and the Dupplin Cross, with its martial and possibly Davidic imagery, inscription naming King of the Picts, Constantine son of Fergus (Constantín mac Fergusa, c. 789-829), and strategic placement in the valley of Strathearn near the *palacium* of Forteviot (Figure 88).[397] The "Life of St. Mochuda" recounted that an Alban king, named Constantine son of Fergus, came on pilgrimage to the monastery of Rahan, nearby Tullamore and Durrow,

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[395] Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare."

[396] For the Tuam crosses, see Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:175-178. Twenty years after Constantine's death, his first cousin, twice removed, Kenneth mac Alpin (810-858), came to power and is considered the first King of the Scots. Although Kenneth's son, Constantine I, son of Kenneth (Caustantín mac Cináeda), succeeded him and eventually met defeat during the Great Viking army invasion, his daughter Máel Muire was married to Áed Findliath, High-King of Ireland, and then his successor, Flann Sinna.

[397] Forsyth and Driscoll, "Symbols of Power," 33-34. Henderson and Henderson, *The Art of the Picts*, 189-91. The Dupplin cross is sandstone and stands 2.5m high. Forsyth and Driscoll wrote that Constantine son of Fergus's family controlled northern Britain in the eighth and first half of the ninth century before being wiped out by the Vikings at Strathearn in 839.

as well as Clonmacnoise, in either the region of Delbna Bethra or Fír Chell.[398] As Mochuda lived in the seventh century, this is either not the same Constantine mentioned on the Dupplin Cross, the king's arrival to the Irish monastery was anachronistically portrayed in the hagiography, or the story was invented. This Constantine was a protector of the monastery, who helped the site by marking out the church and perhaps digging the rampart. Upon his death, he requested that a stone be laid across his face, which was possibly referred to in another story involving St. Mochuda at the End of Days. Upon his forced departure from the monastery of Rahan by a number of local lay rulers, Mochuda stated: "I will come on the Judgement day with all my monks to the Cross of Constantine in front of the Church."[399]

Although there are surely more instances of the cross's association with Irish kingship mentioned in the history and literature of early medieval Ireland, the last example I mention involves Áed Findliath (r.862-879), the man who served as the High-King of Tara between Máel Sechnaill and Flann's reigns. He also embraced the form of the cross, but as a battle standard. According to FA366 (recte 868), Flann son of Conaing, the king of the Ciannachta, insulted Áed by planning to attack him with the aid of men

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[398] Charles Plummer, ed. and trans., *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*: *Lives of Irish Saints* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1922): 2:291-297. Whitley Stokes, ed. and trans., *Félire Óengusso Celí Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus, the Culdee* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905): 81. King Constantine is also commemorated in the *Félire Óengusso* on March 11. "They are attendants (?) of our Lord in the Kingdom above kingdoms, Librén, perennial Senan, Constantine king of Rathen." ("*It coimti ar Fiadat insind flaith uas flathib, Librén, Senan suthain, Constantín rí Rathin.*")

[399] Ibid., 297.

from Laigin and a Viking contingent. The plot was overheard by Land, the Queen of Tara

and a pivotal figure in several political dynasties of the period, being the sister to Osraige

king Cerball mac Dúnlainge, the former wife of Máel Sechnaill, and the mother of Flann

Sinna. Land returned to her husband with the information, inciting him to battle at

Killameer (Co. Louth). Although Áed's forces were smaller, he encouraged his men by

emphasizing their divine favor and his truthful rule:

> It is not by the number of warriors that a battle is won, but by the help of
> God and by the righteousness of the sovereign. Arrogance and excessive
> size of an army, moreover, are not what God values, but rather humble
> bearing and firmness of heart...When you see me rising, rise all of you
> together against them, as God will guide you…Do not think of flight, but
> trust in the Lord who gives victory to the Christians…rout your enemies at
> once so that your fame may last forever.[400]

Among the banners and shields, Áed's troops fought with the "Staff of Jesus" ("*Bachall*

Ísu") and the "Lord's Cross," the relic and symbol representing God's victory-bringing

aid in this decisive battle over these "unjust" usurpers and Norse pagans. The rest of the

passage describes Flann son of Conaing's dishonorable motivation for the battle, as he

merely wanted to seize Tara for himself, as well as his boast that his larger army would

prevail. Conversely, Áed considered himself as divinely chosen to rule Tara and viewed

routing both Christian and pagan enemies threatening his position as part of his duty.

Apparent in this account and inherent in the Crucifixion imagery discussed in the next

section is the paradox of Christianity, true victory can only be achieved after humbling

oneself before God.

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[400] FA366 (868).

3.4   The Scriptures

Apart from the essential form of the high cross, aspects of the Cross of the

Scriptures's iconography also related to common motifs of Christian kingship. The

images of the Passion and Crucifixion appearing on the western face and the Last

Judgment on the eastern head prominently convey the basic tenets of the Christian faith,

as elaborated in the New Testament and reiterated in essential doctrinal texts, such as the

Nicene Creed (Figures 41, 43, 96-97). They also relate to common motifs of Christian

kingship, as a large-scale and frontal Christ radiates forth victoriously from the center of

both sides of the cross-ring. Christ the King, or *Christus Rex*, is one of the oldest

archetypes embraced by Christian rulers the world over.[401] On the underside of the

southern arm, a hand, mostly likely the *manus Dei* (hand of God), appears with a diadem

or wreath, presumably crowning the dual depictions of Christ with victorious kingship

(Figure 98).[402] Images on the southern and northern sides evoke David, the Old

Testament model of kingship and composer of the psalms (Figures 99-100).

3.4.1   The Passion and Christian Kingship: The Western Face of the Cross of the Scriptures

Appearing as the focal point of the western face at the intersection of the cross

arms is the central moment of the Christian narrative and faith, the Crucifixion, which is

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[401] Deshman, "*Christus rex et magi reges*."

[402] See Chapter 4 for further discussion of the *Manus Dei* on the Cross of the Scriptures.

wreathed in victory by the cross-ring (Figure 96).[403] Here, the sculptor highlights Christ's

inherent dualities, as both God and man, alive and dead. Christ's corporeality is carefully

rendered with a relaxed pose, modeled arms, and bowed legs, fully on display because of

the minimal coverage of his loincloth-like garment.[404] Yet, Christ's body is also

triumphant, unburdened by the stress experienced during the extreme physical

punishment of a crucifixion. As eighth-century, Irish poet Blathmac proclaimed, "His

crucified body was His victory."[405] Christ's head remains upright, not drooped to the side

to imply his death, as characteristic of the mid-tenth-century Gero Crucifix in Cologne

(Figure 101). Sculptural elements of the cross further highlight this duality. The four

holes within the crosshead delineate the central cross-shape and the body of Christ from

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[403] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:273-286. Harbison's survey includes thirty-eight earlier examples of high crosses with the crucifixion and seventeen examples from the later Middle Ages, as well as comparable examples from continental Europe. Harbison noted that the crucifixion "is found on virtually every figure-sculpted cross-head which survives. It is always found at the center of the cross, except at Carndonagh, Moone, the South Cross at Clonmacnoise, and the Cross of Saints Patrick and Columba at Kells." Peter Harbison, *The Crucifixion in Irish Art* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 3,7. There are a number of related metal cross plaques with similar compositions that would have been placed on wooden crosses, such as the bronze plaque at St. John's Abbey (Co. Roscommon).

[404] Ibid., 1:277-280. Harbison discussed the various types of garments Christ wears in the corpus of high crosses and their iconographic precedents. See also Lawrence Nees, "On the Image of Christ Crucified in Early Medieval Art" in *Il Volto Santo in Europa (13-16 settembre 2000)*, ed. Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meer (Lucca: Instituto Storico Lucchese, 2005), 346-352, for a discussion of the three main types of garment Christ dons in representations of the crucifixions in the early medieval west, also for the issue of whether Christ is alive, dead or "both."

[405] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 3, §178.

the surrounding ring while allowing the sky to peak through and form a celestial

backdrop for the momentous scene.

The centurions Stephaton and Longinus flanking Christ expand the narrative of

his Passion, acting as the biblical witnesses to the event and symbolic representations of

Ecclesia and *Synagoga*.[406] Depicted anachronistically and in a highly symbolic manner,

the two soldiers simultaneously stab Christ in the side and extend the sponge of bitter

mixture of gall and wine. The Irish recognized Longinus, the soldier baptized in the blood

of Christ at the Crucifixion (Mt 27:54, Mk 15:39 and Lk 23:47), as symbolic for the

foundation of the Church and the Eucharist.[407] His counterpart, who attempted to feed

Christ the bitter vinegar, was thus a representation of *Synagoga*, the witness who refused

to believe. Extending beyond the ring unto the horizontal cross arms are two flanking

devotional figures in a standard motif of submission, they pay homage to the sacrifice of

Christus Rex on bended knee while raising their arms to present offerings. The two

figures appear to be warriors, as the man on the left holds a sword across his lap and one

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[406] Stanley Ferber, "Crucifixion Iconography in a Group of Carolingian Ivory Plaques," *The Art Bulletin* 48. No. 3-4 (1966): 323-334, here 323. The names of the soldiers were first mentioned in the apocrypha of Nicodemus, a popular text in the Middle Ages for its in-depth telling of the Passion.

[407] Harbison, *The Crucifixion in Irish Art*. Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 21-22, §55-58. 55. "When they thought thus that Jesus could be approached, Longinus then came to slay him with the spear." 56. "The King of the seven holy heavens, when his heart was pierced, wine was spilled upon the pathways, the blood of Christ flowing through his gleaming sides." 57. "The flowing blood from the body of the dear Lord baptized the head of Adam, for the shaft of the cross of Christ had aimed at his mouth." 58. "By the same blood (it was a fair occasion!) quickly did he cure the fully blind man who, openly with his two hands, was plying the lance."

on the right bears a shield (Figures 102-3). Based on traditional Crucifixion iconography, Harbison suggested that these figures may be personifications of the sun and moon.[408] The attendants are also reminiscent of the Magi paying homage in adoration scenes, such as the example appearing on the Franks Casket (Figure 104).[409] They are not historical figures at the crucifixion, rather witnesses out of time and place, attesting to Christ's eternal victory and kingship. At the cardinal points of the ring are four roundels with varying shapes, including another image of a warrior, a horse rider in profile, appearing at the top, which is balanced by a downward facing dove at the bottom; the roundels on the left and right arms were not carved as deeply and their design is no longer discernible.

The depiction of Christ's Passion continues beyond the cross-head down onto the shaft below. The panels of the western face display the extent of Christ's suffering and death that led to his ultimate victory, images intimately tied with the idea of His dual kingship. Prior to revealing His heavenly kingship through death and resurrection, Christ is mocked as King of Jews, crowned with thorns, and cloaked and stripped of a purple garment. The scenes are not presented in the order in which they occurred according to the Gospel texts, possibly to necessitate contemplation rather than narration. The top panel features a triad of figures, two soldiers holding what is generally-accepted as a depiction of Christ's seamless garment (Figure 105). A central figure lifts a knife over the

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[408] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:52.

[409] Richard Abels, "What Has Weland to Do with Christ? The Franks Casket and the Acculturation of Christianity in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 84 v.3 (July 2009): 549-581.

cloth, perhaps indicating the moment the group decided to cast lots for the intact cloth

rather than to split it. The panel below this displays another grouping of three. Again, two

soldiers with pointed helmets stand in profile as they restrain the central figure, twisting

his upper body (Figure 106). The figure on the right holds Christ by the waist, while the

figure on the left strikes him with a rod on the shoulder. Usually identified as the arrest or

flagellation of Christ, this scene brings to mind Christ's trial presided over by Pontius

Pilate and his scourging by Roman soldiers.[410] Both the Gospels of Mark and John

recount Christ and the Roman magistrate's discussion of the prisoner's kingship. Mark

(15:2) wrote Christ admitted to being "King of the Jews," whereas John (18:34-36) wrote

he claimed kingship but stated that "it is not of this world."

The lowest panel of the western shaft displays a commonly-depicted and

important Passion scene, Christ in His Tomb (Figure 107). The complex grouping

includes Christ's corpse in the grave guarded over by sleeping soldiers, possibly the

women who came to attend to his body, as well as a seated angel and a small, ambiguous

figure that may represent a soul.[411] Harbison and Henry identified the figure by Christ's

head as a bird breathing life into the dead body. According to antique representations, it

could also represent the presence of divinity.[412] The composition is comparable to

[410] Harbison, *Irish High Crosses*, 1:59. Similar depictions appear on other midland crosses, like Durrow and the Tall Cross at Monasterboice.

[411] Ibid., 1:287. Similar scenes appear on the Tall Cross at Monasterboice, the Kell's Market Cross, and the cross at Durrow.

[412] Ibid., 1:286. Henry, *Irish Art*, 183-4. John Pollard, *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977).

contemporary ninth-century ivory panels, such as the one placed in the cover of the "Pericopes of Henry II" (Munich, Staatsbibli. Cod. Lat. 4452), three examples at the Victoria and Albert Museum (No.250-1867, No. 251-1867, No.266-1867), two examples from the Bibliothéque Nationale (MS lat. 9453 and MS lat.9383), and one at the Nationalmuseum, Munich (MA 160).[413] However, the Cross of the Scriptures' renders the Holy Sepulchre in a distinctly Irish manner. A monumental tomb-slab, the marker of the high-status graves of abbots, bishops, and royals of early medieval Ireland, rests above Christ; his body is tightly wrapped in a cloth and an amuletic cross is placed at his feet.

If there was a crown of thorns present on Christ's head in carving or paint, the detail has since eroded. Although recorded in all four biblical accounts, the titulus labeling Christ as "King of the Jews" is also absent here, as it is from many early medieval renditions of the Passion.[414] However, the nature of Christ's sovereignty remains as an underlying thread throughout his trial, flagellation, and the very nature of the Passion. Robert Deshman observed from his study of Carolingian, Ottonian, and Anglo-Saxon crucifixion imagery that "[e]arly Christian artists were content to imply rather than state the kingship of Christ." As demonstrated below, Christ's kingship can be

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[413] Ferber, "Crucifixion Iconography in a Group of Carolingian Ivory Plaques," 323-334. See Ferber's article for images of the other works beyond the "Pericopes" cover.

[414] Robert Deshman, "*Christus Rex et magi Reges*: Kingship and Christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon Art," in *Eye and Mind: Collected Essays in Anglo-Saxon and Early Medieval Art*, ed. Adam Cohen (Kalamazoo: Western Institute Publications, 2010), 192-219.

inferred by artwork of the Crucifixion, especially when considered alongside more explicit references featured in Irish liturgy and other religious works, such as the poetry of Blathmac.

3.4.2   What Has the *Rig Herenn* to do with Christ?[415]

The panels on the Cross of the Scriptures draw from universal depictions of the Crucifixion and Passion and relate to the concept of *Christus Rex*, but the images also elicit distinctly Irish interpretations related to kingship and social order. Observing the monument through the lens of kingship, as represented in early medieval poetry, legal documents, and politically-charged "wisdom" texts, offers insight into the possible reception of the Cross of the Scriptures in relation to the nature of Irish rulership. Conflating Flann Sinna's kingship with that of Christ further legitimized his claim to primacy, as his temporal rule became an extension of divine rule. The monument's role as a witness to Flann's victory, political competence, and territorial control also expands further to become a marker of the compact between a king, his people, and the Godhead that was agreed upon to ensure a peaceful and prosperous society.

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[415] Abels, "What Has Weland to Do with Christ?," 549. In a letter written in 797, Alcuin admonished an English bishop for allowing his household and guests to be entertained by "pagan songs." He asked "What has Ingeld (Hinieldus) to do with Christ?," essentially what has pagan Germanic culture to do with Christianity. He drew from Tertullian's questioning of "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Abels took up this line of questioning to explain the juxtaposition of northern mythological and biblical stories on the Franks Casket, as they relate to gift-giving in Anglo-Saxon culture. In turn, this section explores how images on the Cross of the Scriptures exhibit elements related to both native Irish and universal Christian concepts kingship with the purpose of presenting Flann Sinna's claims to primacy in recognizable manner to its intended audiences.

In the following section, the study of the excerpts of Blathmac's poem in comparison to the passion imagery on the Cross of the Scriptures reveals that both works address central themes of Christian belief, including Christ's dual nature, the redemption of suffered humiliation and betrayal, and the victorious resurrection confirming his ultimate majesty over heaven and earth. However, these aspects were also understood in the specific terms of Irish kingship and the local social structure. Christ distributed wealth, led a band of warrior apostles, and brought natural bounty and order through his just kingship. He subjected his body and his honor to mockery, disfigurement, betrayal by his kin, and death, before his resurrection confirmed his divinity and authority. Christ embodied the ideals of an Irish king, but he proved his complete superiority to them by defeating death.[416]

In one keening (*coíniud/caoine*) poem, Blathmac consoled the Virgin by extolling Christ's kingly virtues that call to mind the victorious figure of the western crosshead: "Alas that your son should go to the cross, he who was a great diadem, a beautiful hero" and "better he than prophet, more knowledgeable than any druid, a king who was bishop and full sage."[417] He also described Christ as having a superior body that was "more

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[416] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A reappraisal," 149.

[417] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac,* 2-3, §1. Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A reappraisal notes," 134, 139, 143-4. Keening (*coíniud*) was a secular, quasi-legal concept, which entails a client (*céle*) to mourn for his lord (*flaith*). However, the practice was increasingly outlawed during the Middle Ages. Lambkin emphasized that Blathmac synthesis of pre-Christian concepts like keening with the Christian narrative and faith is a larger reflection of the cultural milieu, in which pagan past and Christian present were harmonized.

excellent [in] form than any human being, more vigorous his stout than that of any wright."[418] These qualities aid Christ in his great victory over death and his enemies, themes emphasized throughout the narrative and exemplified in the following passage: §175. "He was victorious from fighting that, / His battle with the Devil. / Miserable Devil, his strength was crushed; / A great prey was taken from him." [419]

Not only was Christ physically superior in this poem, but he also exhibited other characteristics of good rulership according to the Irish legal system. In the terms of gift-giving, Blathmac depicted Christ's "bright gleaming hospitality" and "the excellent manner in which he distributes wealth, silver, and exotic merchandise."[420] Christ also displayed his commanding martial prowess transforming the apostles into "a stout band of people whose warrior qualities [*óclachas*] were renowned."[421] The adapted representation of the quality of his leadership may account for the appearance of a centrally-dominant Christ holding a club and leading a band of warriors depicted on the

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[418] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac,* 4-5, §8.

[419] Ibid., 60-61, §175. In §137 (p.46-47), Blathmac also described Christ's resurrection and ascension in the following manner: "He has saved a prey with stout victory, he has delivered it into the middle of the great house (of heaven), he has sat in a kingdom without hazard on the right hand of his royal father."

[420] Ibid., 11 §28 and 120. Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac," 54. According to Boyd and his reading of Byrne (*Irish Kings and High* Kings, 153) and Kelly (*Guide to Early Irish Law*, 13), Blathmac also used the legal term *esáin* in describing Christ's good nature, in that he never committed "*etch n-aire ná essáin.*" In terms of the legal system, this meant Christ never refused hospitality to a visitor, which would have been a great offense in Irish society and dereliction of a kingly duty.

[421] Ibid.*,* 11. §27. "He called to him a stout band of people whose warrior qualities were renowned: twelve apostles to whom he was abbot, seventy-two disciples."

cross-head of the Tall Cross of Monasterboice (Figure 108). A wisdom-text, the "*Tescosca Cúscraid*" ("The instruction to Cúscraid") also emphasized these qualities to Irish kings, instructing them to "[b]e zealous and a mighty champion, holding assemblies, ardent, warlike, contending against foreign lands, for the protection of thy great territories."[422] In the poem, Christ took on the qualities of Irish kingship that inspired confidence in a ruler's ability to govern, qualities presumably Flann Sinna hoped to convey in his reign as well. From these types of conflations, Lambkin observed: "[w]hat emerges from Blathmac's heroic biography of Jesus is a combination of the king-hero and the martial-hero…Blathmac presents such a figure of Jesus as the ideal model for both a secular and ecclesiastical lord."[423]

The aforementioned Ruthwell cross is the most famous example of a contemporary monumental stone cross integrating the Christian story with the early medieval warrior ethos (Figures 94a-b). Inscribed in runes around the decorative panels of the sculpture is a Crucifixion poem that shares similarities in its discussion of Christ's sacrifice and death with the longer "Dream of the Rood" poem found in the tenth-

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[422] Richard I. Best, "The Battle of Airtech," *Ériu* 8 (1916): 170-90, here 173, 179-180. The text of the "*Tescosca Cuscraid*" is found in the Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 2 ("Book of Lecan"), fol.169v and in the Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, MS 1337 (H.3.18), p.724. The verses in §3 read: "Let thy assemblies be frequent concerning the right of border, for the meeting of nobles who go to (?) an act of hospitality and generosity (?) for bestowing of kin and horses…with jewels (?)."

[423] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A Reappraisal," 150.

century, Anglo-Saxon "Book of Vercelli."[424] In both works, the cross used the terms of

kingship and clientship to express its inner turmoil at the crucifixion, when its two main

duties as a thane come into conflict.[425] In killing Christ, the cross obeys his command,

but to carry out the king's wish was also to abandon its chief duty of protecting his lord.

The cross suffered physical torment and mocking alongside Christ, standing loyally until

the end. It attested to this with its runes:

> Almighty god unclothed himself when he wished to climb the gallows /
> brave [before all men [I dared not] bow / [I raised] up a powerful king,
> lord of heaven, I did not dare bend / Men mocked us both together, I [was]
> with blood drenched / Christ was on the cross but eager ones came from
> afar, nobles to the one I [beheld] it all.[426]

Although there are no expository runes surrounding the panels of the western face

of the Cross of the Scriptures, the close association of kingship with the Passion is

unmistakable in relation to the next series of passages from Blathmac:

> 52. A purple cloak was put about the King / By the ignoble assembly; / In
> mockery that was put about him, / Not from the desire to cover him.

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[424] Biblioteca Capitolare di Vercelli, MS CXVII. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 7-8, 180-223.

[425] The runic inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross share similarities with lines 39-64 of the "Dream of the Rood." The first section of the Rood poem described the vision of the viewer who sees a great cross covered in gold, gems, and blood. Its passage on the crucifixion begins with the cross telling how it was cut down and ends with its burial, along with the body of Christ. It informed the viewer that the "Lord's thanes [and] friends" discovered and adorned it with gold and silver (lines 75-77). The final section of the "Dream" expands upon the momentousness of the Crucifixion by discussing the Last Judgment and the viewer's hope to see the cross again and join Christ as a friend in heaven.

[426] Fred Orton, Ian Wood, and Clare A. Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 146-7. See also, Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood,* 79, 316-7, and 351.

53. The Son of God, the Father! / A reed was put in his hand at the end; It was said, clearly to mock him, / That he was King of Jews.
54. They tore from him his pure raiment; / Beautiful was the body that they stripped;/ Lots were cast without any deception / To see who might take his blessed spoils![427]

Blathmac referred to Christ as a king throughout the description of his death and the heinous crimes committed against his honor and "beautiful" body. Early Irish law perceived both the maiming of his body and death by crucifixion as insults and especially damning to a king's status.[428] If Christ faced such contempt as a mere mortal king, he would be at risk of losing his superior position, as well as his honor price (*lóg n-enech*, "the price of his face [eye]"), the measure of a man's worth.[429]

Kelly's study of early Irish legal texts demonstrated the "deep preoccupation with honor" held by Irish society by recounting the many ways a king's status could be seriously "damaged through satire and increased through praise."[430] Blathmac expressed outrage at the affront to Christ's honor: §48. "Hands were laid upon the face of the King /

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[427] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 19, §52-4. In §51, Blathmac also mentioned the crown of thorns placed on Christ's head; "A crown of thorns was placed (this was severe excess) about his beautiful head."

[428] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 19-20. From his study of early Irish legal texts, Kelly ascertained that a king was "expected to have a perfect body, free from blemish or disability" and cited sagas in which men lose their kingship because of disfigurement, such as the blinding of Congal Cáech. He also noted that it would be *geis* (taboo) for a king to rule Tara with a physical blemish, as recorded in CIH250.13-4. W. Neilson Hancock, Thaddeus O' Mahony, Alexander George Richey, and Robert Atkinson, *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1865-1901), iii: 84.3-4.

[429] Ibid., 8, 43. Kelly defined *lóg n-enech* (price of his face) as the "measure of a person's status." Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the medieval world*, 78.

[430] Idem.

who were severely chastised. / Hideous deed! / the face (eye) of the Creator was spat upon."[431] The north arm of the western face of the Tall Cross at Monasterboice provides a closer illustration of this, as central Christ is bound by a solider to his right, and struck in the face by a soldier to his left (Figure 109).[432] Kelly explained that if a king tolerated either satire or defeat, then this would be evidence of an unjust ruler and cause the loss of honor and position.[433] Through his resurrection, Christ bravely overcame any loss of his honor he might have suffered due to his humiliating punishment and death featured on the western cross-shaft. He shed a lesser, mortal sovereignty for a superior, heavenly kingship exemplified by the victorious nature of the composition featured in the cross-ring.

Understanding that Christ's kingship functioned in a similar capacity to Irish kingship was mutually advantageous for both the Church and lay authorities. As Blathmac used the ideology of Irish lordship to explain the significance of the Crucifixion and Christian doctrine, Irish kings like Flann Sinna, Cormac mac Cuilennáin, Áed Findliath, and Máel Sechnaill legitimized their power by portraying their rule and victories as sanctified by Christ. Flann Sinna facilitated this connection through the placement of his name and status on a Christian monument that emphasized Christ's kingship. The ruling elite of kings, clergy, and the learned class consciously appropriated

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[431] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 17, §48.

[432] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:151.

[433] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 19, n. 20. Kelly referred to CIH219.17-18 and AL50.22-3. Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the medieval world*, 102.

ideas and formal representations of Christ's kingship, assuming its authority to support

their own concepts of governance. This is evident in Blathmac's use aspects of the

clientship (*célsine*) system and notions of Irish high-kingship to explain the events of the

Passion. As Lambkin observed, the poem conveyed that "the one true lord, God, who

claim[ed] legitimately the following of all men, allow[ed] his power of truth to be

mediated on earth by certain men who rule or govern others. The efficacy of their rule

depend[ed] on the extent to which they have access to the power of truth."[434]

Fír flathemon, or the "ruler's truth," was an institution of governance for Irish

kings throughout the early medieval period.[435] In his study of Irish kingship during the

long transition to Christianity, Jan Erik Rekdal argued that the "term may appear as an

Irish glossing of *rex iustus* [(just king) and] it is held to be pre-Christian."[436] During the

conversion process, "ruler's truth" became an extension of Christian truth. Christianity

introduced the idea of a supreme authority, but the Church in Ireland also adapted its

structure to the *célsine* system. Lambkin noted that these new Christian concepts could be

integrated in the prevailing Irish political system because the authority "was supernatural

[and] allegiance could be given to it without any surrender of secular power being

[434] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céli Dé: A Reappraisal," 143.

[435] For more on *fír flathemon*, see Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céli Dé: A Reappraisal," 143; Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the early medieval world*, 50; and Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 77.

[436] Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung," 215.

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necessary in practice."[437] This permitted fragmented and localized governance to

continue with each lord and king ruling by the power of *fír flathemon*. However, it also

emboldened powerful leaders, such as Flann Sinna and Máel Sechnaill, to centralize rule

and propagate their *superior*, divinely-sanctioned kingship.

Nelson's study of early Irish "mirrors of princes," such wisdom-texts as the

"*Tecosca Cormaíc*" ("Instructions of Cormac") and the "*Audacht Morainn*" ("Testament

of Morann"), revealed the lingering thoughts on power and its practices of pre-Christian

Ireland that persisted after the new faith was introduced.[438] Both sources have similar

elements to the Old Testament guidelines set down for the biblical kings, but Nelson

highlighted legal concepts native to early medieval Ireland. The "*Tecosca Cormaíc*"

asked: "What is best for the benefit of the tuath? A meeting of nobles, frequent

assemblies, a regular assembly: that is best for the profit of the tuath."[439] It also

instructed the king on what he must do to rule effectively: "[he] must punish crime and

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[437] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céli Dé: A Reappraisal," 143-4.

[438] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 3-6. See Kelly, *Audacht Morrain*, xiii, for other sources from the early medieval Ireland that he considered to be "mirrors of princes," including: *Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn*, *Serglige*, and *Sembríatha Fithail*. Kuno Meyer, *The instructions of King Cormac Mac Airt: Tecosca Cormaic*, Todd Lecture Series 15 (Dublin: Hodges Figgis & Co, 1909), page v–xii; 2–62. CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed June 20, 2018, https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T503001/index.html. Nelson noted that the "*Tecosca Cormaíc*" borrowed from the "Book of Proverbs," both its genre of a king giving advice to his son and its form as a series of maxims. However, they differ in content.

[439] Ibid., 6.

criminals, he must check theft, he must adjust relationship, enslave criminals, set free the

innocent; keep hostages, [and] defend the borders."[440]

Aside from telling the king to "estimate the creations of the creator," there was

little reference to divinity, Christian or otherwise, in the "*Audacht Morainn*."[441] Instead,

the mythological judge Morann defined and emphasized the "truth of the ruler" ("*fír*

flathemon") to King Feradach Find Fechtnach, advising its use to bring peace and

prosperity to his reign and people. Morann told him to be "merciful, just, impartial,

conscientious, firm, generous, hospitable, honourable, stable, beneficent, capable, honest,

well-spoken, steady [and] true-judging" and to not let "rich gifts or great treasures or

profit blind him to the weak in their sufferings."[442] A truthful and just rule protected the

people because it kept "plagues" and "great lightnings" at bay (§12), at the same time as

it secured "peace," "joy," and "ease" (§14) and brought an "abundance of great tree-fruit

of great wood" (§17), "milk-yields of great cattle" (§18), "tall corn" (§19), "fish" (§20),

and "children" (§21).[443] To prove his rule was just, Morann tasked Feradach with

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[440] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6.

[441] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 10-13, 43, 54. §32: "Tell him, let him estimate the creations of the creator who made them as they were made." In his notes on §32, Kelly discussed the inclusion of the word "creator" (*dúilemon*) and whether it was a Christian insertion or a pagan concept, as argued by Binchy. The only direct reference to Christianity appeared in §59 and the word "blessing" (*bendachtnaib*), which Kelly wrote is "one of the few Latin load-words" in the text. Kelly (p.23) proposed that §1, which provided the context of the text, was a later, possibly ninth-century addition to the "*Audacht Morainn*."

[442] Ibid., 16-7, 10-11, §55.

[443] Ibid., 3, 6-7. §1, 12-28. §12: "Tell him, it is through the justice of the ruler that plagues [and] great lightnings are kept from the people." §14: "It is through the justice of the ruler that he secures peace, tranquility, joy, each, comfort;" §17: "great tree-fruit of

establishing ten things: "rule and worth, fame and victory, progeny and kindred, peace and long life, good fortune and tribes [(*tuatha*)]."[444] The judge ended his discussion by labeling the four types of rulers: "the true ruler and the wily ruler, the ruler of occupation with hosts, and the bull ruler."[445] The first kind ruled by truth, resulting in a legitimate reign marked by devotion and victory, but the others received a lack of prosperity and constant war for their unjust and false rule.[446]

The concept of an evil king bringing ruin to his community by failing to rule by "Truth" also appeared in the mid-seventh-century "*De duodecim abusivis saeculi*," an Irish work denouncing the "Twelve Abuses of the World" that served as a foundational text for later medieval treatises on rulership.[447] Among the abuses listed are "the unjust

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great wood;" §18 "milk-yields of great wood;" §19 "tall corn;" §20 "fish;" and §21: "children.

[444] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 16-17, §56.

[445] Ibid., 18-9. §58.

[446] Ibid., 18-9, §58-62. §59-62: "The true ruler, in the first place, is moved towards every good thing, he smiles on the truth when he hears it, he exalts it when he sees it. For he whom the living do not glorify with blessings is not a true ruler. The wily ruler defends borders and tribes, they yield their valuables and dues to him. The ruler of occupation with hosts from outside; his forces turn away, they put off his needs, for a prosperous man does not turn outside. The bull ruler strikes [and] is struck, wards off [and] is warded off, roots out [and] is rooted out, pursues [and] is pursued. Against him there is always bellowing with horns."

[447] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6. *Ps.-Cyprianus*, *De duodecem abusivis saeculi,* ed. Siegmund Hellman, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geshichte der altchristlichen Literatur 34 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1909), 32-60. Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, xv-i. Kelly and Nelson pointed to Hellman's translation of *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* and his consideration of the text as Irish because of linguistic and textual features. Kelly noted that the *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* was used in *De*

king" ("*rex iniquus*"), "the neglectful bishop" ("*episcopus neglegens*"), "the community without order" ("*plebs sine disciplina*"), and "the people without law" ("*populus sine lege*").[448] Blathmac's verses echoed this sentiment: §244. "Evil will be the aspect of the perverse kings / The wicked clients of a bad lord / The lord to whom they had adhered / Will be neither king nor abbot."[449] *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* asserted the king's justice is the "people's peace."[450] If a king did not enforce laws upon his people or hold himself accountable, the agreement of protection made with his *túatha* or religious settlement would be broken, and his rule considered unjust (*gáu flathemon*).[451] If either party breached the compact, it opened the people up to disaster in the form of famine, crop failure, female infertility, defeat in battles, plague, and natural catastrophes.[452] Likewise, the "*Córus Bésgnai*" affirmed that "[s]torms are abated by the good practices of ordinance and (royal) promulgation and by good discipline and by treaty."[453] Ó Cróinín described this idea "an entirely pagan, sacral concept of kingship bound up with

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insitutione regia (884) by Bishop Jonas of Orleans and *De regis persona et regio ministerio* (c.860) by Bishop Hincmar of Rheims.

[448] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 3, 7, 20. Pseudo-Cyprian, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi,* 32.

[449] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 86-7, §258.

[450] Pseudo-Cyprian, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi,* 53.

[451] Idem.

[452] Kelly, Guide to *Early Irish Law*, 18 (note 11) and 21. Pseudo-Cyprian, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi,* 52-3.

[453] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 32-33, §26.

fate and taboo, luck and disaster," but nothing of these concepts was largely incompatible with Christian law and practice.[454] With the advent of Christianity, the prosperity of the people and land of the *túath* remained intimately tied to the ruler and Christ assumed the guise of a powerful and righteous Irish king. Blathmac conveyed this in his description of the bounty engendered by his just reign and through the use of the language and "ideology of secular kingship."[455] He described the effect of Christ's reign upon the land: §29. "He kindled faith in every fertile / inhabited meadow-land; / he was a sea in a spring-tide of kingship / to whom many thousands used to flock."[456]

Yet, the order and fecundity of the *túath* was not the sole responsibility of the ruler, but also was based in clientship (*célsine*) and the people's ability to honor the agreement made with their lord. As advised in the "*Audacht Morainn*," §6. "Let [the king] preserve Truth, it will preserve him;" §9. "Let him care for his [túath], they will care for him;" §10. "Let him help his [túath], they will help him."[457] Bad clientship was also punishable, as evident in the king's legal right to burn down the homes of any client who failed to pay his taxes.[458] As Bhreathnach summarized, "[r]oyal authority is based

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[454] Ó Croinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 98.

[455] Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac' and 'The Dream of the Rood,'" 54-55.

[456] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 10-11, §29; Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac," 54.

[457] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 5. Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 4-5, §6, 9-10. Nelson replaced Kelly's translation of "tribes" in this quote with the original Irish term "*thuatha*."

[458] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 145, referring to CIH763.10.

on the idea that there was a contract between the ruler and the ruled, and that a king's status, comparable to other nobles, relied on men in clientship."[459]

Those operating under the prevailing social structure and Irish law readily understood the events of the Passion as a failed contract within the client system between God and his clients, the Jewish people. According to Lambkin, the requirements of a keen (lament) performed for a person who died a "violent death" included the "denunciation of the enemy of the deceased who is responsible for the death and assurance of the bereaved mother that the unjust killing will be avenged."[460] One of these elements is discernable in the following passage from Blathmac: §77. "It was a grievous and a shameful deed / For the Jews whom we have mentioned: / The crucifixion of the son of God, the Father, / Who broke strength beheld of their ancestors in Egypt."[461] Per Blathmac's view, God acted as a just and giving ruler. He honored his side of the covenant (or contract) agreed upon by Abraham on behalf of the Jewish people by delivering them from Pharaoh (§84), providing them with manna and pure water on their journey (§85-6), teaching them the making of brazen serpents for protection (§87), bestowing the "fertile Land of Promise" (§90), and rewarding its leaders with victories

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[459] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the early medieval world*, 64.

[460] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A reappraisal," 138.

[461] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 26-27, §77-78. §78. "For he heard their lament from captivity, under heavy servitude, on account of the covenant that he had with Abraham from of yore."

(§92-5).[462] Blathmac explained that God's people's superior station because of this covenant: §96. "He endowed them with the best country in the world; / He granted them a heavy shower of fortune / In that he raised up for them (stout protection!) / Kings and prophets."[463]

Both betraying their king and the slaying of one of their own were considered atrocious crimes in the early Irish legal system, resulting in social upheaval, loss of land, and destruction of their nation. Carney and Byrne pointed to the following passage from Blathmac's lament, which demonstrated the poet's use of the Irish law to explain the significance of the Crucifixion as a betrayal and evidence of dishonorable clientship: §106. "Every advantage that the King / had bestowed upon the Jews / in return for their clientship was 'wealth to slaves;' / they violated their counter-obligations."[464] In "violat[ing] their counter-obligations" and breaking a fairly-imposed and generously-upheld compact, God punished the Jewish people with the loss of their king and their land. Blathmac described how the death of Christ caused the land to tremble and run red with blood, the sky turned to darkness, and the sea roared wild and furiously.[465] He

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[462] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 32-33 §92-95. Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac," 56, 58-9.

[463] Ibid., 32-33, §96.

[464] Lambkin, "Blathmac and the Céili Dé: A reappraisal," 143. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 44-5. James Carney, *Early Irish Poetry*, Thomas Davies Lecture (Cork: Mercier, 1965), 53. Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac, Son of Cú Brettan, and "The Dream of the Rood," 56. Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 36-7, §106. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 44-5.

[465] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 22-3, §61-5.

reasoned this "would have been fitting for God's elements" to react in such a way "when

keening their hero" and a further consequence of a broken agreement with the

Godhead.[466]

Boyd demonstrated that the clients failed to fulfill their promise of obedience and

utterly disrupted the social order as "they crucified the one to whom it was owed."[467]

Blathmac accused the Jewish people of one of the greatest offenses to the kin-based

structure of early medieval Ireland, *fingal* (kin-slaying).[468] He decried: §44. "It is true

that after that / the Jews became envious of him; / the reward that used to be given to him

/ was not a fitting thing in blood-relationship;"[469] and §103. "Oh shameless countenance

and wolf-like / were the men who perpetrated the kin-slaying / since his mother was of

them, / it was treachery towards a true kinsman."[470] Kelly noted that this act upset basic

order and resulted in injustice or the perpetuation of the crime, as neither of the two

traditional options for retribution of kin-slaying were viable, i.e. 1) the entitlement of

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[466] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 22-3, §61-2, §64-5. §61. "The sun hit its own light; it mourned its lord; a sudden darkness went over the blue heavens, the wild and furious sea roared. §62. The whole world was dark; the land lay under gloomy trembling; at the death of noble Jesus great rocks burst asunder. §64. A stream of blood gushed forth (severe excess!) so that the bark of every tree was red; there was blood on the breasts of the world, in the tops of every great forest. §65. It would have been fitting for God's elements, the beautiful sea, the blue heaven, the present earth, that they should change their aspect when keening their hero."

[467] Boyd, "The Poems of Blathmac," 57.

[468] Ibid., 59-63.

[469] Blathmac, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 16-7, §44.

[470] Ibid., 36-7, §103.

each kin member to compensation by the guilty, and 2) the king's pursuance of a blood-feud if proper compensation did not occur.[471] Triad 186 of the "*Trecheng Breth Féne*" listed *fingal*, injustice, and over-binding as things that "destroy every ruler."[472]

In viewing the Passion imagery on the Cross of the Scriptures as understood by early Irish society, the western face imagery, like that of the eastern face, communicates compact. In this case, the transcendent covenant between divinity, the king, and his people and land. The high cross served as a reminder for viewers from those who created it to honor their covenant with God and his designated earthly rulers identified through the monument's inscriptions, or else the disorder would befall society. The conflation of Christian truth with enduring pre-Christian ideas of *fír flathemon* had transformed the power of Irish kingship into an extension of Christian authority. In turn, the temporal ruler's power remained rooted in serving his people's best interests, both in life and the hereafter. Success in battle, nature's abundance, and the relative peace and prosperity of the *túath* were signs of a king's legitimacy, but *fír flathemon* also represented how well the group, with the king serving as representative, recognized Christ's superior authority

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[471] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 127. Kelly further commented that "[t]he laws and wisdom-texts frequently stress the horrendous character of fingal 'kin-slaying' which strikes at the heart of the kin-based structure of early Irish society." He also noted that the practice did not necessarily meet the ideals of law, as many kings are recorded as committing *fingal* and having successful reigns.

[472] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 40, notes for §29. Kuno Meyer ed. and trans., *The Triads of Ireland*, Todd Lecture Series 13 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1906). CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts, University College, Cork, accessed June 30, 2018, https://celt.ucc.ie/published/ T103006.html. Meyer dated the recording of the triads to the second half of the ninth century; they are included in later manuscripts like the "Yellow Book of Lecan" and the "Book of Ballymote."

by honoring their oaths, offering devotion, fighting in his name, and living by the laws provided. As Clonmacnoise thrived as religious, intellectual, and cultural center and remained free from plunder in the years coinciding with Flann Sinna's reign, perhaps the king and his allies considered the peace and prosperity as the result of an honored agreement with the Godhead and evidence of *fír flathemon*. The Cross of the Scriptures was an offering of thanksgiving for these conditions and a declaration by those claiming responsibility for the good fortune and security. It was through a truthful rule and devotion to God that Flann Sinna gained a great victory, but it was through force, political strategy, and messages of his legitimacy, such as those conveyed on this impressive Christian monument, that helped him to sustain his rule.

3.4.3 "Blessed Be the Lord My Strength, Which Teacheth My Hands to War:" David, The Old Testament Model of Kingship

The crucifixion on the western crosshead is not the only model of Christian kingship present on the Cross of the Scriptures. Several scholars have identified David, the Old Testament model of kingship and prefiguration of Christ in the decorative program, albeit in a decidedly more indirect manner.[473] Roe, Henry, Harbison, and Herbert all recognized the figure seated in profile and playing the lyre within the central panel of the southern side to be "David the Psalmist" (Figure 99).[474] Harbison alone

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[473] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:50. Harbison identified the central and upper panels on the south side of the Cross of the Scriptures as part of the David cycle.

[474] Roe, "The David Cycle," 55. Henry, *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions*, 173. Herbert, *Psalms in Stone,* 212-243, 273-338. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:50.

considered the panel immediately above it as another representation of David, as shepherd (Figure 110). This frontally-seated figure grips a crook while an angel hovers above him with outspread wings, possibly portraying the moment when God's messenger called David as he tended his flock. As a long-reigning and divinely-chosen ruler, extraordinary warrior and protector, political strategist, and humble and pious follower of God, David was a versatile model and the embodiment of the essential characteristics of ideal Christian kingship. These qualities provided an ideological framework for legitimate rule using biblical terms in Ireland and more generally in early medieval Christian exegesis and iconography.[475]

The various guises of David are prevalent within the corpus of high crosses, as first noted by Roe and extensively surveyed by Harbison.[476] There are twenty-eight confidently-identified depictions and eighteen probable instances of David appearing as shepherd, lion-slayer, vanquisher of Goliath, enthroned king, and harpist or psalm-composer. Both of these scholars catalogued the imagery with the goal of tying high crosses to the broader context of European art. Rulers throughout the Christian world, including the emperors of the Eastern Roman Empire and the Carolingian and Ottonian courts, embraced David as the exemplum of biblical kingship. His was also a favored image among the leaders of northwestern Europe, appearing on the monuments of early

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[475] See Herbert, *Psalms in stone;* Lawrence Nees, *A Tainted Mantle: Hercules and the Classical Tradition at the Carolingian Court* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); and Ruth E. Leader, "The David Plates Revisited: Transforming the Secular in Early Byzantium," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 3 (September 2000): 407-427.

[476] Roe, "The David Cycle;" and Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:210-222.

medieval Scotland and Northumbria, most notably the St. Andrew's Sarcophagus (Figure 111).[477] In addition to the solitary representations of the Old Testament figure commonly-rendered in Ireland and featured on the Cross of the Scriptures, the column at Masham, the Utrecht Psalter, and frescoes of St John at Müstair demonstrate an interest in depicting more extensive cycles of David across media.[478] David's image also enhanced more personal works of art, such as the decorated initials and full-page illustrations of the Durham Cassiodorus (fols. 81v, 172v) and the Vespasian Psalter (fol. 30v), as well as a repeated motif on the casula of Sts. Harlindis and Relindis, a rare silk preserved at the Church of St. Catherine of Maaseik, Belgium (Figures 112a-114).[479]

Charlemagne and his father Pepin the Short were the most famous adopters of the guise of David, among the other associations of past emperors the Carolingians fostered to promote their imperium. Pope Stephen II called Pepin "David" and Charlemagne's

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[477] Henderson, "The 'David Cycle' in Pictish Art," 187-223; and *The Art of the Picts*, 130-2. Hawkes, "The Non-Crucifixion Iconography" (PhD diss., Newcastle University, 1989), 124.

[478] Koert van der Horst, William Noel, and Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, ed., *The Utrecht Psalter: picturing the Psalms of David* (Tuurdijk, Netherlands: HES, 1996). Hawkes, "The Non-Crucifixion Iconography," 80-136. Jürg Goll, Matthias Exner, Susanna Hirsch, and Michael Wolf, *Müstair: die mittelalterlichen Wandbilder in der Klosterkirche: UNESCO-Welterbe* (Zürich: NZZ-Libro, 2009).

[479] "The Durham Cassiodorus," Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B. II. 30, eighth century, fols. 81v, 172v. Richard N. Bailey, *The Durham Cassiodorus*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow: Parish of Jarrow, 1978). J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th-9th century*, Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles (London: Harvey Miller, 1987), plate 74. Cotton MS Vespasian A I, fol.30v. David Wright, ed., *The Vespasian Psalter*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, XIV (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1967). Mildred Budny and Dominic Tweddle, "The Early Medieval Textiles at Maaseik, Belgium," *The Society of Antiquaries of London* 65, no. 2 (1985): 353-389.

court advisor Alcuin also addressed the latter ruler as such.[480] Each man also underwent a

papal anointing with oil in the manner of David, as recorded in the first Book of Samuel

XVI.13.[481] As previously mentioned, Harbison sought to tie the Carolingian emulation of

the Old Testament king to Máel Sechnaill's political ambitions, citing as evidence the

Davidic imagery on the Kinnitty (Castlebernard) Cross, Ossory (Ahenny) crosses, and the

cross-base at Cashel.[482] Herity also pointed to the Davidic imagery on the crosses at

Castledermot to argue that they were the product of royal patronage; Diarmait, the site's

founding saint, was said to be descended from kings.[483]

In standard representations of David, his most common attribute is the harp or

lyre. High cross panels featuring a figure playing the instrument have been consistently

identified either as the biblical king composing Psalms or as a young shepherd tending

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[480] Mary Garrison, "The Social World of Alcuin: Nicknames at York and at the Carolingian Court," in *Alcuin of York: scholar at the Carolingian Court: proceedings of the Third Germania Latina Conference held at the University of Groningen, May 1995*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen & A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Forsten Pub, 1998), 59-80.

[481] Enright, *Iona, Tara, and Soissons*, especially chapter 3, 107-162. Enright traced the anointing ceremony of Pepin to Irish ceremonies developed by the clergy at Iona. Book of Samuel XVI.13: "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed [David] in the midst of his brethren; and the Lord came upon David from that day forward."

[482] Harbison, "A High Cross Base from the Rock of Cashel," 14-20. Harbison deduced that Máel Sechnaill was mostly likely born at the end of Charlemagne's reign, and his power as an ordained ruler was recognized in Ireland. He proposed that "though there is no documentary evidence to prove it, the possibility that Máel Sechnaill having modelled himself on Charlemagne in his single-minded quest for power may possibly help to explain the popularity of the David iconography on Irish crosses."

[483] Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada." Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*, 214.

his flock, rather than a common musician. Harpists appear on the North and South Crosses at Castledermot, the Market Cross at Kells, and Durrow, among others (Figures 115-117).[484] St. Martin's Cross at Iona, the Dupplin Cross, the Monifieth cross-shaft, and the Lethendy cross-shaft are Scottish examples that include this type of musician (Figures 118-120).[485] Images of a harpist, who is possibly David, in the company of other figures appear on handful of monuments, including the Durrow Cross, Kinnitty (Castlebernard) Cross, the Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba at Kells, and Muiredach's Cross (Figures 117, 121, 122, 125). Hawkes noted that many depictions of "David the Psalmist" in Continental Europe happened within an "aulic" arrangement with the king in the center surrounded by his courtiers, such as the illustration of David's court in the *Vespasian Psalter* (Figure 113).[486] More common of Irish high crosses and pictured on the southern side of the Cross of the Scriptures is the representation of a lone harpist seated in profile (Figure 99).[487] Harbison observed this image approximates the standard rendering of "David as Harper" within the context of the corpus; the figure faces towards the right with the "left upper leg raised slightly higher than the right," although the lyre is raised

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[484] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:213.

[485] Henderson, "The 'David Cycle' in Pictish Art," 187-223.

[486] Hawkes, "The Non-Crucifixion Iconography," 106.

[487] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:213. Harbison tied this pose to the French manuscript tradition of the early ninth century, basing his connection on Henry's allusion to MS. 18 (14) in the Bibliothéque Municipale in Angers, fol. 13.

higher and not in his lap.[488] David sits on what is either a leonine beast with a long, curled tail or an animal-like mound. This is perhaps the lion he slew to protect his flock, or conceivably a representation of his lion throne, although a different representation of a royal seat may appear on the northern face of the Cross of the Scriptures (Figure 100). Roe observed the similarities between this Clonmacnoise example and a panel on the West Cross of Kells that also depicts a seated harpist; she ultimately traced inspiration of the composition to a common "stock mode" motif used to depict Orpheus by early Christian artists.[489]

In the introduction to the survey of "The David Cycle" from his corpus of Irish high crosses, Harbison attributed the figure's "frequency" to "the interest which the early Irish church took in him, doubtless because he was presumably regarded as a prefiguration of Christ as King, and also the ancestor of the house to which Christ belonged."[490] Herbert's dissertation, "Psalms in Stone: Royalty and Spirituality on Irish High Crosses," deepened this discussion. She attributed the abundance of imagery to the strongly-held passion for the psalms that David composed, which the religious repeated

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[488] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:213; Roe, "The David Cycle," 57; Hugo Steger, *David Rex et Propheta: König David als vorbildliche Verkörperung des Herrschers und Dichters im Mittelalter, nach Bilddarstellungen des achten bis zwolften Jahrhunderts*, Erlanger Beitrage zur Sprach- und Kinstwissenschaft 6 (Nuremberg: Verlag Hans Carl, 1961), 121-132. Roe and Steger noted the different appearances of the harps within the corpus. Roe identified them as hybrid harp-lyres and Steger proposed they are Irish types.

[489] Roe, "The David Cycle," 56-58, note 106.

[490] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:210.

daily within the context of early medieval Irish liturgical performance.[491] Although

Blathmac criticized the Jewish people, Kim McCone argued that early medieval Ireland

also embraced the Old Testament for the "particular affinities" shared by its native laws

and the "Mosaic code."[492]

Herbert provided a summary of specific theological messages conveyed by these

scenes derived from patristic and Irish sources, such as the concept of Christ being born

into the House of David to redeem it.[493] According to the biblical exegesis of Augustine

of Hippo, Jerome, and Hilary of Poitiers, David served as the precursor and prophet of

the future king of Israel; many of the events of the Old Testament figure's life

foreshadowed that of Christ.[494] Herbert also drew attention to the "Columban headings"

of psalms appearing in the saint's renowned "Cathach," as well as those in Bede's

Argumenta of the "*De titulis Psalmorum*," the Codex Amiantinus, and the "Psalter of

Charlemagne," all of which retitle a number of the song-prayers as Christological

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[491] Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*, 214.

[492] McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present,* 104. This observation supported
McCone's overarching argument that (p.ix) "for all its diversity, early Irish literature as a
whole is rooted in a coherent, far-reaching and flexible construct or *Senchus* adapted,
synthesized and modified by monastic men of letters from the Bible and other Latin
writings in conjunction with vernacular traditions both oral and increasingly, as time
went on, written." Jaski, "Early medieval Irish kingship and the Old Testament," 329-
344; and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," *Proceedings
of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies held at Oxford from 10-15 July
1983*, ed. D. Ellis Evans, J.G. Griffith and E.M. Jope (Oxford: D.E. Evans, 1986), 141-
158.

[493] Ibid., especially chapters 4-6, 164-338.

[494] Ibid.*,* 245, note 37.

prophecies, e.g. "Words of Christ" ("*Vox Christi*"), "Words of the Church" ("*Vox Ecclesiae*"), and "Words of the Apostles" ("*Vox Apostolorum*").[495] Alcuin, the Northumbrian-born, Carolingian court advisor, considered the verses to be "contain[ers of] all of biblical history."[496]

Herbert highlighted the ninth-century "Old-Irish Treatise on the Psalter" to demonstrate the interpretation of psalms as prophecies of the Passion and Judgment.[497] Similar to each high cross panel's capability to convey multiple layers of meaning, the treatise described the four levels of interpretation for the psalms, including:

> There are four things that are necessary in the Psalms, to wit, the first story (*cetna stoir*), and the second story (*stoir tanaise*), the sense (*siens*) and the morality (*moralus*). The first story refers to David and to Solomon and the previously mentioned persons, to Saul, to Absalom, to the persecutors generally. The second story to Hezekiah, to the people, to the Maccabees. The sense (refers) to Christ, to the earthly and heavenly Church. The morality (refers) to every saint.[498]

The first referred to the time of David and the second to post-Davidic Jewish history, whereas "sense" signified the allegorical foreshadowing pertaining to Christ and the New Testament, and the last "moral" layer related the lives of saints.

Fitting with the previously established motivations for the patronage of the Cross of the Scriptures, the panel of David the Psalmist connoted Christian kingship and

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[495] Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*, 224. "Cathach of Columba," Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 12 R.33. "Psalter of Charlemagne," Paris, BN MS lat. 13159. "Argumenta" of the *"De titulus Psalmorum*," Vatican MS Pal. Lat. 68.

[496] Ibid., 225.

[497] Ibid., 224.

[498] Ibid., 225-226, note 40.

legitimacy, as well as celebration and thanksgiving. Divinely-inspired, the psalms reflected David's position as God's selected leader among his chosen people. The prayer-songs composed in gratitude for this special status would also appeal greatly to those Irish leaders that desired to associate themselves with the Old Testament king and project that they, too, possessed this same divinely-sanctioned primacy. David's reasons to praise God were numerous, including his rise in power to the kingship of Israel and his divinely-aided victories in physical battles against lions, the giant Goliath, and the rest of the Philistines. Psalm 144, one of the many employing the language of the divine warrior, lauded:

> (1) Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and fingers to fight. (2) My shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. (9) I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. (10) It is he that giveth salvation unto kings, who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

Yet, constant war was also David's punishment for his transgressions with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, as Nathan prophesized "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Samuel 12:10). David's life served as a reminder for Christian kings to act according to God's wishes and rule according to truth, rather than their personal desires that would bring destruction. The concept is similar to the "*Audacht Morainn's*" advice and the chaotic results of poor rulership, discussed above.

Previous studies by Harbison, Hawkes, Henderson, Herbert, and Roe demonstrated the prominence of Davidic and warrior imagery among iconographic motifs

decorating high-status artworks in early medieval Ireland and Scotland.[499] The more

martial depictions of the Old Testament king often appear in conjunction with his

position as ruler and psalmist, such as the image of the harpist featured on the reverse of

the Cardonagh warrior figure, as well similar dual representations on the Kells Market

Cross and the Dupplin Cross (Figures 118, 123a-124b).[500] The decorative program of the

Cross of the Scriptures also includes warrior and hunting imagery on its base (Figures 31,

44). These figures cannot necessarily be identified as David, but they recall some of the

same notions bound up with the figure of the king.[501]

Similarly, the ambiguous piper in the central panel of the northern side, directly

opposite the scene of the harpist, may also be tied to the representation of David (Figure

100). In this scene, the figure curls his hands around a wind instrument and purposefully

places his figures along the three reeds of varying lengths. Sporting long hair, a

moustache, and a short beard, he puffs out his cheeks to blow through the mouthpiece

and produce his song. In the upper left corner of the scene is a grotesque or abstract

rendition of a beast, unidentified in scholarship save Harbison's suggestion that it is the

depiction of a cat lying on its back with head and legs folded inward.[502] Two cat-like

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[499] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*; and "A High Cross Base;" Hawkes, "The Non-Crucifixion Iconography;" Henderson, "The David Cycle" in Pictish Art," 87-123; Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*; Roe, "The David Cycle."

[500] Herbert, *Psalms in Stone*, 233.

[501] Ibid., 63-165. Herbert suggested that the hunt and herding imagery appearing on high cross bases were inspired by the Book of Psalms.

[502] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:308-9.

figures also appear at the piper's feet. These figures are depicted in a calm, unnatural pose with hind legs and tails forming an elegant fretwork pattern.

Harbison identified this scene as St. Anthony lamenting the death of St. Paul with the lions that helped dig the latter's grave, whereas Roe suggested these leonine figures are meant to recall the lion-headed throne of David and Solomon, further associating the piper with the court.[503] Greer Ramsey's study of pipers in Irish art argued that the instrument may have "worldly," and possibly evil connotations, and provide the antithesis to the heavenly harp. She highlighted literary references of *cuislennach* (pipers) and other musicians among the king's retinue and noted further visual examples on pipers on the Scottish monuments of St. Martin's Cross of Iona, the cross-slab at Ardchattan, and the Lethendy slab.[504] In the "aulic" representations of an enthroned David composing psalms surrounded by his court and entertainers, horn-players or pipers are common features, as visible in the image of David's Court (fol. 30v) in the Vespasian Psalter (Figure 113). Pipe-players or trumpeters are also depicted in tandem with harpists within the same composition at Muiredach's Cross, the Durrow Cross, and the Lethendy cross-shaft (Figures 117, 120, 125). Ultimately, it remains unclear if the Clonmacnoise figure is meant to represent David, his son Solomon, a court musician, or a personification of worldliness. Yet, the various representations of harpers and pipers on these prestigious works of art tend to have royal connotations.

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[503] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:302. Roe, "The David Cycle," 55-56.

[504] Greer Ramsey, "The Triple Pipes on Irish High Crosses: identification and interpretation," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 61 (2002): 26-36.

Mark Hall discussed the Lethendy cross-shaft with its image of harper and piper within the frameworks of "oath-taking, kingship-affirming, and law-giving."[505] He associated this fragmented cross with a nearby site of power and assembly, the Clunie Loch mound, prior to its later inclusion into the architectural fabric as a lintel in the Lethendy Tower. The image of the musicians appearing on the shaft exhibited what Hall deciphered as v-shaped ritual sword or blade cuts (Figure 120). Conor Newman made a similar case based in archaeological, historical, and literary evidence for the tradition of warrior and kingship ceremonies involving stones and swords concerning Irish monuments.[506] He identified more than thirty blade-marks on the base of the Market Cross at Kells (which displays martial images of battle, armed riders, bow-wielding centaurs, and stags), and cited possible instances on the Kell's unfinished cross and the Lorrha Cross, as well as on cross-slabs and pre-Christian monuments in Ireland (Figure 126). [507] These examples complement instances of ritual cuts found in the British Isles on

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[505] Mark A. Hall, "Lifeways in Stone: Memories and Matter: Reality in Early Medieval Sculpture from Scotland," in *Early Medieval Stone Monuments*, ed. Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton, and Meggen Gondek (Rochester, NY: The Boydell, 2015), 190-192. The Lethendy Cross-shaft was discovered in 1969 in the Lethendy Tower House. It was being used as a lintel in the stairway and inchoated there sometime during the sixteenth to eighteenth century. It was removed and conserved in 2001. I. Fisher and F.A. Greenhill, "Two unrecorded carved stones at Tower of Lethendy, Perthshire," *PSAS* 104, (1971-2): 238-41.

[506] Newman, "The Sword in the Stone," 425. The deeply cut grooves of these stones have been previously considered to be iconoclasm, plough marks, and poorly rendered ogham. Newman considered them to be conscious cuts made in high crosses, cross-slabs, and bullaun stones, as part of rituals relating to political, religious, and personal transitional boundaries.

[507] Ibid., 427. He noted thirty grooves cut into the top of the base.

the Sueno Stone (Moray), Kirriemuir No. 2 stone (Angus), and the tenth-century Maen

Achwyfan stone (Flintshire).[508] Newman's hypothesis contributed additional support to

the consideration of monumental stones as witnesses in the Insular world, in that he

proposed that "[t]he v-shaped grooves may have symbolized a returning of potency of the

sword to the stone and represent renewal of the blade and with it the revitalization of

lineage and of kingship, or indeed the renewal of oaths, treaties, alliances and laws."[509]

If the artist of the Lethendy cross-slab did not intend for the harpist and piper to be

associated with King David originally, it apparently became a powerful symbol

associated with martial rituals and possible rulership at some later point in the

monument's biography.

Newman also argued that the aforementioned Kilnassagart pillar, located on the

Sli Midhluachra and marking the southern boundary of Armagh, displays ceremonial

marks (Figures 58-60).[510] He pointed to several written accounts that consider boundary

stones with ritual cuts as *foci* for rituals of kingship, warrior ethos, and oaths, including

the story of the "Rock of Weapons" (*cloch na narm*) from the "*Acallam na Senórach*'s"

("Colloquy with the Ancients"). On this "stone," located in Leinster, warriors sharpened

their weapons each year at *Samhain* to prevent dullness in battle. Coscrach na Cét, the

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[508] Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton, and Meggen Gondek, "Introduction: Stones in Substance, Space and Time," in *Early Medieval Stone Monuments* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell, 2015), 1, 3-4.

[509] Hall, "Lifeways in Stone," 190-192.

[510] Newman, "The Sword in the Stone," 426.

hospitaller of the High-King of Leinster, explained to his guest Patrick and Cailte that

"[o]n that rock was the best official test of peace [prevailing in the land] during the reign

of Conn [Cétchathach] and Art [mac Cuinn] and Cormac [mac Art] and Cairbre

Lifechair."[511] During their reigns, someone placed a golden armlet in a hollow in the

stone and "so excellent was the rule of those kings that none dared take it away."[512] In

response, Cailte mused on the permanency of the monument's materiality that persisted

long after the warriors had departed: "Whetstone of the weapons, its hosts are all dead.

Though the stone ever since, remains in its place."[513]

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[511] Newman, "The Sword in the Stone," 430. Conn Cétchathach, Art mac Cuinn, Cormac mac Airt, and Cairbre *Lifechair* were four generations of family members, who ruled as legendary kings of Tara during the second and third centuries.

[512] Standish Hayes O'Grady, trans. "The Colloquy of Ancients," in *Silva Gadelica* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892)*,* 209. The story continued with Cailte displaying the hole and circlet as proof of the story and the peace. He recalled: "Howbeit those former kings successively passed away until Cairbre Lifechair arose, who fell in the battle of Gowra; then we (so many of the remnant of the Fianna as we were) retreated to this ford, and with putting of that which had been its upper part downwards I inverted the stone so that it was as ye behold it.' The company said: 'could we but see the hole and the token we would believe the thing.' 'Grant me a little spell for the Gael is a perfervid being- till I lift the nether and make an upper end of it," said Caeilte; whence the adage: 'a perfervid being is the Gael.' But the whole of them as many as they were there went at it presently and all together, yet even so availed no jot with it. Then came Cailte and with his two fore-arms embraced it, hove it out of the earth, and it proved to be thus: with its bangle of gold through a hole at the lower end, so that all in general saw it. Cailte addressed himself to the bracelet and divided it in two: one−half he gave to Patrick, the other to them of the town in which they were, and its name therefore from that time to this is cluain fhalach, i.e. 'lawn of the fail or armlet;' that of the stone being *lia na narm* or 'the monolith of arms.'"

[513] Newman, "The Sword in the Stone," 430. O'Grady, "The Colloquy of Ancients," 209. O'Grady's translation of Cailte's words were different: "Many a spear of the king with which grief is wrought, many an accomplished hero's sword, was sharpened by us here upon the pillar-son, O Coscrach, on each recurring Samhain-day."

In short, the appearance of David on the Cross of the Scriptures belonged to a broader network of high-status art that emphasized the prototypical ruler's divinely-sanctioned legitimacy and marital prowess, as well as his indebtedness and gratitude for these gifts. These images associated the same qualities with the lay and religious leaders that created and controlled these monuments. In Ireland and Scotland, the Old Testament king appeared on stone monuments that maintained long-held associations with commemoration, oath-taking, recognition of power, and the marking of boundaries and points of personal transition.

3.4.4   The Last *Brithem*

The misattributed "Proverbs of the Greek," now believed to be a wisdom text of medieval Irish origin, stated that there are "8 columns which strongly sustain the realm of the just king," including the first column that required "truth in all royal dealings."[514] Comparable to the Last Judge on the eastern cross head, the "Proverbs" stated the king

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[514] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6, 23. Nelson cited Dean Simpson, ed., "The *Proverbia Grecorum*," *Traditio,* 43 (1987): 17. No. 2 "*Octo columpnae sunt quae fortiter regnum iusti regis sufferimt. Frima columpna veritas est in omnibus rebus regalibus; secimda columpna patientia est in omni negotio; tertia largitas in muneribus; quarta persuadibilitas in verbis; quinta malorum correctio et contritio; sexta bonorum exaltation atque elevation; septima levitas tributi in populis; octava aequitas iudidi inter divitem et pauperem.*" She attributed the "Proverbs of the Greeks" to an Irish author writing in Latin as early as the sixth century, who drew from various sources to compose the tract. She traced its far-reaching influence to continental Europe during the eighth and ninth centuries. Cathwulf, an Insular scholar and Carolingian courtier, once wrote to Charlemagne (775) with advice that included a discussion of the 8 columns of rulership. See Lawrence Nees, "Godescalc's Career and the Problems of Influence," in *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. John Lowdon and Alixe Bovey (Turnouts: Brepols Publishing, 2007), 27.

must also "correct and grind-down of the wicked, exalt and raise-up of the good, and bring fairness of judging between the rich and poor."[515] Together the Crucifixion and Last Judgment reflect the culmination of the past, present, and future in Christian doctrine. Their paralleled placement within the cross-head on the dominant faces of the Cross of the Scriptures reiterates the intimate connection of these pivotal events. As the western face's images of the Passion and Crucifixion purposefully connect the concepts of Irish and Christian kingship, the eastern face facilitates the comparison of the Last Judge to the Irish ruler's ability to act as a magistrate and his mission to rule by truth.

In the Last Judgement scene, an imposing Christ, fully clothed in a long and sleeved *tunica manicata*, tilts his head to stare down at the viewer from the center of the composition (Figure 97).[516] He holds two symbols of his authority crossed diagonally across his body, a scepter topped with volutes and the cross representing his divinity achieved through his victory over death. Similar cross-armed poses appear in other early medieval religious works of northwest Europe, including the evangelist "Luke" in the Lichfield Gospels (or Chad Gospels, Lichfield Cathedral, eighth century, p.218), the "Tetramorph" in the Trier Gospels (Trier Domschatz, Ms 61 (134), eighth century, fol. 5v), the Fuller Brooch, and the Alfred Jewel (Figures 127-130).[517]

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[515] Nelson, "The Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6, 23.

[516] Nees, "On the Image of Christ Crucified in Early Medieval Art," 349-352.

[517] The Last Judge is sometimes described as having an Osiris-pose due to the similarity of its appearance to common depictions with the Egyptian god of the dead. Although the founders of Christian monasticism Sts. Paul and Anthony originated the ascetic

On the Cross of the Scriptures those bound for heaven are at the judge's right

hand; awaiting the next step are four seated figures stacked in rows of two in the cross

arm. Within the cross of the circle, a large piper or trumpeter leads a train of three of the

faithful towards the center. This may represent the biblical account, "Then shall the king

say unto them on his right hand, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:34). It also fits with

Blathmac's description: §239. "Before your noble unblemished son / the angel will sound

a good trumpet; / there will arise at the sounding every dead one / who has been in human

shape."[518] The "wicked" proceed away from the judge's left, as described in Matthew

(25:41): "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'" The members of this group

turn their backs on Christ, as a winged and taloned creature with leonine head prods the

damned souls onwards towards hell. According to the tenth-century Irish "Poem on the

Day of Judgment," "the Judge will pronounce righteous true judgments, awarding heaven

to the chosen, increase[ing the] punishment to the evil folk."[519] Among these wicked

people are "the lewd, the sinful, the satirists, the contentious, arrogant clerics…envious,

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movement in Egypt, there is little in the way of convincing evidence for the transmission
of the pose, especially as the type was not used in Coptic Egypt.

[518] Carney, *The Poems of Blathmac*, 80-1, §239.

[519] J.G. O'Keeffe, "A Poem on the Day of Judgment," *Ériu* 3 (1907): 29-33, §5. The
poem is found in Dublin, Franciscan Library, Merchants' Quay, MS19, and a copy is
included in the "Book of Lismore." O'Keeffe noted certain linguistic clues that date the
poem to as early as the tenth century.

parricides, [and] wicked and impious chiefs (§7-8)."[520] In the cross-arm to Christ's left are the damned, stacked in rows of two the figures parallel the saved on the other cross-arm. According to the poem, at the Judgement these sinners "shed tears over cheeks (§9)" and their wailings are described as "dreadful…as they go with black demons (§12)."[521] "After being for a long space of time in the scorching fire of Doom, they will be cast by the King of the Sun into a place of torture at last (§11)."[522]

Scholarship remains divided on the extent to which an Irish king acted as a judge, whether or not he held the capacity to judge, and furthermore if he acted alone in decision-making or relied upon the office of a *brithem* who specialized in judgment.[523] Ó Cróinín observed that the Irish king seemed to "occupy a quasi-judicial status" in relation

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[520] O'Keeffe, "A Poem on the Day of Judgment," 30-1. §7. "The red-mouthed brehons, the lewd, the sinful, the satirists, the contentious, arrogant clerics will find neither honour nor welcome." §8. "The envious, the parricides, the wicked, impious chiefs, the lewd unwomanly women will find death and extinction."

[521] Ibid., 30-1. §9. "Bitter and harsh will be their repentance they will shed tears over cheeks, the lying, the impious, the folk enduring sin." §12. "Sorry will be the outcry they will make, dreadful will be their wailings, as they part from holy angels, as they go with black demons."

[522] Ibid., 30-1, §11.

[523] Marilyn Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," *Celtica* 20 (Dublin: Dublin Insitute for Advanced Studies, 1988): 29-52. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish* Law, 23, 51. Ó Croinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 97, note 59. See these sources for a summary discussion of the viewpoints on the extent of a king's role as judge by leading scholars, including Eóin MacNeil, *Early Irish Laws and Institutions* (Dublin: Burns and Oates, 1918), 97-9; Rudolf Thurneysen, "Celtic Law," *Celtic Law Papers: Introductory to Welsh Medieval Law and Government*, ed. Dafydd Jenkins (Brussels: Les Editions de la Librairie encyclopedique, 1973), 68-9; Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, 16; and Fergus Kelly, "An Old-Irish Text on Court Procedure," *Peritia* 5 (1986): 74-106.

to his responsibility of ensuring his *fír flathemon* and justice for the *túath*.[524] Marilyn

Gerriets reasoned that as:

> Trivial disputes among people of low status would certainly not have required the king's attention [rather] disputes among leading nobles within the king's territory and any intractable dispute would have come to the king's attention. If the king could not intervene, his power [*and honor*] among his peers would have been seriously weakened; a *túath* torn by dissention was ill-prepared to defend itself against outside attacks.[525]

Any large misstep in judgment resulted in injustice (*gáu flathemon*), threatening the

king's honor, his ability to rule, and the order and prosperity of the community.

Several examples from the wisdom-text genre and various legal texts conveyed

judging effectively and truthfully as part of the high-king's duties. The "*Tescosca*

Cúscraid" advised the king to "[b]e just and righteous in judgment, not suppressing

speech between the *tethra* of the strong and the weak," as well as "[t]o exalt the good is

incumbent on thee, to enslave the oppressor, to destroy criminals."[526] In order to rule by

truth and for the benefit of his *túatha*, the "*Audacht Morann*" stipulated that a king must

be able to judge the quality of various metals, foodstuffs, water, soil, and livestock.[527] In

return, truthful judgment brought fecundity.[528] Another legal tract detailed it was the

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[524] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 97, note 65. Ó Cróinín referred to Calvert Watkins, "*Is tre fhír flathemon*: marginalia to *Audacht Morainn*," *Ériu* 30 (1979): 181–198.

[525] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 30.

[526] Best, "The Battle of Airtech," 173, 180, §3.

[527] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn,* 10-13, §32-45.

[528] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 41, referring to Máirín Ó Daly, "A Poem on the Airgialla," *Ériu* 16 (1952): 181, 186. §21-22. "Judgements in favor of truth

king's duty to made decisions "regarding killing of people and fines about that."[529]

Additionally, when a judge did not swear an "oath on the Gospel that he will judge truly,"

the responsibility of a verdict passed to "the king or bishop of the *túath*."[530] In relation to

legal trials, there was also evidence of the king having the power to overrule court

decisions, especially those to be settled by combat, and at times held the title of "lord of

judgement" (*flaith airechta*).[531]

How the king handled his other responsibilities affected the perception of both his

ability to judge and his overall legitimacy. Proving oneself on the battlefield and

strategically leading an army to triumph, along with the recognition that accompanied it,

fostered confidence in a ruler's ability to make decisions based in truth and for the

prosperity of the people. Following the list of the eight columns that sustain rulership, the

author of the "Proverbs of the Greek" described what a ruler must accomplish in order to

rule justly and "prepare the way to great joy."[532] The passage mentioned the three things

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are due from him and the pacification of claimants, corn is due and milk and mast and salmon."

[529] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 34. CIH1972. §3-4. "Judgement of the laity is given according to the decision regarding killing of people and fines about that."

[530] Idem. CIH1966. §1. "No judge's judgment is a (valid) judgement until he has sword an oath on the Gospel that he will judge truly about anything he knows according to conscience and soul." §13-15. "The man who rejects that oath is not a judge among the laity, and the judgement goes to the king or bishop of the *túath* afterwards."

[531] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 97, notes 71-72.

[532] Nelson, "On the Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6, 23. Simpson, "The *Proverbia Grecorum*," 17. No. 5: "*Tria sunt quae in regalibus, ut rerum rectores confingunt, sapientes intelliguntur et in rebus cotidianis assidue reperiuntur, quae*

that demonstrate a king is "wise" and "behaving conscientiously in everyday affairs:"
"[t]he first is the victory of the king who is freed of the danger of battle, the second is the
slaying of enemies and adversaries, and the third is the good name given by victory."[533]
All three of these features align with the previous arguments regarding the Cross of the
Scriptures as a symbol of victory.

The "*Críth Gablach*" presented contradictory passages regarding the topic of the
king's role as judge.[534] One entry described the "royal week" (*córus ríg*), which reserved
both Mondays and Saturdays for the judgement of legal cases.[535] Yet, the tract contained
a legal maxim heavily-debated by scholars, which stated "that a king should have a judge
or that he be a judge himself."[536] Kelly also cited the "*Gúbretha Caratniad*" ("The False
Judgments of Caratnia") as further evidence because in this wisdom-text King Conn
Cétchathach conferred with his judge Caratnia about legal cases.[537] Seemingly, the law

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*gaudium nimium magis et mage praeparant. Frima victoria regis de praeliali periculo
liberati, second interfectio inimicorum atque adversariorum, tertia fama victoriae*."

[533] Nelson, "On the Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6, 23.

[534] Binchy, *Críth gablach*. T.M. Charles-Edwards, "*Críth Gablach* and the law of status;"
and "A contract between king and people in early medieval Ireland?" Ó Cróinín, *Early
Medieval Ireland*, 97.

[535] Ibid., 142-7. Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the medieval world*, 64. Gerriets, "The King as
Judge in Early Ireland," 35-36. "Monday for adjudication, for adjusting disputes between
túatha...Saturday for judgements."

[536] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 23-4. Binchy, *Críth gablach*, 152. Binchy, "An
Archaic legal poem," 152.

[537] Ibid., 24. Caratnia was able to defend any questioning of his judgment by the king.
Kelly inferred from these consultations that the legal case was usually decided by a
judge. However, the king could confirm or overturn the judgement, especially if the

provided that a *túatha* should have an official judge (*brithem*) to advise the ruler on legal

decisions concerning the group's well-being, or have the ruler arbitrate unaided

depending on the case. Nevertheless, a king also had the capability to act judiciously and,

thus, should have a knowledge of the law.[538] He also had the power to appoint a judge, as

the "*Audacht Morainn*" advised: §23. "Let [the king] not elevate a judge unless he knows

the true legal precedents."[539] These legal bodies of knowledge included inheritance,

monasteries, lordship, marriage, kinship, boundaries, and treaties.[540] To ensure the

truthfulness of his decision, the law required the judge to swear an oath upon the gospels

and willingly accept the economic and social penalties for any false judgements, i.e. by

paying one *cumal* and risking the loss of honor.[541] Both the *brithem's* advisory role and

the recommendation that he maintained a constant presence within the king's inner circle

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brithem's judgement is called into question. Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 31. Gerriets noted that in the "portrayal of the kings as judge in the legends" the "responses very closely match the portrayal in the legal material."

[538] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 39. CCHXXI.1: "Gregorius Nazianzenus: In worldly business, the king and elder and the expert jurist(?) judge. The king calls on the scribe and the scribe establishes the judgement in the presence of the king; the elder assembles all these and he decrees; the expert jurist(?) assembles elders and co-provincials so that they shall not judge carelessly."

[539] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 8-9, §23.

[540] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 24, 54 (note 46), and 117-8. From a legal heptad, Kelly quoted seven areas of knowledge that support judgement, including: "the law relating to the rights of sons (*cain mac ina techta*), the law relating to monks or monastic clients (*cain manach*), the law relating to lordship (*flatha*), the law of marriage (*lánamna*), the law of kinship (*cairdesa*), boundary law (*críche*), and law relating to a treaty between territories (*cairde*).

[541] Ibid., 54.

closely aligned the two offices. Most likely, the *brithem* advised or passed judgement and

the king added his final approval or denial.[542] It remained within the king's purview to

ensure judgements acted in accordance with *fír flathemon* and upheld the social order.[543]

The historical record reveals Irish kings did not establish codified laws, but rather

societal needs and customs drove the development of legal regulations. The "*Crith*

Gablach" stated that there were four different types of laws (*rechtgí*) a king could enact

on behalf of the *túath*.[544] The first, *rechtge fenechais*, was a decision initiated by the

collective group at an assembly or fair (*óenach*) called by the king and approved by him

through a binding oath. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the panel

depicting a compact, the chief duty of the king was to serve as representative of his

túatha or kingdom and decide the best course of action in the case of external affairs.

"For there are three *rechtgi* which it is proper for a king to bind his *tuatha* to with a

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[542] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 52, n 109. Kelly pointed to an entry in the "*Crith Gablach*" that stated that the judge must be in the retinue of the king, even during sowing season when he is limited to three members of his court. Binchy, *Críth Gablach*, 535-8. Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 31, 36, and 46. From her study of Old Irish legal texts, Gerriets indicated that the *brithem* was reliant on the king "for his status and income and who was his most important companion." She also pointed to a passage from the "*Bretha Nemed*" that highlighted how the king sought advisement about legal decisions from his advisors. CIH1124. 16-8: "Submission to the king for judgement, the king to the ollam, the ollam with the king."

[543] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 48. "Whether the king judged from his own knowledge, judged with the advice of the *brithem*, or had a *brithem* give the judgement, he remained responsible for the provision of justice."

[544] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 99, note 77. Binchy, *Críth gablach*, 20-1, §38. Eóin MacNeill, "Ancient Irish law," 303. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 22. Bhreathnach, *Ireland and the Early Medieval World*, 64.

pledge; *rechtge* for the expulsion of invading kindred [*echtarchenél*], i.e. against the Saxons; *rechtge* for agricultural labor; and *rechtge* of religion, such as the Law of Adomnán."[545] Kings could also unilaterally issue "emergency actions," either creating special laws or temporarily suspending established ones in order to protect the community in times of great strife. The other three *rechtge* listed in the "*Crith Gablach*" apply to these states of exception: "*rechtge* after defeat in battle, that he may unite his *tuatha* thereafter so that they may not destroy each other; *rechtge* after a plague; and *rechtge* of kings, as the *rechtge* of the king of Cashel applies in Munster [over other kings]."[546]

The "*Crith Gablach*'s" stipulation allowing the high-kings to bind his *tuatha* to the "*rechtge* of religion," conveyed a reliance upon the laws of the church and saints to maintain order. The *Traditio Clavium et Legis* panel discussed briefly in the previous chapter provides one of the clearest references to the authority of church doctrine on the Cross of the Scriptures.[547] In addition to the *Traditio Clavium et Legis* on the Cross of the Scriptures and a similar panel on the Cross of Muiredach, Harbison also identified the

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[545] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 100, note 77. Binchy, *Críth gablach*, 20-1, §38. MacNeill, "Ancient Irish law," 303.

[546] Idem. Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, 21-2. Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the medieval world*, 68.

[547] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49. Harbison identified the scene as the *Traditio Clavium et Legis*. Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 163-167.

scene among the ninth-century murals of St. John at Müstair.[548] Prior to its conflation

with the giving of the keys sometime in the ninth century, the iconography of the *Traditio*

Legis ("Giving of the Law") appeared on such early Christian works as the mosaic of Sta.

Constanza[549] and the sarcophagi of Junius Bassus, both from the fourth century.[550] As

Stalley explained, the *Traditio Legis* is "typological," Paul's acceptance of the new law

alludes to Moses's reception of the Ten Commandments, i.e. the old law. [551] When such

images of the *Traditio Clavium et Legis* are studied, scholarly discussion usually turns to

a discussion of the recognition of papal authority.[552] However, the status of the

representatives of the church hierarchy and law stand on equal footing, receiving their

ascribed duties together in apostolic, ecclesiastic, and, perhaps, even monastic

compromise on both the Clonmacnoise and Monasterboice examples. Similarly, Henry

referred to a seventh-century description of a chapel at the Irish monastic settlement of

Perrone, France attributed to the Irish abbot Cellach that also displayed the scene; he

[548] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49. Goll, Exner, Hirsch, and Wolf, *Müstair*.

[549] Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 163-167. Joannes G. Deckers, "Constantine the Great and Early Christian Art," in Jeffrey Spier, *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 94-95.

[550] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *The iconography of the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 49-53.

[551] Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 163.

[552] Ibid., 165-6; and Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland* for discussion of the recognition of papal authority as expressed by art and architecture in early medieval Ireland.

recorded: "[t]he Saviour shows an equal friendship to the two Apostles to Peter giving the keys, to Paul the law."[553] For the purposes of this dissertation, the *Traditio Clavium et Legis panel* points to the recognized joint authority of Rome and church doctrine by those responsible for the creation of the Cross of the Scriptures, and further highlights the centrality of laws and agreements within the social formations of early medieval Ireland.

In concept, *cána*, or sets of ecclesiastic laws adopted in Ireland, protected the "innocent," i.e. women, children, and clergymen, at the same time as they promoted a ruthless attitude towards sinners and criminals.[554] The Church appointed its own judges to decide ecclesiastical affairs, most often bishops, but lay judges were responsible for rulings concerning the *túath*, even when it came to the prescriptions of *cáin* law.[555] With titles such as *Cáin Ciaráin* (Clonmacnoise), *Cáin Adamnáin* (Iona), and *Cáin Pátraic* (Armagh) among the most prominent examples, these law tracts used the preeminent authority associated with principal saints to effectively regulate behavior.[556] These

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[553] Henry, *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions*, 185.

[554] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 101.

[555] Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 42-45. Among the sources Gerriets (p. 43) provided as evidence was CCHXXI.29: "That clerics are not to be judged by laity, but the laity are to be judged by clerics." She included another legal entry (p.44) that referred to the lay adoption of *cáin* law, CIH1965. §16-7: "A lay judge regarded the determination of anything which is proper to a *túath* including *cáin* law and judgement of *Caí*." The "Judgement of Caí" may refer to Mosaic law, supposedly brought to Ireland by a figure named Caí.

[556] Abbots often travelled on circuit (*cuárta*) to enact or reaffirm these laws and assert their monastery's control in certain areas, especially in times of disorder like war, famine or plague. They travelled with relics of saints that served as implements to sanctify the *cána* or other oaths. These holy remains and their receptacles also visibly expressed the

treatises tended to be written at local centers of ecclesiastical power and, although they could be adopted interregionally, they normally established regionally-specific codes of conduct. The promulgation of *cána* denoted alliances between different political and religious polities and the extent of influence of major monasteries, such as Clonmacnoise and Armagh.

Apart from exceptional cases, a king did not often make laws, rather regulations evolved out of custom in early medieval Ireland. As a proponent of truth, however, the ruler could accept, enforce, and help to decide their application on behalf of the *túath*. Christ the Last Judge, as represented on the eastern head of the Cross of Scriptures, would return at the cataclysmic event to serve as assessor of the righteous and wicked and ensure true believers returned with him to heaven. Awaiting the end of days, the church supported a new symbol of authority ruling in Christ's image to pass judgment on the earth. Based in pre- and early-Christian governance practices, the virtuous king promoted truth and enabled peace, protecting his *tuatha* physically in this life and bettering their chances of obtaining eternal peace in the next. According to the "*Uraicecht Becc*," the king's judgement superseded all others for it was based on a total knowledge of "[legal] maxims, on precedents, and on scriptural citations," rather than just one of these branches.[557] When considered together, the western and eastern faces of

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saint's presence and provided evidence of the power imparted to their current ecclesiastic successors.

[557] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 125, note 56. Gerriets, "The King as Judge in Early Ireland," 37. CIH2261. §18-35: "Every judgement of a churchman that exists, it is on the truth and entitlement of scriptures that it is based; the judgement of the poet,

the Cross of the Scriptures conflate ideas of Christian and lay kingship and suggest the collaboration of secular and ecclesiastical leaders in the terms of the legal sphere and judgement. This cooperation is most clearly represented in the plinth inscriptions naming Flann Sinna and Abbot Colman on the dominant faces on the cross. Mutually beneficial partnerships are also apparent in the previously discussed eastern panels, the *Traditio Clavium et Legis* representing a great Church compromise and the compact panel, an agreement between lay rulers. Thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, the foundation panel on the eastern face of the Cross of the Scriptures expresses the unification of these two spheres of leadership. The image represents a momentous pact for the future of Christian kingship in Ireland, Clann Cholmáin preeminence, and Clonmacnoise's prosperity and position in the monastic hierarchy.

3.5   Summary

Complementing the previous chapter's study of the political structure, specific historical events, and interaction of monument and location, this chapter reveals an additional layer of arguments presented on the Cross of the Scriptures to support Flann Sinna's legitimate high-kingship. Since the cross's elevation to imperial regalia by Constantine, the symbol of Christ's triumph over death and evil expanded to represent the divinely-sanctioned victories of earthly rulers across early medieval Christendom. The elite presented the cross in impressive forms of monumental sculpture or *cruces gemmatae* in thanksgiving for their favorable conditions and as signs of adoration of the

however is based on maxims; the judgement of the lord, however, is based on them all; on maxims, on precedents, and scriptural citations ([true testaments])."

Godhead. Resembling their continental counterparts, the leaders of the northwestern isles adopted this versatile symbol, expressing the numerous messages inherent to its form in a variety of ways to support their political ideologies. Yet, the high cross also incorporated a native tradition that recognized the capacity of monumental stones to be impactful, authenticating, and sacral. Further enhancing the prestigious form and material of the monument-type, the Cross of the Scriptures and similar crosses depicted universal iconographic models of Christian kingship that appealed to Irish rulers seeking to establish or maintain primacy. To promote comparison, images of King David, the quintessential ruler of the Old Testament and the past, *Christus Rex*, the present King of kings, and the all-powerful and future Christ of the Last Judgment accompany the name of Flann Sinna, as well as possible representations of the high-king and his royal ancestors.

Chapter 4

THE HIGH CROSS AS LANDMARK: EVOKING THE PAST TO CLAIM THE PRESENT

Another dimension of the high-cross-type's multivocality and multifunctionality is its capacity to act as an apotropaic boundary marker. It could demarcate both the sanctuary and physical territory of a monastery and define the extent of power for certain influential lay and ecclesiastic polities. The second chapter examined the Cross of the Scriptures through the events of Flann Sinna's reign and revealed the importance of the monument's placement within its contemporary geopolitical context. Its location on the boundaries of the Connacht and Mide regions expressed the compact between the two overkingdoms. The cross simultaneously claimed victory for the *Leth Cuinn* over the *Leth Moga*, near the border separating these ancient halves. Yet, what this study still lacks is a complete understanding of how the high cross actually performed as a boundary marker within Irish society. In other words, from what sources did it derive its authority to demarcate the land and how did it effectively convey this power. Was the high cross's powers of demarcation and protection tied only to the authority of the Christian faith, or did other factors contribute to the activation of these functions? To perform efficiently, boundary markers often visually express pertinent information clarifying the ownership of the territory in question. As every high cross was subject to the specific circumstances of its locus of creation, each monument differed in form and decoration. Among these variations are encoded signs to inform contemporary viewers about the 1) owners and

their beliefs, 2) the nature of the place within the boundary, and 3) possibly the land claim itself. This approach reveals the high cross to be a tangible expression of the bond between territorial claims, ritual kingship, and ancestry within early Irish cultural memory.[558]

The current chapter explores how the Cross of the Scriptures expressed early Irish society's respect for the ancestral past, as a part of Flann Sinna's broader strategy to claim primacy, territory, and his family's special relationship with Clonmacnoise. Its decorative program integrated contemporary events, the legendary past, and Christian history, portraying the different eras as part of the same narrative. The monument also acted as a cenotaph, calling to mind the burials of past kings and abbots present at the monastery. The Cross of the Scriptures served as a reminder of the continued presence and patronage of the monastery's founding saint, Ciarán, both through his holy remains and his spiritual successors, the abbots of Clonmacnoise. The work epitomized the collaboration of lay and ecclesiastical powers and advanced both the communal and personal gains of the actors responsible for its creation.

4.1 Boundary Markers in Early Medieval Ireland: Ancestral Ferta, Ogham Stones, and High Crosses

Early medieval Irish culture actively fostered a connection between landscape and its past, whether ancestral, historical, or legendary. The association was so pronounced that it provided a framework governing numerous aspects of Irish society, including the

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[558] Joanna MacGugan, "Landscape and Lamentation: Constructing Commemorated Space in Three Middle Irish Texts," *PRIA* 112C (Sept. 2012): 189.

law, politics, family structure, religion, literature, and art. A notable example was the aforementioned *dindschenchas* (lore/history of places) genre, which was a required body of knowledge for both the military elite, who considered such factors in their campaigns, and for their legal and historical advisors, the Brehons.[559] The relationship between the land and its past occupants was also a crucial component to the demarcation and claiming of land. Thomas Charles-Edwards's study of territorial boundaries based on legal texts revealed that hereditary claims decided land rights, and ancestral burials acted as boundary markers and protective totems.[560] He summarized that "[t]he dead warded off the outsider from the land thus protect[ing] the rights of their heirs; and this belief provided the basis for the part of the procedure for claims to land which showed the basis of any lawful claim, hereditary right."[561] Bhreathnach added that "graves of past generations presented a focus for ceremonies involving the legitimization of authority, taking possession of land, and marking borders."[562] This section examines the legal, archaeological, and literary evidence of these ancestral burial-boundary markers, as well as how ogham stones functioned in a similar capacity. It also explores accounts recording

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[559] In modern Irish, *dindshenchas* translates as "topography." Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, 166–167. Charles Bowen, "A historical inventory of the Dindshenchas," *Studia Celtica* 10-11 (1975-1976): 116. Charles Bowen stated the "name of every place was assumed to be an expression of history."

[560] Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Irish Law," 83.

[561] Ibid., 87.

[562] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World,* 57.

the use of high crosses as landmarks and apotropaic totems and connects the monument-

type to past traditions of using ancestors to defend and assert ownership of land.

Recorded in a legal tract from late-sixth or early-seventh century, the process of

claiming a piece of land, or *tellach* (legal entry), involved the petitioner driving yoked

horses across the boundary of the property, specifically over a *fert* (grave-mound) in the

presence of witnesses. If the previous occupant failed to respond to this action, the

claimant repeated the process two more times, each time increasing the number of horses

and witnesses. If still no defendant came forward, the final act of staying the night and

lighting a fire verified the claimant's ownership of the property. The emphasis on driving

over the burial-mound implied that it was necessary to gain the acceptance of the

ancestral landowners in order to deem the claim legitimate. It also connected the

procedure to the concept of *fintiu*, or kin-land, which was territory that could only be

claimed by members of the landholding *derbfine* in question. As noted in the previous

chapter's discussion of *fingal*, the *derbfine* served as the primary source of legal and

physical protection in early medieval Ireland. Members of the extended kin-group

provided protection for landholdings and family members, as well as bearing the

responsibility both for exacting retribution and compensating wronged parties, in order to

preserve the family's honor and societal standing.[563]

Archeological evidence further supports Charles-Edwards' investigation into the

legal aspects of ancestors acting as guardians and holding ultimate approval over land

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[563] Gilbert Márkus, *Conceiving a Nation: Scotland to AD 900* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 211-213.

claims.[564] Bhreathnach, O'Brien, and FitzPatrick all cited the practice of repurposing

prehistorical and early medieval *ferta*, or hillocks imitating these monument-types, for

later burials, as well as for royal inaugurations and assemblies during the early medieval

period.[565] Thus, *ferta* were essential for both commonplace boundary demarcations and

territorial claims, as well as for politically-motivated burials employed to foster a

connection to a royal past. O'Brien argued that either "new or intrusive groups inserted

burials into the ancestral burial *ferta* of an ousted group in order to create a contrived

form of continuity as a means of legitimizing a claim to territory" or "legitimate

occupants [reused their] own ancestral *ferta* in order to confirm title to their land during

challenging times."[566] Furthermore, the locations of these appropriated monuments were

often near prominent natural features, including rivers and ridges, that could also act as

boundaries in their own right.[567]

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[564] Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Irish Law," 83-7. FitzPatrick, "Assembly places and Elite Collective Identities," 52. O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 135-154.

[565] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 186-9. O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 145.

[566] O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 145. O'Brien referred to her previous work, O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England*; as well as R. Bradley "Time regained: The creation of continuity," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 140 (1987): 1-17; H. Williams, "Ancient landscapes and the dead: The reuse of prehistoric and Roman monuments as early Anglo-Saxon burial sites," *Medieval Archaeology* 41: 1-32; and Edwards, "Early Medieval inscribed stones and stone sculpture in Wales," 22. See also FitzPatrick, "Assembly places and Elite Collective Identities in Medieval Ireland," 52. FitzPatrick supported that dynasties exploited "ancestral attachments" and "territorial history" to legitimize their reigns.

[567] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World*, 10-11.

Both the use of familial burials as boundary markers and the insertion of graves

into earlier *ferta* for purposes of conveying dynastic continuity are examples of a respect

for the ancestral past that permeated the culture of early medieval Ireland. To reiterate

FitzPatrick's observations discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, "the names of

eponymous ancestors and mythological heroes with whom ruling dynasties aligned were

ascribed to particular monuments and landscapes in medieval toponyms" providing

further evidence that the concept of 'geography of lineage' ordered both territory and

landholding."[568] Rulers laid claim to land by evoking an actual or imagined ancestor

present in the historical landscape and cultural memory. Correspondingly, these ancestral

figures featured prominently in historical annals, genealogies, and *dindshenchas*, as well

as in the stories of local saints and monastic foundations.

There are two examples from literature of kings seeking burial along ancestral

boundaries in order to protect their territory in the afterlife. In the "*Caithréim Cellaig*"

("The Victory of Cellach"), High-King Eóghan Bél of Connacht (d.542) requested to be

buried standing up with a red spear in his hand and facing north towards his enemies, the

Uí Fiachrach of the Northern Uí Néill.[569] The second reference is more specific and

comes from hagiography. According to Tírechán's "Life of St. Patrick," Loegaire mac

Néill articulated his belief in the protective nature of ancestral burials to the saint when

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[568] FitzPatrick, "Assembly places and Elite Collective Identities," 52-3.

[569] Kathleen Mulchrone, ed. *Caithréim Cellaig,* Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 24 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971), 65-70, 82-87. This group mortally wounded the king in battle and, according to other sources, killed his son Cellach, a student of St. Ciarán.

the two adversaries convened at Tara. In defense of the traditions of his forefathers, the

high-king explained:

> My father Níall [*Noígíallach*] did not allow me to believe [in Christ], but
> [said] that I should be buried in the ridges of Tara, I the son of Níall, and
> the sons of Dúnlang in Maistiu in the plain of Liffey, face to face like men
> armed for war until the day of *erdathe*, as the magicians call it, that is the
> day of the Lord's judgement. For the pagans are accustomed to be armed
> in their tombs, with weapons ready.[570]

As they once did in life, Loegaire's ancestors were called upon to protect the family

holdings in death. Their graves demarcated territorial claims, similar to the guiding

principles of *tellach*. Although the dead did not physically rise to guard their kinland,

their preserved memory embedded in the landscape provided a powerful psychological

defense against non-familial aggressors. The story from the saga of Conn Cétchathach

previously mentioned in chapter 3 also relates to this concept, as the stones of the druids

Mael, Blocc, and Bluicne that marked their graves and the boundary of Tara moved aside

when this rightful ruler approached in his chariot.

Bhreathnach, O'Brien, and FitzPatrick's evidence also determined that "pagan"

ancestral burial continued alongside Christian interments for centuries after the

introduction of the faith to Ireland, adding further credence to the well-established

opinion that conversion was a gradual process. Christian burial received preference,

however, as the law recorded as CCHXVIII.5 stated: "lots may be cast to make the

division between the church and the ancestral burial places, but the greater gift should go

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[570] Liam De Paor, ed. "Bishop Tirechan's Account of St. Patrick," in *St. Patrick's World: The Christian Culture of Ireland's Apostolic Age* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 156. See also Márkus, *Conceiving a Nation*, 212.

to the church and a little could go to the ancestral burial place in honor of ancestors."

Likewise, CCHXVIII.3 required "if anyone may have been joined into the church, in that

he will be buried;" and CCHLI.3 "[encouraged Christians] to be buried in desert places,"

i.e. monastic cemeteries, for they are "more likely to be visited by angels."[571]

Nevertheless, the Church recognized that ancestry continued to significantly influence

societal beliefs, especially regarding inhumation. Bhreathnach, O'Brien, and MacGugan

cited several instances from canon law reflecting the compromise between the two

traditions.[572] CCHXVIII.2 declared that a "[m]an or woman [was to be] buried in

paternal tomb" for "everyman is accursed who is not buried in the tomb of his

fathers."[573] CCHLI.2 further noted that those "in the religious state," i.e. Christians or the

Church, were to "blame" if they "neglected" these burials.[574]

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571 O'Brien and Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary Ferta," 55, 58. O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 143 and 149. Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 56-7. CCHXVIII.5.d: "*Si unusquisque secularis voluerit, dividat sors inter ecclesiam et sepulcrum paternum, sed dona sua plurima ecclesiae suae conferre debet, pauca autem in pulcro paterno in honorem partum;*" and CCHXVIII.3.a.: "*Sinodus Hibernensis statuit: Si quis in ecclesia conjunctus fuerit, in ea sepelietur.*"

572 MacGugan, "Landscape and Lamentation," 195; O'Brien and Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary Ferta," 55.

573 Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 56. CCHXVIII.2.a-b: "*Sinodus Romana decrevit: Vir sive mulier in sup paterno sepulcro sepeliatur. Dictitur enmi: Maledictus omnis homo, qui non sepelitur in sepulcro partum suorum.*"

574 O'Brien and Bhreathnach, "Irish Boundary Ferta," 55. Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 209. CCHLI.2: "*Augustinus ait: Alii putant angelicis operationibus sive ad vivorum qualcumque solatium, ad quos pertinent mortui, sive admonendo humano generi, ut sepulturae prebeatur humanitas, quae licet defunctis non opituletur, tamen culpatur, si in religiositate neglegitur.*" O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 149.

In the eighth century, the burial of individuals in "prehistoric burial mounds" ended and inhumations shifted exclusively to Christian graveyards with their saintly protectors. Nevertheless, being laid to rest with one's kindred continued and remained an important aspect of early Irish societal beliefs.[575] Occupying the opposing ends of the spectrum of early Irish social standing were the concepts of *sochraite* and *dochraite*. Charles-Edwards described *sochraite* as the "happy condition [of] being accompanied and supported by many kinsmen and allies," whereas *dochraite* equated to "social isolation."[576] In life, this meant maintaining one's honor by having a prescribed number of men, consisting mostly of kin, for accompaniment when travelling, attending public events, or conducting private dealings. The appropriate number of men in the retinue depended on the event and one's status; the higher the standing of the man in question, whether lay or ecclesiastic, the greater the entourage required.[577] In death, achieving *sochraite* meant establishing eternal companionship for the afterlife through burial placement; laypersons desired to be with their deceased family members, whereas

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[575] O'Brien, "Pagan or Christian?," 2-10. See this article for further discussion of the burial practices that characterized early medieval period.

[576] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 525.

[577] Ibid., 526, note 13 and 14. All lords and kings were expected to travel with a prescribed number of men. The legal system allowed minor kings to have a company of nine to twelve men, but over-kings of provinces could have anywhere from seventeen to thirty.

members of the clergy desired to be with the dead of their religious community and patron saint.[578]

When Christianity became the principal religion of the island, saints assumed the role of superior protectors of the kin-group (*fine érlama*).[579] Charles-Edwards noted the five qualities of the holy *érlam* included: "he was heavenly patron of the community attached to his church; he participated in the foundation of the church; he decided upon the rule of the community; he is buried in the church cemetery; and he will represent others buried in the same cemetery on Judgement Day."[580] For example, St. Mochuda said he would gather his faithful on Judgement Day at the Cross of Constantine in front of the church at the monastery of Rahan.[581] Burial near a saint thus allowed one to retain "loyalty to one's kin" *and* follow Christian prescriptions.[582] The superiority of saints within Christian society was most notably evident in the development and adoption of

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[578] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 525.

[579] Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland*, 161-3. Wycherley wrote that "*érlam*" came to mean patron or founding saint, however it "appears to be a pre-Christian term originally meaning "tutelar deity." Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, "Érlam: The Patron Saint of the Irish Church," in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Richard Sharpe and Alan Thacker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 290.

[580] Charles-Edwards, "Érlam," 290.

[581] Plummer, *Bethada Náem NÉrenn*, 297.

[582] Ibid., 287. An *érlam* was considered the patron saint of a monastery, "many of course were founders, but they did not have to be." Tomás Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting of the Cult of relics in Early Medieval Ireland," *JRSAI* 133 (2003): 147. Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 44, 84, and 109, §86-7 and 92.

cáin laws associated with the island's holy men, such as *Cáin Adamnáin*, *Cáin Pátraic* and *Cáin Ciarán*, that were enacted by numerous kings. In hagiography and saga alike, the protection of holy men overwhelmingly prevailed over transgressors, although not without significant challenges, as evident in the stories discussed below featuring the High-King Diarmait mac Cerbaill. Saintly remains in the form of relics were believed to have the power to heal, calm weather and end drought, bring forth victory, and lend protection both to their permanent location and wherever they might travel on circuit (*cuairt*) with the ecclesiastic elite. The belief in the apotropaic quality of sacral remains that formed the basis of belief for the cult of the relics was not far-removed from previous traditions. These holy objects could also serve as objects to bind treaties between institutions or as gifts to cultivate political alliances and ecclesiastic relationships, as well as official emblem of a monastery.[583]

Although Charles-Edwards asserted that "the dead lost their power to defend the land which they had left their heirs" when Christianity was "[r]elegated to the graveyards of the churches," the following discussion investigates the alternative in relation to the

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[583] Wycherley, *The Cult of the Relics in Early Medieval Ireland*, 168-178. Wycherley (p.168) observed that violating a reliquary was equivalent to attacking the saint, as well as the monastic institution and its leadership. In her discussion of the use of relics to foster bonds between geographically-diverse religious institutions (p. 170), she noted Armagh's possession of relics of Peter and Paul that not only tied the institution to Rome and the papacy, but also allowed its leaders to argue for primacy among of Irish monasteries. Finally, Wycherley (p. 178) explained "[t]he use of relics fitted into the system of reciprocity and gift exchange that was an important feature of late antique and medieval society."

Cross of the Scriptures.[584] Although burials outside church cemeteries were no longer acceptable for Christian kings, the connection of the ancestral and heroic past to the landscape was not lost. It remained sacred yet altered to conform to the tenets of Christianity. Of course, the concept of respecting markers set up by ancestors in Ireland also did not conflict with ideas expressed in the Old Testament: "In the inheritance which you will hold in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess, you shall not move your neighbor's boundary marker which men of old have set" (Deuteronomy 19:14).[585] Stones with references to the ancestral and Christian heroes, such as the Cross of the Scriptures, and kinship burials remained effective in claiming strategic places and supporting claims dynastic legitimacy, and in Flann Sinna's case, primacy.

There is a discernible connection between ancestral burials acting as apotropaic markers of land claims and the performative aspects of the high cross through a related monument type, the ogham stone (Figures 131-132ab). Considered widely as one of the variety of inspirations that led to the creation of the free-standing high cross, Edwards also suggested that the monument-types were contemporaries, subject to regional and economic disparities rather than different stages in a stylistic development. Nevertheless, a dialogue seemed to exist between the two. As discussed in chapter 2's consideration of stone monuments as object-witnesses, Plummer's early work on the function of the ogham stone explored its role as a burial marker. He cited passages from the "*Berrad*

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[584] Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Early Irish Law," 86, note 9.

[585] A similar warning appears in Proverbs 22:28, "Move not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set."

Airechta" concerning ancestral land claims, which stated that "[h]eirs have no memories

without, among other things, ogam upon stones."[586] Advancing the discussion of the

versatile monument-type, Charles-Edwards connected ogham stones to ancestral land

claims; he wrote

> men may be buried upon the boundary of their land; their graves may be
> marked by ogam inscriptions upon stones; and the inscriptions may be
> used by their heirs to confirm their hereditary right to the land. These
> inscriptions normally specify the father or kindred of the dead man, and
> thus facilitate the argument of their heirs based upon proving the identity
> of the former holders of the lands.[587]

These stones with their formulaic inscriptions noting a person's lineage and larger

familial ties (i.e. kingdoms) could act as witnesses or guarantors of legal contracts in their

function as territorial boundary markers by invoking the memory of past inhabitants for

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[586] Plummer, "On the Meaning of Ogam Stones," 387-390. See also Damian McManus, *A Guide to Ogam*, Maynooth Monographs 4 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1991), 163-6. Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Early Irish Law," 84. Another legal tract claims: "heir of a grave-stone which lies about lands." Although Plummer sought a sole function for these monuments and emphasized their purpose as a grave-markers, scholars have since expanded upon this view, allowing for a variety of functions, including the stones performing as devotional foci, commemorations without burial, pilgrimage markers, and territorial markers. Edwards, *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, 161. Edwards noted that Henry hypothesized that the ogham stone was an early (fifth and sixth century) example in the development of the high cross, which progressed in "monumentality and elaborateness" until achieving its apex in the later early Middle Ages; 14% of ogham stones display inscribed crosses. Rather than Henry's stylistic chronology, Edwards approached the corpus of ogham stones regionally, stating the variety of shapes, inscriptions and ornaments "do not form a coherent group." She observed that stones with ogham may be contemporary to freestanding high crosses, as many of the former are found in the northwest of Ireland where there are few and late examples of the later.

[587] Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Early Irish Law," 84. Some examples of ogham stones marking boundaries are located at Gleensk, Crag, and Ballintermon (Co. Kerry), as well as Keavaugh More (Co. Cork).

the protection of the current residents. [588] Burials or stones, and places where the two

coincided, effectively projected the memory of the ancestor to promote claims as deeply

rooted in the landscape.[589]

When the early medieval crosses were removed to the Clonmacnoise Visitor

Centre in the early 1990s, the excavations around the crosses within the semi-circular

area in front of the church revealed a concentration of early medieval burials, among later

post-medieval and modern interments.[590] The early male burials date mostly from the

eighth-tenth centuries with the earliest from the seventh century. The pit beneath the

Cross of the Scriptures revealed the impression of large, wooden post, while burial slabs

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[588] Charles-Edwards, "Boundaries in Early Irish Law," 85. As Charles-Edwards summarized, "[t]o have an *ogam* inscription recording the names of a dead ancestor placed above his grave was to reinforce the power of the dead man to repel non-kinsmen from claiming the land."

[589] Stones were not limited to representing the deceased. They could also represent the future fortunes of families. In a story involving two of Ireland's preeminent saints, Patrick and Brigit, the latter dreamed of a shower falling upon two stones. The smaller stone increased and emitted silver sparks, as the larger stone wasted away. Patrick interpreted the stones of Brigit's dream to be the two sons of Echaid son of Crimthann. His prophecy for the dominance of northeastern Ireland came to bear with the decline of the descendants of one son, the Uí Bressail family, because of their reluctance to become Christian, and the rise of the other son's offspring, the Uí Cremthainn, for their acceptance. Charles Doherty, "Warrior and king in early Ireland," in *Kings and warriors in early north-west Europe*, ed. Jan Erik Rekdal and Charles Doherty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), 133-4. Kathleen Mulchrone, ed. *Bethu Phátraic: the Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1939), 108, II, 2052-67. "Brigit said: 'Thereafter I saw two stones, one of the twain a small stone and the other a large. A shower dropt on them both. The little stone increased at the shower, and silvery sparks would break forth form it. The large stone, however, wastes away.' 'Those,' saith Patrick, 'are the two sons of Echaid son of Crimthainn.'"

[590] King, "Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise," 127-30.

and pillow stones were found in the pits beneath the South and North Crosses. Curiously, six of the earliest burials focused around the Cross of the Scriptures were interred with animal bones, one rested under a man's chin and others were found near the right hands of two men.[591] Of course, none of the burials can be assigned to any historical personages discussed in this dissertation, but their location implies some sort of relationship with the monuments.

The basic form of the high cross, a cross on a base, invites an interpretation in relation to the practice of placing ancestral monuments on borders for both protection and ownership. Scholars traditionally considered the truncated pyramidal base as a stylized Golgotha or Calvary, the hill upon which Christ's sacrifice transpired, as well as the alleged location of Adam's skull (MT 27:33; MK 15:22; LK23:33; JN19:17).[592] After the discoveries of the True Cross and Christ's tomb, Constantine built the Holy Sepulchre complex upon the spot (Figure 75). He and subsequent emperors may have erected memorial crosses to mark the site of the Crucifixion.[593] Tomás Ó Carragáin convincingly

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[591] King, "Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise," 129.

[592] Helen Roe, "The Irish high cross: morphology and iconography," *JRSAI* 95 (1965), here 224. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:350; and "A High Cross base from the Rock of Cashel," 18. Stalley, *Irish High Crosses,* 11. Hilary Richardson, "The concept of the high cross," in *Irland und Europa/Ireland and Europe, Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter/The early church* ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta,1984), 31.

[593] Although Eusebius claimed that the empress ordered the temple destroyed, the legend of her finding the True Cross did not appear until the fourth century, as recorded by Ambrose "On the Death of Theodosius" and Rufinius's Latin translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. See Ambrose of Milan and Dorothy Dolorosa Mannix, *Sancti*

presented evidence that some Irish monastic layouts were modelled after the Holy

Sepulchre complex, making high crosses within these plans akin to the series of imperial

crosses erected on the hill believed to be Golgotha.[594] In its simplest form, the Cross of

the Scriptures consists of the representation of the mound in which the ancestor of men is

interred, and upon which is placed a stone monument with an inscription naming those

who controlled the land.

The top register of the eastern face of the Cross of the Scriptures' base depicts

three horses commanded to march with near dressage-like precision by their riders, while

the bottom register contains two more horses pulling chariots with eight-spoked wheels

(Figure 133). One of the possible readings for these figures is that they may be a

reference to the nearby travelling route, the Eiscir Riada, the second word referring to

horse and chariot riders.[595] The charioteers also evoke the idea of *tellach*, as they appear

riding across a stylized representation of the mound, i.e. the cross base. Comparatively,

the same application of the language of land entitlement also appeared in the "*Félire*

Óengusso" ("Martyrology of Óengus," a late-eighth-century, early-ninth-century text),

which described three saints as "unyoking" their chariots in heaven and effectively

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Ambrosii Oratio de obitu Theodosii: text, translation, introduction and commentary
(Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1925).

[594] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland,* 72-82.

[595] Curry, *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, 69. Curry discussed the etymology of the name Eiscir
Riada.

seizing their place.[596] Chapter three briefly discussed the role of a chariot in helping to

identify the high-king of Tara, but there is further evidence of the apparatus's relation to

kingship. Unlike the perfectly controlled horses on the cross-base, the "*De Shíl Chonairí*

Móir" spoke of a chariot that would be unwieldy and cause the "horses to jump up

against" any false man attempting to claim the kingship Tara.[597] The "*Audacht Morainn*"

used the analogy of a charioteer to advise a young king to be as the driver of an old

chariot, i.e. one "who does not sleep. He looks ahead, he looks behind, in front and to the

right and to the left. He looks, he defends, he protects so that he may not break(?) with

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596 Stokes, *Félire Oengusso*, xlvii, 124. May 17th: "The hosting of Adrio, of Victor, of
Basilla: they unyoked, without a whit of weakness, on a height of the blessed kingdom."
("*D. xvi. Call Iunii. Slóiged Adrionis, Uictoris, Basille: scorsit cen chuit fainee for dind
flatha finde.*") The "*Félire Oengusso*" appears in the following manuscripts: Dublin,
Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 16, "Leabhar Breac," (Hodges and Smith 224, 1230),
fifteenth century; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 3 (1242), fifteenth-sixteenth
century; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 610, "Book of the White Earl,"
fifteenth century; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. B 512, c.1500; Brussels,
Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 5100-5104 (507), [1630]; Oxford, Bodleian
Library, MS Rawl. B 505, "Codex Insulensis (MS R2 or I), fourteenth-fifteenth century;
Dublin, University College, MS Franciscan A 7, fifteenth century, Dublin, National
Library of Ireland, MS G10, section 2, sixteenth century; London, British Library, MS
Egerton 88, [c.1564]; Trinity College Dublin, MS 1337, section 19, sixteenth century.
The original tract is dated by contextual clues, as Óengus says he was educated by Máel
Ruain who died in 792, as well as the reference to the recent deaths of Donnchad mac
Domnaill, king of Tara, (d.797) and Bran Ardchenn mac Muiredaig, king of Leinster
(death c.795).

597 Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 134. Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 33. See also,
Heinrich Wagner, "Studies in the Origins of early Celtic civilisation," *Zeitschrift für
celtische Philologie* 31 (1970): 14. In an attempt to support the Celtic migration theory,
Wagner also attempted to draw attention to a number of examples of chariot references
representing "truth" in the collection of Indian hymns, the Rigvedá.

neglect or violence the wheel-rims which run under him."[598] Therefore, the horses

pulling men in chariots across the stylized mound could have likely referred to the nearby

major traveling route and represented the claiming of land, while affirming the military

prowess and truthful kingship of Flann Sinna and his ancestors.

Before proceeding into the bulk of this chapter that provides an in-depth

investigation of how the Cross of the Scriptures projected the ancestry of Clonmacnoise

to safeguard Flann Sinna's territorial and political claims, it is first useful to summarize

the recorded evidence of high crosses acting as protective boundary markers. An earlier

section presented the Cross of the Scriptures' function as an indicator of the boundary

between overkingdoms, simultaneously denoting both inter-regional compact and

discord. Several annals also supported its function as a topographical marker of the

physical *and* spiritual territory of a monastery.[599] Along with buildings and roads, high

crosses appeared in the records as landmarks used to more easily define areas of

destruction caused by fires, such as those recorded of Armagh and Clonmacnoise.[600] The

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[598] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 8-9, 33, §22.

[599] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 58. Bradley, "The Monastic Town of Clonmacnoise," 58-9.

[600] AU1166.4: Armagh burned "from the **Cross of Colum-cille**, the two streets to the **Cross of Bishop Eogan** and from the **Cross of Bishop Eogan** one of the two streets, up to the **Cross of the door of the Close**…and a street towards the Close to the west, - namely, the **Cross of [St.] Sechnall** to the **Crosses of [St] Brigit** [was burned]." AFM957.10: "The Termon of Ciarain was burned this year, from the **High Cross** to the *Sinainn* [Shannon], both corn and mills."AFM918.9: "A great flood in this year, so that the water reached the Abbot's Fort of Cluain-mic-Nois, and to the causeway of the **Monument of the Three Crosses**." Moss, *Art and Architecture of Ireland,* 1:146. Moss

Annals of Tigernach and the Annals of the Four Masters also referred to the Cross of the

Scripture's historical location as a site of protection and boundary in 1060, when: "[t]he

Éile and the Ó Fócarta plundered Clonmacnoise and took many prisoners out of *Chrois*

na Screbtra, and two persons were killed, i.e. a student, and another a layman. So God

and St Ciarán commanded the Delbna to pursue them."[601] The record suggested that the

abduction of those in peril occurred either as they sought out the cross for its protective

quality or when they were in its vicinity attempting to enter the bounds of sanctuary.

Legal texts also stipulated the nature of the high cross's symbolic protection.

CCHXLIV.3 specified that "the sanctuary of a sacred place must have markers around it"

and "wherever you find the mark of Christ's cross, do no damage."[602] A poem from the

"*Leabhar Breac*" attested to this practice, when described how Óengus of Tallaght lived

in "a pious cloister behind a circle of crosses."[603] This territorial limit demarcated by the

crosses may have functioned similarly to the previous boundary laws and traditions.

According to a tract in the "*Senchas Már*," "legal entry onto a church [was] across [its]

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noted that descriptions of ecclesiastical settlements frequently use crosses to define the topography of a place.

[601] AFM1060.5; AT1060.

[602] Lisa Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1990), 64. Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 175, CCHXLIV.3: "*Sinodus Hibernensis: Terminus sancti loci habeat signa circe se. Sinodus dicit: Ubicunque inveneritis signum crucis Christi, ne laeseritis.*"

[603] Stokes, *The Martyrology of Oengus, xxv*. §2. "Disert Bethech wherein dwelt the man whom hosts of angels visit, a pious cloister behind a circle of crosses, wherein Oengus son of Oiblén used to be."

grave mound" ("*tellach cille tara fert*.")[604] The eighth-century prayer book, the *Book of Mulling*, included a diagram often interpreted as a plan for an ideal Irish monastic site (Figure 134a-b); it need not be taken as a literal plan of an actual monastery.[605] The illustration depicts four pairs of crosses dedicated to the Evangelists and Old Testament prophets demarcating the exterior of two circles at intercardinal points. Four further crosses are marked within the two rings. If on some level the image acts as a plan, then it supports that crosses should mark the boundary between the sanctuary of a monastic enclosure and the secular world. Before its relocation into the Clonmacnoise Visitor's Centre for conservation purposes, the Cross of the Scriptures stood on the westernmost boundary of the sacred, circular enclosure where its replica now stands. The other two early medieval crosses still at the site, the "North" and "South" Crosses (also replaced by replicas), flank the western cross's central position and perpendicularly bisect the implied line created by Flann and Colmán's high cross and the "Cathedral" (Figure 135). If the imagined plan presented in the "Book of Mulling" serves as an analogue, other crosses of

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[604] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 109. CIH24.2*, Senchas Már*, tract 9.

[605] Trinity College Dublin, MS 60 (A.I.15). Hugh J. Lawlor, "Notes on Some Non-Biblical matter in the Book of Mulling," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 29 (1895): 37. Dominique Barbet-Massin, "The circular drawing in the Book of Mulling and its relationship to the Fleury Prayer Book," in *An Insular Odyssey. Manuscript culture in early Christian Ireland and beyond*, ed. Rachael Moss, Felicity O'Mahony and Jane Maxwell (Dublin: Four Courts Press 2017), 159-174. Harbison, *Irish High Crosses,* 1:345. Lawrence Nees, "The colophon drawing in the Book of Mulling: a supposed Irish monastery plan and the tradition of terminal illustration in early medieval manuscripts," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (Summer, 1983): 67–91. Henry, *Irish art in the early Christian period*, 135. Nees argued that the image interacted more closely with the liturgical text and functioned closer to a colophon than an actual plan of a monastery as first argued by Lawlor.

wood or stone may have also marked the sacred enclosure. The current positions of the

(replicas of) three monuments and the great church, however, combines with the round

shape of the monastery's layout to resemble a cross within a circle.

4.2   The Foundation of Clonmacnoise: Diarmait mac Cerbaill and St. Ciarán

One of the most discussed images among the many appearing on the Cross of the

Scriptures is the lowermost panel on it eastern face featuring two men in profile clasping

a central staff (Figure 23). The scene has been variously interpreted, but current

scholarship generally agrees it illustrates an interaction between a layman and a cleric,

commonly identifying the pair as St. Ciarán (also called Ciarán the Younger or Ciarán of

Clonmacnoise) (c.516-d.545) and a High-King of Tara, Diarmait mac Cerbaill (d.565, r.

544-565).[606] The panel likely depicts a story featured in both St. Ciarán's hagiography

and Diarmait's historical cycle, in which the Uí Néill ancestor and king assisted the cleric

by helping him to raise the first post in the construction of a church, effectively claiming

the land and founding the monastery of Clonmacnoise.

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[606] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49, 202-3. In his 1991 corpus of high crosses, Harbison identified the scene as "Joseph Interprets the Dream of Pharaoh's Butler." The list of scholars that have identified the scene as Diarmait and Ciarán includes, but is not limited to, Margaret Stokes, Françoise Henry, Cathy Herbert, Annette Kehnel, R.A.S. Macalister, Arthur Champneys, Katherine Forsyth, Stephen Driscoll, Patrick Power, Arthur Kingsley Porter, Hans Gsänger, Bettina Brandt-Förster, Conn Manning, Hermann Multhaupt, Roger Stalley, Anthony Weir, Thomas Johnson Westropp, and Henry Crawford. As previously noted, Tomás Ó Carragáin (*Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 153) suggested that the cross panel was not of Ciarán and Diarmait, but its composition helped to inspire the story of founding featured in Ciarán's *Life,* which facilitated a connection between the two projects. Regardless, the image and text are related in the mind of the tenth-century viewers and creators of the cross, whichever of these sources came first.

Styled with tonsured hair, clean-shaven face, and longer embroidered garment and cloak is St. Ciarán, one of the forefathers of Christian monasticism in Ireland. He was the founder and patron saint of several monasteries, but the one that what would be remembered among the greatest cultural and religious centers of early medieval Ireland was Clonmacnoise. Here, Ciarán stands in profile, clasping a thin post with both hands. On the right-side of the panel, his position is mirrored by a warrior, identified by his long hair and beard, short tunic, and thick sword. The compromise between warrior and holy man on the cross represented the most significant agreement for the success of the monastery and the Southern Uí Néill political fortunes. Prior to his rise to power, Diarmait had been exiled by Tuathal Máelgarb (d. 544), who held the High-Kingship of Tara.[607] While in hiding, the warrior came upon Ciarán lighting a fire at Drium Tiprat, the previous name for the land Clonmacnoise occupied. Ciarán informed Diarmait that he was "building a small church" ("*eclas bec do chumdach*") and made a compelling offer to the young warrior in exchange for his help.

> Then Ciarán set up the first post in Cluain and Diarmait mac Cerbeil along
> with him. Said Ciarán to Diarmait when they were planting the post,

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[607] Dan Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 1,4, 89. As discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the "Cycle of Diarmait mac Cerbaill" is a compilation of stories of the High-King of Tara, purportedly written down in the Middle Irish period, 900-1200. Like other works of the genre called the Cycles of Kings, the episodes were developed at different times, places, and recorded in different manuscripts. A composite of these sources appears in the "Book of the Uí Maine," Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, Dii 1, fourteenth century, f.133r-134r (old foliation); the "Yellow Book of Lecan," Trinity College Dublin, H.2.16 fourteenth century, cols.869c-d, 870-875; Egerton 1782, The British Library, sixteenth century, f.37ff; Trinity College Dublin h.1.10. eighteenth century, pp.123-140; and the ML 10, *Colaiste Naomh Mel*, Longfort, nineteenth century, 87ff. The original compilation is believed to be written at Clonmacnoise, as several of the stories from this saga involve the monastery and its founder St. Ciarán.

"Warrior, suffer my hand to be over thy hand and thou shalt be over the men of Ireland in the high-kingship (ard-ri Erenn)." "I permit it," said Diarmait, "only give me a token thereof." "I will" said Ciarán, "though thou art solitary to-day, thou shalt be king of Ireland this time tomorrow."[608]

Shortly after their compact, Tuathal died at the hands of Máel Mór, Diarmait's half-brother (or foster-brother), who was also killed in the conflict.[609] Diarmait became the new High-King of Tara as prophesized by Ciarán, and further verified when the men of

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[608] Macalister, *The Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, 91. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 106, note 58. Similar versions of the story are also recorded in the Bodleian *Vita Ciaran* (Rawl. B 485 and Rawl B 505) and the Clonmacnoise annals. I include here a recent translation by Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 20, §1.11-15. "'Plant the post with me,' Ciarán said Diarmait, 'and suffer my hand to be above yours and your hand and your rule shall be over the men of Ireland before the hour comes again.' 'How might that be accomplished?' Diarmait said, 'For Tuathal holds the kingship of Ireland and I have been exiled by him.' 'God is a good lord,' Ciarán said. Together, then, they plant the post, and Diarmait grants that place to Ciarán." ("'*Sáidh in cleth lium*,' *ol Ciarán fru Diarmait*, '*7 léic mo lámh uas do láim, 7 biaid do lám-sa 7 do rigi for feraib Érenn, síu bas trá-sa nach a n-oirrter*.' '*Cindas dogénta ón?*' *Or Diarmait*, '*air atá Tuathal a rigi nÉrenn 7 atúsa for indarba uadh*.' '*Is fó flaith Dia*,' *or Ciarán. Sáidhit in cleith iarum aráen 7 edbraid Diarmait in port sin do Ciarán*.") Kehnel also noted that the story appears in non-Ciarán and Clonmacnoise works, including the "Tripartite Life of St. Patrick," citing Whitley Stokes, *The tripartite Life of Patrick: with other documents relating to that saint*, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 89 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 88.

[609] The various sources recording Túathal's time of death and Diarmait's ascension to the kingship vary from an hour to a year, but all of these stories portrayed the two events to be related. CS544: "Tuathal Maelgarbh, son of Cormac Caech, son of Coirpre, son of Niall, King of Temhair, died from a wound inflicted by Maelmor Ua Machí, who was forthwith slain himself. Hence is said "the feat of Maelmor." CS545: "Diarmaid Mac Cerbhail begins to reign. Maelmor was the son of Diarmaid's mother." AU544.1: "Tuathal Maelgarb was killed, i.e. in Grellach Allta by Mael Mórda, and Diarmait son of Cerball succeeded him." AU545.3: "Diarmait son of Fergus Cerrbél son of Conall of Cremthann son of Niall Naígiallach began to reign, according to the book of Cuanu." Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 20. The lost "Écht Maili Móir" stated Máel Mór mac Argatán, Diarmait's foster-brother, killed Tuathal.

Ireland (*fir Érenn*) approved him the following week.[610] In return, Diarmait "bestowed a hundred churches on Ciarán."[611]

Thus, Diarmait's agreement with the saint set him upon the path to become a ruler respected by the church and laymen alike, whose "law, rule and authority…were boundless and vast throughout all Ireland," as described in the "*Aided Diarmata*."[612] A king considered by the author of the Latin "Life of Ruadán" to be a formidable opponent for its saintly protagonist, describing Diarmait as "a powerful and peacemaking king in Ireland, who ruled Tara [and] established and prescribed the strongest peace in his kingdom."[613] More important for the ideology of Irish Christian kingship and the Uí Néill legacy, later generations considered Diarmait the first king ordained by God to rule Ireland, as the abbot of Iona, Adomnán (r.679-704), emphasized in his hagiography of St. Columba.[614] Although no ordination ceremony account exists, the portrayal of Ciarán

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[610] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 21. §1.11-15: "Then, before that week was over, the men of Ireland made Diarmait king."

[611] Macalister, *The Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, 91. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 106, note 58.

[612] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 39.

[613] Idem. The Latin "Life of Ruadán" continued to describe that this peace was on account that most feared him, "on account of his wrath no one would even dare to anger him."

[614] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 96. In Adomnán's hagiography of this influential saint of both Irish and Scottish Christianity, he also emphasized the Christian kingship of Oswald of Northumbria, prophesized and sanctioned by Columba. As emphasized in an earlier section dealing with the cross as victory totem, Columba foresaw Oswald's victory over the pagan Cadwallon at the Battle of Heavenfield. The story recounted how the king raised a monumental cross prior to his victory.

sanctioning Diarmait speaks to the king's divinely-sanctioned status. Diarmait's decision to recognize Ciarán's superiority as a representative of God, also allowed the king to act as an extension of God's sovereignty. The expression of this hierarchical rule is visually represented by the hand placements in this panel and further endorsed by the *Manus Dei*, a symbol of God's intervention and approval on the southern side of the cross (Figure 98).

Before continuing the discussion of the Ciarán-Diarmait panel and its relationship to the sacred and ancestral topography of Clonmacnoise, an alternative identification of the scene and an important comparison warrant consideration. There is a possibility that the panel depicts a contemporary representation of the patrons of the Cross of the Scriptures, King Flann Sinna and Abbot Colman, rather than alluding to their compact with figures from the past. Within the corpus of high crosses, donor images are either unusual or yet-to-be identified, whereas images of seemingly generalized kings, aristocratic laymen, and warriors appear frequently across media. The feasibility of a contemporary identification increases, however, if the panel directly above depicted a contemporary compact between Flann Sinna and Cathal mac Conchobair, the High-King of Connacht.

A comparable patronage portrait appears on the slightly later, tenth-century processional cross from Essen, Germany, the Cross of Otto and Mathilde (Figure 85b).[615]

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[615] Liz FitzPatrick, "Raiding and Warring in Monastic Ireland," *History Ireland* 1, no. 3 (1993): 17-18. FitzPatrick identified the parallel in gestures between the Essen Cross and the panel on the Cross of the Scriptures. She briefly described the action of holding "the standard" as "reaffirming the faith of the imperial house," and a "symbolic act" reflecting

This *crux gemmata* features a small rectangular enamel prominently among its decorative jewels, directly below the large figure of the crucified Christ. The two patrons of the cross, Otto I, Duke of Swabia and Bavaria, and his sister, Mathilde, the Abbess of Essen (971-1011), are posed similarly to the Foundation panel on the Cross of the Scriptures. Helpfully identified by labels, the two figures hold a wooden pole supporting a golden cross between them. Mathilde's sophisticated dress conveys her high status. She wears an amber-colored garb decorated with yellow and red floral patterns, resembling the cloak of her brother, and a light blue head-covering that drapes over her shoulder and down her back. Otto clasps the rod with two hands, above and below Mathilde's left hand; she raises her right in an open-palm gesture of blessing. This work expresses a similar partnership to the compact featured on the Cross of the Scriptures, one between a powerful monastic community represented by the religious superior of Essen Abbey and royal members of the Ottonian dynasty. As the granddaughter of Emperor Otto I, Mathilde was a royal princess in her own right, in addition to her renowned leadership of an Imperial Abbey. The institution's status allowed her to govern the monastic territory like a secular lord, controlling it economically and politically, and made her accountable to the emperor alone. Similar to Flann Sinna, Mathilde was a generous patron of both art and architecture at the abbey, allegedly responsible for two further *cruces gemmatae*, a gilt-bronze candelabrum, and possibly the "Golden Madonna of Essen" and the westwork of Essen Abbey. Unlike the foundation panel of the Cross of the Scriptures, the cross-

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the interdependence of church and state." Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master,'" 159-60

topped staff grasped by the two, labelled figures on the Cross of Otto and Mathilde resembles the work upon which it appears.

Although the monument's dual inscriptions express the partnership of Flann and Colmán and their patronage of the Cross of the Scriptures, and the foundation panel faces the "Cathedral" of Clonmacnoise, it is more likely that the image implied rather than illustrated their joint benefaction through the scene of St. Ciaran and Diarmait's compact. The prevalence of the foundation story in the historical records of Clonmacnoise, hagiographic sources, and saga-type literature throughout the eighth through eleventh centuries supports this identification. As noted in the introduction, several elements appearing in the "Irish Life," especially Diarmait's role in founding Clonmacnoise and rise to the high-kingship, imply that the version was written in tenth century and shaped by the political aims of Clann Cholmáin and the monastic elite.[616] Emphasizing or inventing a historical event was a common strategy of early Irish rulers and their supporters to prefigure a partnership or a disagreement in the contemporary political situation. Any stories highlighting the saintly friendships or quarrels that Ciarán participated in during his lifetime often reflected the current-day interactions of the religious communities authoring these accounts of their founders' lives. Suggesting parallels between the present and the past provided explanations for both the long-established relationships existing among the many polities of early medieval Ireland, as well as any upheavals to the *status quo*. As Kehnel highlighted in the "Irish Life" of

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[616] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 14-21.

Ciarán, the saint's favorable position among St. Finnian's students possibly reflected

Clonmacnoise and Clonard sharing an abbot at the beginning of the tenth century, and

Ciarán and Columba's friendship was evidence of relaxed tensions between the two rival

monasteries, Clonmacnoise and Durrow, under Clann Cholmáin consolidation of control

over the region. The next section discusses another such example, the elaboration of the

life of Diarmait mac Cerbaill by writers associated with Clonmacnoise and Clan

Cholmáin patronage to advance the idea of the family's long held claim to the patronage

of the monastery and the surrounding region. The practice promoted a sense of

consistency and stability that garnered support for those controlling such a narrative,

allowing them to consolidate political authority and provide justification for their actions.

Setting up the past as a model further expressed the deference to historical ancestry

prevalent in Irish society, law, and the landscape.

The *cleth* erected by Ciarán and Diarmait and monumentalized by Cross of the

Scriptures could function as a marker of ownership of the land, according to legal

texts.[617] Kelly explained that the "driving in of the house-post by the heir (*comarb*[*a*])

is part of the ritual of dividing [territorial] inheritance."[618] He also noted that the planting of

a *cleth* appears in a similar capacity in the foundation story of another major site of

Christian kingship, "the Story of the Finding of Cashel."[619] Conall Corc, son of Lugaid,

[617] Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung," 253, note 104.

[618] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 29, notes for §16.

[619] Myles Dillon, ed., "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," Contributions in Memory of Osborn Bergin, *Ériu* 16 (1952): 61-73. Kelly, *Audacht* Morainn, xiv. The story may have been recited as part of an inauguration rite as argued by Byrne, for it includes elements

heard a story from Cuirirán, the swineherd of the king of Músgraige, of an angel

proclaiming that the kingship of Munster will be entrusted to the first of "every righteous

prince" who kindles fire at Cashel. He traveled immediately to the site, lit a fire at Dún

Cuirc and "planted stakes there."[620]

Jane Geddes connected the Cross of the Scriptures' foundation panel to a similar

image on a cross-slab (VIG0011) from St. Vigeans Church in Angus, Scotland, in which

two figures face each other and hold staffs topped with rounded knobs (Figure 136).[621]

The figure to the left is mostly destroyed saved the top half of his face and his hand

holding the upper part of the staff while the figure on the right is bearded and with long

hair and wears a shorter tunic. Although Geddes considered the possibility that the scene

depicted a foundation or the establishment boundaries, she also tied the stone to the

performance of a rogation ceremony, or a religious procession around the grounds of a

monastery involving prayers and songs and the carrying of holy books and relics. Nick

Aitchison provided another possible example of the planting of posts on the Forteviot

Arch, which he believed was the "delineation of an ecclesiastical boundary by a king and

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that require audience participation. After the king recited "May it be a truth that is
confirmed! May it be a power that is enforced!" ("*Rob fír fírthar, rob bríg brígther*!"),
the people are to reply "Amen."

[620] Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 66, 71. §4, lines 81-2. "*ad-táed Corc
aneas fó chédóir co Caisil co adaisdar teine i nDún' Chuirc, 7 cor chland cleatha ann.*"

[621] Jane Geddes, *Hunting Picts: Medieval Sculpture at St. Vigeans, Angus* (Edinburgh:
Historic Environment Scotland, 2017), 1:136-7.

two senior clerics inserting wooden stakes into the ground to form a palisade" (Figure 137).[622]

The foundation panel records Diarmait and Ciarán simultaneously building a church by planting the post and jointly claiming the land for both parties. Interestingly, *senchléithe* (ancient house), a derivation of *cleth*, became the term for a servant or worker tied to the lord and his territory, similar to a serf.[623] The planting of the post legally and metaphorically bound Diarmait and Ciarán and their descendants to the land forever, further connecting the story of Clonmacnoise's foundation and the cross upon which it is represented to the function of ancestors and their markers protecting territorial rights. Therefore, the Cross of the Scriptures' relationship to land and ancestral deference, as well as its materiality, shares similarities with earlier Irish legal practice of boundaries. The monument protected the site by evoking the authority and memory of past relatives.

4.2.1 Diarmait Mac Cerbaill: The Life of the Last Pagan and First Christian King of Tara

Diarmait mac Cerbaill was Flann Sinna's forerunner in the high-kingship of Tara and patron of Clonmacnoise, as well as his direct ancestor. A study of Diarmait's rise to power, aspects of his reign, and his death and burial reveal his inclusion on the Cross of

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[622] Geddes, *Hunting Picts*, 1:137. Nick Aitchison, *Forteviot: A Pictish and Royal Centre* (Tempus: Stroud, 2006), 189, 206-7.

[623] Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung," 254, note 106. Rekdal highlighted the etymological similarities between the *cleth* and *senchléithe* and the ridge-pole of the Church as an important symbol of Christianity overtaking paganism, characterized by the roofbeam that finally killed Diarmait.

the Scriptures as a discernable attempt by its patrons to evoke the presence of an ancestor in the historical landscape. Flann Sinna used the perceived memory of Diarmait, the co-founder of Clonmacnoise and "ordained" Christian king, to substantiate his claims of territorial ownership and legitimate rule.[624] Diarmait has proven a highly-challenging historical person to study. The extant sources recounting his life survive from periods much later than his reign and his figure is often used as an archetype of high-kingship. The sources drawing on his figure are riddled with authorial bias based on political and religious affiliations and the nature of the genre of the literary work in question, i.e. historical saga versus hagiography. The high-king also lived during an ambiguous period characterized by the gradual acceptance of Christianity by the Irish. Diarmait's pivotal transition to power occurred in the same moment as his conversion to the Christian faith. In the more positive accounts, Diarmait obtained victory and power through the Christian God and ruled in his name, but in other stories he exhibited questionable behavior for a true convert in the modern sense of the word.

Adomnán recorded that Diarmait's father was Cerbaill ("*filius Cerbulis*"), identified in the royal genealogies as Fergus Cerbaill (either "Crooked-mouth" or

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[624] Laura Álvarez García, "Towards a first Critical Edition of '*Flann for Éirinn*, a poem ascribed to Máel Muru (†887)," (MA thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2015), https://www.academia.edu/31932591/Towards_a_first_Critical_Edition_of_ Flann_for_Éirinn _a_ poem_ascribed_to_Máel_Muru_887_. "*Flann for Éirinn*" is a poem written with the goal of supporting Flann's claims of high-kingship and similar to previous examples it attempts to tie his ascendency and reign to that of an illustrious Uí Néill ancestor. The late-ninth century work is attributed to Máel Muire Othain (Máel Muru). The poet wrote that the pseudo-historical high-king Túathal Techtmar fought more than a hundred battles with subject kingdoms to take back the high-kingship of Ireland once held by his father Fīachu.

"Fighter with swords.")[625] Fergus was a member of an illustrious *derbfine*, which included his grandfather, Conall Cremthainne, and his great-grandfather, Niall Noígíallach, legendary high-king and namesake of the Uí Néill dynasty.[626] Although Fergus appeared on the regnal lists as a King of Mide, he did not claim the high-kingship of Tara, subsequently placing Diarmait in an inferior position for obtaining primacy among the Uí Néill.[627] The lesser status within the extended kingroup and Diarmait's condition of exile ordered by Tuathal, the reigning king of Tara, made his role in helping Ciarán found Clonmacnoise a pivotal moment for his ascent and for the future prospects of his descendants. For without out divine intervention and saintly approval, Diarmait risked losing Tara for himself and his descendants. As Byrne observed, "the failure of his father and grandfather to achieve any distinction meant that under the *derbfine* succession, he and his sons were well on the way to political extinction."[628] The divine compact with the saint facilitated Diarmait's rise and placed his offspring back in contention for controlling Tara. Two of the major, and often rival, dynasties within the Southern Uí Néill trace their ancestry to Diarmait's sons, Colmán Mór, the eponymous ancestor of Flann's Clann Cholmáin dynasty, and Áed Sláine, the founder of the Síl

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[625] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata,*" 11-12.

[626] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, Table 1.

[627] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata,*" 12, note 53.

[628] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 93.

nÁedo Slaine whose kingdom of Brega (modern-day Co. Louth, Dublin, and Meath) was home to Tara.[629]

In addition to Diarmait's acknowledgement of Ciarán's superiority and his support in the foundation of Clonmacnoise, the "*Aided Diarmata*" recounted the high-king's continued devotion to Ciarán in the form of gifts of land, support of the saint's monasteries, and the public submission of himself and his descendants in perpetuity before all the men of Ireland. As mentioned above, Adomnán, Columba's biographer and later abbatial successor, recorded that the powerful saint and founder of Iona recognized the ordained kingship of Diarmait and his descendants. In describing the high-king's death, he wrote: "Áed the Black, verily a man of blood, who had slain Diarmait, the son of Cerball, who had been ordained by God's authority as ruler of all Ireland."[630] Adomnán also alluded to the possible divinely-sanctioned kingship of Diarmait's son, Áed Sláine. He related Columba's warning to the prince against committing *fingal* and killing his brother.[631] As established in the discussion of Flann's attempt to consolidate the power once held by Máel Sechnaill, the law did not guarantee the political station of the father to the son. Accordingly, Columba advised the ancestor of the Síl nÁedo Slaine:

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[629] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 90. A third son, Colmán Becc, was the founder of a lesser dynasty, the Caílle Follamain. Historians have questioned if this Colmán was an actual person or one engendered to separate the greater and lesser exploits of a single man.

[630] Ibid., 96. "*Aidus Niger, valde saguinarius homo it multorum fuerat trucidator. Qui et Duirmitium filium Cerbulis totius Scotiae regnatorem deo auctore ordinatum interfecerat.*"

[631] Idem.

"My son, you must take heed lest by reason of the sin of parricide you lose the prerogative over the kingdom of all Ireland, predestined for you by God. For if ever you commit that sin, you will enjoy not the whole kingdom of your father but only of some part of it in your tribe and for but a short time."[632] Adomnán's account, written a century after these events, portrayed Columba's opinion of Diarmait as decidedly high.[633] The high-king and Columba were possibly cousins, sharing Conaill Cremthainne as a grandfather.[634]

Although Columba's and Ciarán's hagiographers, as well as authors sympathetic to Clonmacnoise and Diarmait, painted the king in a favorable light, other sources portrayed his continued interaction with the pagan tradition and as his adversarial role against saints. Several annals (CS560, AU558 or 560, AT599) recorded that he held the pagan fertility rite, and possible inauguration ritual, the "Feast of Tara" ("*Feis Temro*" or "*Cena Temoriae*") between 558 and 560.[635] For example, AT559.1 stated: "[t]he last

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[632] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 96.

[633] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 14, note 43. In turn, Diarmait bestowed the saint's namesake on two of his sons, Colmán Mór and Colmán Becc.

[634] Eoin O'Flynn, "The organization and operation of Uí Néill kingship in the Irish midlands: Clann Cholmáin" (PhD diss., Trinity College, Dublin 2011), 27, 72-3. Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, "Nebulae discutiuntur: The emergence of Clann Cholmáin, sixth-eighth centuries," in *Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J Byrne*, ed. Alfred Smyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 95.

[635] AU558.2: "The Feast of Temair *held* by Diarmait son of Cerball; and the flight before Máelchá's son; and the death of Gabrán son of Domangart." AU560 partly repeats the preceding entry: "The Feast of Temair *held* by Diarmait son of Cerball; and the death of Gabrán son of Domangart." However, other sources, such as the *Bretha Nemed*, recorded

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Assembly of Tara by Diarmaid son of Cearball." It was a requirement for the pre-Christian High-King of Tara to partake in a symbolic marriage (*hieros gamos*) with the goddess of sovereignty and personification of the territory. Through this sacred union performed at least once during the king's reign, she bestowed upon him the right to rule.

The same formidable saints that favored Diarmait were at times his opponents, especially when the high-king operated within the older tradition rather than Christian law. He appeared as Columba's adversary in the saint's disagreement with Finnian of Molville. The latter saint accused the former of copying his holy book and Diarmait, acting in his capacity as judge, sided with Finnian.[636] This purportedly enraged Columba, who called upon his other royal cousins, Ninnid mac Duach and Ainmere mac Sétnai of Cenél Conaill, Fergus and Domnall (both d. 566), the sons of the high-king of Cenél nEógan, and Aéd mac Echach, the High-King of Connacht, to confront Diarmait at the Battle of Cúl Dreimne (near the monastery at Drumcliff, Co. Sligo, and between the kingdoms of Connacht and Donegal). AT559 recounted an alternative and less anecdotal reason for attracting Columba's ire and the resulting battle between Diarmait and the

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that the feast continued to be celebrated. CS560: "The last feast *i.e. of Temair held* by Diarmait son of Cerball. ("*Caena postrema* [.*i. Temra*] *la Diarmaid mac Cerbaill*.")

[636] Brian Lacey, "The Battle of Cúl Dreimne: A Reassessment," *JRSAI* 133 (2003): 78. Andrew O'Kelleher and Gertrude Schoepperle, trans. and ed., *Betha Colaim chille. Life of Columcille. Compiled by Manus O'Donnell in 1532* [*Edited and translated from manuscript Rawlinson B. 514 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*], University of Illinois Bulletin 15.48 (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1918), 178-9. Diarmait decided: "To every cow her young cow, that is her calf, and to every book its transcript." ("*le gach boin aboinín .i a laogh 7 "le gach lebhur a leabhrán.*") The surviving transcription of this story is from the sixteenth century, recorded in Manus O'Donnell's *Betha Colaim Chille*.

kingdoms of Ulaid and Connacht.[637] Curnán mac Áedo, son of the King of Connacht, disrupted the Feast of Tara by committing murder during the gathering, a transgression punishable by death. In his capacity as the presiding king,[638] Diarmait executed Curnán for his crime. At the time, the Connacht prince was under the protection of Columba (*ar comairce Coluim chili*), as well as the Cenél nEógain.[639] Although Diarmait upheld the social order and traditional law by delivering the prescribed consequences of disrupting an assembly, he also violated Columba's sanctuary, affronting the saint and undermining his power to protect. In the ensuing battle, Diarmait supposedly relied upon a druidic

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[637] AT559: "The death of Curnán son of Aodh son of Eochaidh Tirmcarna, by Diarmaid son of Cearball while under Columcille's protection, and that is one of the causes of the battle of Cúil Dremne." AT560: "The battle of Cúl Dremne *gained* over Diarmaid son of Cerball. Forgus and Domnall, two sons of Muircheartach mac Erca and Ainmire son of Setna, and Ninnid and Duach and Aodh, son of Eochaidh Dryflesh, king of Connacht, were victors through the prayer of Columcille." AU561.1: "The battle of Cúil Dreimne, in which 3000 fell, *won* over Diarmait son of Cerball. Forgus and Domnall, two sons of Mac Erca, i.e. two sons of Muirchertach son of Muiredach son of Eógan son of Niall, and Ainmire son of Sétna, and Nainnid son of Daui, were victors, with Aed son of Eochu Tirmcharna, king of Connacht. They prevailed through the prayers of Colum Cille."

[638] Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung," 226. "Death would await the man who breaks the rights of the feast of Tara or any of the three congregations in Uisnech, Tailltiu and Tara."

[639] Lacey, "The Battle of Cúl Dreimne: A Reassessment," 82. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 96. Byrne viewed Diarmait as the aggressor in this situation. His movement into the north and the lands of the Cenél Cairpre threatened both of the overkingdoms, the Connachta and the Northern Uí Néill, that bordered it.

protective barrier (*airbe druad*) that ultimately led to his loss to the divinely-favored

Columba, whose allied forces lost only one man.[640]

Diarmait also insulted St. Ruadán (d.584), abbot and founder of Lorrha (Co.

Tipperary, close to border of Connacht, Munster, and Mide), in a similar manner, when

he violated the saint's boundary of protection to imprison Áed Guaire, King of the Uí

Maine of Connacht.[641] Diarmait defended his capture of Áed, who had murdered one of

his men. Maintaining his autonomy and seeking to rule justly, Diarmait claimed: "it was

not right for the Church to maintain protection for the one who should violate the king's

law, since it was an outrage to God and man."[642] Disregarding his argument, the saints

rang their bells and chanted malediction psalms in effort to free Áed and punish

Diarmait.[643] For one year, the clerics and high-king exchanged miraculous acts and

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[640] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 95. AT560: "Fraechán son of Teniusán, it is he that made the druid's fence for Diarmaid. Tuatán son of Dimmán son of Sarán son of Cormac son of Eoghan, it is he that overturned the druid's fence. Maiglinde went across it, and he alone was slain." AU561.2: "The battle of Cúil Dreimne. It was Fraechán, son of Teimnén, who made the druidic 'fence' for Diarmait. Tuatán son of Dimán son of Sárán son of Cormac son of Eógan cast the druidic 'fence' over them. Maglaine leaped over it and he alone was killed."

[641] Áed had been insulted by two of Diarmait's men and killed one of them. These men had traveled through Connacht demanding each doorway be extended wide enough to fit the high-king's spear cross-wise. To escape retribution Áed fled, seeking help from various powers, including Bishop Senach, a number of kingdoms in Britain, and Ruadán. Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 48. Wiley parsed the etymology of the passages to demonstrate the author's use of the language of legal cases to convey the story, such as use of the phrase "to take action" or *"oc acre"* found in §9.2.

[642] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 50. §9.2-4.

[643] For more information see, Dan Wiley "The Maledictory Psalms," *Peritia* 15 (2003): 261-279. Wiley compared the psalms of malediction (*sailm escaine*) to the tradition of

fasted in an attempt to outdo each other in God's eyes and achieve victory, before Ruadán and Brendan finally outwitted Diarmait into breaking his fast.[644] Diarmait accused the saints of undermining his rule and championing falseness and chaos: "You have done me wrong in harming my reign," Diarmait said, "For I am upholding truth while you are protecting a criminal."[645] He further argued "destroying my rule is wrong…for in our time, Ireland will not be better off than it was just now."[646] Diarmait wished ill will upon Ruadán, cursing his eye, his monastery and followers, as well as his future gravemound, in turn, the saint returned the curse prophesizing Diarmait's corpse would be mangled and dispersed in burial. Yet, it was Ruadán's condemnation of Tara for Diarmait's reign and all future rulers of Ireland that horrified the king into relenting at last and freeing Áed.[647]

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satire in early medieval Ireland. One of these twenty was chanted for three weeks, "consigning a malefactor to disgrace, short life, and eternal damnation."

[644] D.A. Binchy, "A Pre-Christian Survival," in *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick, and David Dumville (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 173. Binchy noted that the monastic sources tended to not include the saint's deception of Diarmait. One did describe the king as: "Protector of the church and the poor… fair in justice, firm in faith" ("*adiutor ecclesiarum et pauperum…equus in iudicio, firmus in fide.*") Binchy cited Charles Plummer, ed. *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae, partim hactenus ineditae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 2:247. Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 38, §9.7-9.

[645] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 52, §10.7-10.

[646] Ibid., 53, §12.1-4.

[647] Rekdal, "From wine in a goblet to milk in cowdung," 226. "Never again should smoke come from the roof-tree (*cleith*) of Tara" ("*ná bía dé do chlethi I Temraig co bráth.*")

The conflict provides a further example of Diarmait's ambiguous nature as a high-king whose reign of Tara straddled Ireland's transition to Christianity. The final confrontation revealed the uncertainty that persisted in determining the limits of kingly and ecclesiastical power and deciding who held the ultimate authority in deciding matters of justice, a situation much more complex than simply pitting Christian versus pagan law. The events portrayed ongoing negotiations that existed in the sixth century, but also were still present in the eleventh or twelfth century when the story was composed. The figure of Diarmait argued for his right to execute the king's law to avenge the wrong committed against him and maintain the social order, yet he understood that his authority also stemmed from God, who granted him the high-kingship through Ciarán. The king claimed that he did not intend to cause offense, only to ensure peace and prosperity, and he performed miracles and fasts to earn God's favor, acting in the same manner as the saints. In the end, he recognized God's power invoked by Ruadán to condemn Tara.

The intention of the author of this conflict was to encourage the cooperation of lay and religious rulers, collaborations akin to those of Ciarán and Diarmait and Colmán and Flann Sinna, both preserved on the Cross of the Scriptures.[648] Although Ruadán won the day, all of Ireland - both lay and ecclesiastics - suffered as a result. The narrative most clearly emphasized the need for cooperation among the leaders in Diarmait's dream of a cleric and layman, who jointly tore the high-king's diadem (*miond ríg*) from his head.

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[648] Rekdal, "From Wine in Goblets to milk in cowdung," 233. Rekdal noted that after the eleventh century, church and state were drifting apart as a consequence of reforms enacted to amend a long-lasting secularization of the religious institutions.

From it, each man fashioned his own crown. Diarmait's advisor interpreted the dream as of "the division of the sovereignty of Ireland (*Flaitheas Eireann*) between State [people] and Church" ("*etir thúaith ocus eglais*").[649] This separation also appeared in legal texts, such as the "*Córus Bésgnai*" and its declaration to maintain order: "everyone is tied to which is proper to them. Male ecclesiastics and nuns to a church...Laymen and laywomen and the rest of secular society are tied to a lord."[650] Although dateable to a period after the Cross of the Scriptures' creation, the story upheld the principle that a king must rule by Truth to safeguard his reign and *tuatha*, much like the core focus of the earlier wisdom texts discussed in the previous chapter. Cooperation with the Church, however, remained paramount. Diarmait's dream demonstrated an important component of the ideology of Christian kingship: collaboration brought abundance and success to all, whereas disagreement brought the destruction of temporal power and its ability to protect the Church.

Successful compromise numbers among the major themes of the Cross of the Scriptures' decorative program, particularly on the eastern face. Collaboration between Church leaders appears with Peter and Paul in the *Traditio Clavium et Legis*, and among secular rulers as Flann and Cormac exchanging a horn in compact (Figures 70, 57). The two spheres of authority united in the form of Ciarán and Diarmait planting a *cleth* to

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[649] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 53-4, §13.1-8 53-4; Rekdal, "From Wine in Goblets to milk in Cowdung," 231, note 54.

[650] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 28-29, §13-14. "*Ad-regar cách fria théchtae. Cléirig 7 caillecha fri heclais…Laích 7 laíchesa 7 aes túiaithe ad-regtar fri flaith.*"

ensure their mutual rise to power in early medieval Ireland. The western face also may

suggest the unity of the Church with the presentation of the seamless garment of Christ, a

common trope mentioned by such theologians as Cyprian, Augustine, and John

Chrysostom.[651] A more pertinent reference to the current discussion is again the *Manus*

Dei, or rather what accompanies God's hand under the cross-head on the southern side

(Figure 98). Depicted behind the open and upward-oriented hand is an intact diadem

(*mionn*) in the form of a pearl roundel.

Both Chris Lynn and Liz FitzPatrick observed that the hand is unusual among

representations of the *Manus Dei* from this period; it appears to rise up rather than

descend from the heavens to intervene.[652] The hand's association with the panel directly

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[651] Joel C. Elowsky, ed., "The Seamless Garment: John 19:23-24" in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IVb, John 11-21* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 313. Cyprian, "On the Unity of the Church" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*: *Translations of the writings of the fathers down to A.D.* 325, *volume 5 Hippolytus, Cyprian Caius, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886): 421-29. Cyprian wrote in his treatise: "This sacrament of unity, this bond of a concord inseparably cohering, is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided nor cut, but is received as an entire garment, and is possessed as an uninjured and undivided robe by those who cast lots concerning Christ's garment, who should rather put on Christ. Holy Scripture speaks, saying, 'But of the coat, because it was not sewed, but woven from the top throughout, they said one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be.' That coat bore with it and unity that came down from the top, that is, that came from heaven and the Father, which was not to be at all rent by the receiver and the possessor, but without separation we obtain a whole and substantial entireness. He cannot possess the garment of Christ who parts and divides the Church of Christ...But because Christ's people cannot be rent, His robe, woven and united throughout, is not divided by those who possess it; undivided, united, connected, it shows the coherent concord of our people who put on Christ. By the sacrament and sign of His garment, He has declared the unity of the Church."

[652] Ciarán Ó Sabhaois, Chris Lynn, and Liz FitzPatrick, "The Crowning Hand of God," *Archaeology Ireland* 11, no.1 (Spring 1997): 21-23. Lynn and FitzPatrick were

below it, two biting serpents entwined in a figure-eight and resembling a forearm, led some to identify it as the sinister, left hand.[653] With its decorative halo and little indication of a palm, however, it is more likely the *Dextra Dei*, the right hand of God. Another point supporting this conclusion is the hand's location on the south face because the Old Irish word "*dess*" (modern Irish spelling, *deas*) refers to both "right" and "south." Lynn suggested the hand holds up the celestial ring of the heavens, whereas FitzPatrick compared the hand and crown motif that appears on the Cross of the Scriptures, as well as the Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice, to continental examples of the crowning of Ottonian and Byzantine emperors, such as the crowning of a Carolingian prince from the Metz Coronation Sacramentary (Figures 138-139).[654] The hand does not wrap around the crown as it does in non-Insular representations. Instead, the two components of the motif are clearly on display: the authority or sovereignty of Ireland in the form of the diadem (*mionn*) and the *Manus Dei* that bestowed it.

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responding to a letter by Ó Sabhaois, who, in turn, was responding to an article by Heather King, "Prophets and Evangelists (Speaking from Stone)," *Archaeology Ireland* 8, n.2 (Summer 1994): 9-10. Ó Sabhaois wrote that the hand may represent Psalm 73:11: "Why, O Lord, do you hold back your hand? Why do you keep your right hand hidden?" He suggested this may explain the placement of the hand on the underside of the cross.

[653] This motif also appears on the Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice and the Cross of Durrow, however, these two examples display three vertical heads entwined by the biting snakes, instead of the two heads on the Cross of the Scriptures that appear below the *Manus Dei*.

[654] Ó Sabhaois, Lynn, and FitzPatrick, "The Crowning Hand of God," 23. Metz Coronation Sacramentary, 855-77, BN Lat. 1141, fol. 2v-3r.

Both biblical testaments mentioned the crowning "hand of the God," most notably "[t]hou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isaiah 62:3), and, in referring to man's domination over the earth, "[y]ou have made [man] a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5). The New Testament claimed Christ sits at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19), a statement Augustine interpreted as having a quality of royal or judiciary power.[655] Christ is "crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death," as represented on the western face of the Cross of the Scriptures.[656] The crowning hand sustains and strengthens the anointed David (Ps 89.21).[657] It reflected the approval of the rule of Diarmait and his descendent Flann and granted authority to their joint partnership with Ciarán and his successors.

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[655] Augustine, "*De Fido et Symbolo*," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 1, trans. S.D.F. Salmond, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), vii, §14. "This expression, at the right hand, therefore, we must understand to signify a position in supremest blessedness, where righteousness and peace and joy are...And in accordance with this, when it is said that God sits, the expression indicates not a posture of the members, but a judicial power, which that Majesty never fails to possess, as He is always awarding desserts as men deserve them (*digna dignis tribuendo*); although at the last judgment the unquestionable brightness of the only-begotten Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, is destined yet to be a thing much more manifest among men."

[656] Heb 2:9

[657] Psalm 89:20-28: "I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil. I have anointed him. My hand will sustain him; surely my arm will strengthen him. The enemy will not get the better of him the wicked will not oppress him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries. My faithful love will be with him and through my name his horn will be exalted. I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers. He will call out to me 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock, my Savior.' And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth. I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail."

These varying accounts portrayed the ambiguous nature of the life and reign of the Clann Cholmáin and Uí Néill ancestor, Diarmait, during the early medieval period. Binchy proposed that stories, such as the conflict between Ruadán and Diarmait and the resulting anathema of Tara, served to represent the king's conversion to Christianity; he argued "all references to the old pagan cults associated with the monarchy disappear from the annals."[658] Alternatively, the negative accounts of Diarmait's reign may have been propagandist attempts to undermine the political *status quo*. For example, Brian Lacey suggested that the underlying narratives of the Battle of Cúl Dreimne and Columba's support from the Northern Uí Néill probably stemmed from the Cenél nEógain in the eighth century, during their rise to become the dominant northern power.[659] The "*Aided Diarmata*" conveyed a later medieval perception of the sixth-century relationship between the church and lay rulership, exemplifying the use of the past to prefigure an ideal contemporary situation. Throughout the texts, Diarmait remained an archetype for Irish kingship, adding further credence for his deliberate inclusion on the Cross of the Scriptures, a monument patronized by his royal descendants. The persistence of the principle of *fír flathemon* in these texts over multiple centuries (seventh century to the twelfth century) suggests that these concepts remained at the forefront of the ideologies

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[658] Binchy, "A Pre-Christian Survival," 174.

[659] Lacey, *"*The Battle of Cúl Dreimne," 82.

and practices of kingship. The scope of religious and lay power was still subject to debate and necessitated monumental statements in the form of high cross.[660]

Diarmait reigned early in the long and gradual conversion of Ireland. Although he was named as an ordained Christian king, different accounts recorded his involvement in two sacred unions: one in accordance with ancestral traditions and the other a Christian one. The latter ultimately was portrayed as the more important action for the course of Irish history and southern Uí Néill destiny.[661] Although the ceremonies differed in religious outlook, Diarmait performed both acts for the same reasons, to bolster his authority and to facilitate the safety and success of his people. His association with Christian kingship, together with his inclusion on the Cross of the Scriptures and in the lore of Clonmacnoise, intimately tied Uí Néill fortunes to both the foundation of the monastery and the divinely-ordained kingship of Ireland. The portrayal of Clonmacnoise as a royal Christian site associated with a powerful king of Ireland from its establishment created a condition benefiting both parties. The concerted effort to convey Flann Sinna's lineage as part of Clonmacnoise's history and his rule as part of Christian truth through the Cross of the Scriptures may reflect one of the other columns of rulership

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[660] Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung," 211-14, especially 214. Rekdal noted a "close intertextuality between these king tales and the admonitory texts like *Audacht Mo12rainn*, *Tescosca Cormaic*, and *Bríathat-thecosc Con Culainn*." The earlier texts advising kings are "terse and sober advice from the learned orders, whereas the king tales [like the *Aided Diarmata*] offer case-studies of royal conduct in full-blown tales with plot and intrigues."

[661] The following sources have all pondered this dual-portrayal of Diarmait, including Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 96; Enright, *Iona, Tara and Soissons*, 86; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland,* 295; and Lacey, "The Battle of Cúl Dreimne."

recommended in the "Proverbs of the Greek," the ability to be persuasive

(*persuadibilitas*).[662] The monument was an impactful part of Flann's repertoire to sway

public opinion in support claims of his family's superiority in anxious borderlands,

among followers and enemies, and lay and clerical, alike.

4.2.2   The Death and Burial of Diarmait: Ancestral Protector of Clonmacnoise

The stories surrounding Diarmait's death and burial are vital to this chapter's

consideration of the Cross of the Scriptures as a landmark of ancestry and territorial

ownership. The "*Aided Diarmata*" described that he was wounded with a spear, burned

alive, and drowned in a vat of ale before a building collapsed on him, striking him in the

head with its ridgepole.[663] His death-tale recounted that Diarmait died in this way

because he angered his great ally, Ciarán. He violated the saint's sanctuary to kill Flann

Finn on land previously bestowed to the holy man by the king.[664] Because of their

previously made compact at Clonmacnoise, the saint decided to not "take heaven or earth

from [him or his] descendants," but instead cursed Diarmait to die in the same way as the

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[662] Nelson, "On the Limits of Power in medieval Europe," 6, 7 23. Simpson, "The *Proverbia* Grecorum," 17. No. 2: "*Octo columpnae sunt quae fortiter regnum iusti regis sufferimt. Frima columpna veritas est in omnibus rebus regalibus; secimda columpna patientia est in omni negotio; tertia largitas in muneribus; quarta persuadibilitas in verbis; quinta malorum correctio et contritio; sexta bonorum exaltation atque elevation; septima levitas tributi in populis; octava aequitas iudidi inter divitem et pauperem.*"

[663] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings,* 97.

[664] Flann Finn had seduced Diarmait's wife Mugainn. The account of his death is found in Wiley's translation of the "*Aided Diarmata*," §2.7-9.

man he murdered, i.e. a three-fold death by "wounding, drowning, and burning."[665]

Shortly after his transgression, a drought also plagued the important gathering of the *Óenach Tailten*. As previously established, the king's ability to rule according to *fír flathemon* affected the elements. Diarmait and his people suffered the consequences of his actions, but his public submission and prayers to Ciarán appeased the saint to intervene for rain. The high-king's actions also ensured the continuance of the partnership for future generations. The gates of heaven remained open to Diarmait and his descendants. Like the great biblical kings, his repentance and self-humbling made him an admirable model of Christian kingship, regardless of his flaws.[666] Likewise, Flann was not without fault even though he was a great patron of monasteries. For example, he broke the laws of sanctuary at the monastery of Kells when seeking to put down a rebellion by his son Donnchad Donn; AU904.2 recorded that "many were beheaded there around the oratory."

The Cross of the Scriptures recalls the memory of Diarmait through narrative and iconography, but also reminds viewers of his physical presence at Clonmacnoise. After his death at Ráith Becc at the hands of a Criuthín king in the heartland of Ulster,

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[665] Wiley, "*Aided Diarmata*," 29. §2.13-15. "It did not take you long to violate your bequest,' Ciarán said to Diarmait, 'committing this outrage against us concerning the land you gave us. However," he said, "I shall not take heaven or earth from you or your descendant, but the way that man died at your hands, that shall be your death, namely wounding, drowning, and burning."

[666] In the story, the elaborate manner of Diarmait's death was foretold in more detail by his prophet, Becc mac Dé (d. c. 553), aspects of which can be read in Wiley's dissertation and further interpreted by Rekdal, "From Wine in a Goblet to Milk in Cowdung."

Diarmait's followers interred what was left of his body at nearby Connor (Co. Antrim) and transported his head to Clonmacnoise for burial at the monastery.[667] The interment of Northumbrian King Oswald's head at Lindisfarne, a monastery he helped found, provides a comparison for this practice, among the other similarities shared by these "ordained" kings.[668] Several sources connected the burial of the isolated head to a practice and later prescription pertaining to the Last Judgement. The eighth-century canon, "Concerning the resurrection of translated relics" ("*De resurrection transmutatorum martyrum*," CCHXLIX) declared: "[w]here the head will have been, there all the limbs (*omnia membres*) will be assembled."[669] Diarmait's head was purportedly buried in a favored

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[667] AT563.4: "Diarmaid son of Cearbhall was killed in Ráth Becc in Magh Line by Aodh Dubh son of Suibne Araidhe, king of Ulster, and his head *was taken* to Cluain and his body was buried in Connere. To whom two sons of Mac Earca succeeded i.e. Forgus and Domnall." AFM558.1: "After Diarmaid, the son of Fearghus Cerrbheoil, had been twenty years in sovereignty over Ireland, he was slain by Aedh Dubh, son of Suibhne, King of Dal Araidhe, at Rath Beag, in Magh Line. His head was brought to Cluain Mic Nois, and interred there, and his body was interred at Connor." CS565: "The slaying of Diarmait son of Cerball at Ráith Becc i.e. by Aed Dub son of Suibne Araide, i.e. king of Ulaid, and his head was brought to Cluain moccu Nóis and buried there and his body was buried in Coindire; and the two sons of mac Erca, Forgus and Domnall, succeeded him." John Koch and John Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age, Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2003), 209. Elizabeth O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports British Series 289, 1999), 143. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 107. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 105.

[668] O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon* England, 143. Bede, EH, 161, book 3, chapter 12.

[669] Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 207. CCHXLIX.10. "*Uni enim caput fuerit, illie omnia membra congregabuntur.*" O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon* England, 54; Charles-Edwards, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 527; Rekdal, "From wine in a goblet to milk in cowdung," 260.

place, near his devoted saint and in sacred land that promised earthly kingship and heavenly paradise for his descendants.[670] The themes of death on the western crosshead and resurrection of the dead at the Last Judgment on the eastern crosshead feature prominently on the Clonmacnois sculpture, a connection further implied by the corresponding positions of the scenes of Christ's burial at the bottom of the western shaft and the foundation of the monastery at the bottom of eastern shaft.

Similar to Diarmait's ordination and true conversion, his actual entombment at Clonmacnoise is unverifiable. The emphasis placed on these details, however, reflected their importance to the monastic community and their Uí Néill partners as they endeavored to embed the high-king's memory in the land and history of the foundation. Controlling the burial rights of important kings, in turn, also increased the prestige of the monastery in question. Clonmacnoise claimed the first Christian king of Tara as their protector, tangibly through his head and mnemonically in narrative expressed through literature, architecture, and art. Simultaneously, the interaction of the Cross of the Scriptures' iconography and placement in the landscape worked to project Clann Cholmáin's ancestry into the past, and to legitimize Flann Sinna's claims of primacy of Ireland in the present. Diarmait's burial among the elite of Clonmacnoise subsequently preceded the kingly burials of the Uí Maine, Uí Briúin, and Uí Fhiachrach kings of

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[670] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 115, note 95.

Connacht, subverting the former power and privileging the relationship Clann Cholmáin

held with Clonmacnoise.[671]

4.2.3   The Burial and Continued Presence of Flann's Family at Clonmacnoise

Flann's final resting place is uncertain and variously assigned to Tailtiu, Cenn

Eich, and Lough Ennell, as well as Clonmacnoise according to the *Baile in Scáil*. [672] His

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[671] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the early medieval world*, 187, note 48. Cormac d. 862 (Uí Maine), Murgal (d.787) Uí Fiachrach. Ó Floinn, "Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage," 87-100. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 92. Kehnel*, Clonmacnois,* 94. A variety of historical figures claimed a special relationship with Clonmacnoise and burial rites at the monastery. According to the "*Cath Carn Chonaill*" ("The Battle of Carn Chonaill"), Diarmait's grandson, Diarmait mac Áedo Slaine, was also interred at Clonmacnoise. Although the excerpt below emphasized the fortunes of the Áed Slaine dynasty against the Midland Kings, as well as considering the monastery as part of Connacht, it also pointed to a descendent of Diarmait mac Cerbaill seeking out the blessing of St. Ciarán and burial on his holy land: "Now when entering Connaught, Diarmait went to Clonmacnois, and St. Ciarán's community, with their abbot Aed-lug, son of Cumman, did penance to God for him that he might come (back) safe by virtue of their guarantee. So the king (after returning in triumph) offered him Tuaim n-Eirc with its subdivisions of land — i.e. Liath Mancháin — as a 'sod on altar' to God and to St. Ciarán, and he bestowed three curses on the king of Meath (for the time being) if any of his people should consume (as a right) even a drink of water therein. Wherefore no king of Meath ventures to look at it, and none of his people ventures to partake of its food. Hence it is that Diarmait requested his burial in Clonmacnois, wherefore he was after interred therein."

[672] CS916: "Flann son of Máel Sechnaill, king of all Ireland, died on the eighth of the Kalends of June [*25 May*], the seventh feria, in the 37th year of his reign, at Cenn Eich of the people of Cluain: Pity, this, O warlike Erinn/ And thy anguished people/ For Flann is missing... dead/ Thy noble, most valiant King." AFM914: "After Flann, the son of Maelsechlainn, had been thirty-eight years in the sovereignty of Ireland, he died at Tailltin. It was in lamentation of Flann the following verses were composed: Flann, the fair of Freamhain, better than all children, monarch of Ireland, fierce his valour; It was he that ruled our people, until placed beneath the earth's heavy surface. Flowing flood of great wealth, pure carbuncle of beauteous form, Fine-shaped hero who subdued all, chief of the men of Fail of august mien, Pillar of dignity over every head, fair chief of valour, caster of the spears, Sun-flash, noble, pleasant, head of the men of hospitality is Flann." The AU gave as his reign 36 years, 6 months, and five days and that he was 68 years old.

family seemingly continued the long-held tradition of kin burials among Clann Cholmáin

members at the monastery, however, as the annals noted the interment of Flann's father,

mother, sister and daughters there.[673] The inclusion of the high-king's father through his

patronymic surname in the western inscription, "Fl[a]ind Mac Mael Sechlainn," is the

cross's most explicit reference to lineage and provides evidence of his enduring presence

as ancestral protector. The use of his name is arguably a convention for identification,

separating Flann from the many other historical figures that shared this common first

name in early medieval Ireland.[674] Yet, it differs from the inscription on the eastern face

of Cross of the Scriptures and the majority of contemporary high crosses, save the

Kinnitty (Castlebernard) and Durrow crosses, which mentions Máel Sechnaill and his

father Máel Ruanaid (Figures 33-34c).[675] The inclusion of Máel Sechnaill's name on the

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Hudson, *The Prophecy of Berchán*, 162-3. Berchán recorded Flann's death as occurring at Imlech Sescain on Cormorant Island in Lough Ennell, a dependent institution of Clonmacnoise.

[673] AFM886.8: "Flann, daughter of Dunghal, wife of Maelsechlainn, son of Maelruain, King of Ireland, and who was the mother of Flann Sinna, died after a good life, and after penance at Cluain Mic Nois; and she was there interred." AFM921.10: "Lighach, daughter of Flann, son of Maelseachlainn, and wife of Maelmithidh, lord of all Breagh, died, and was buried with great veneration at Cluain-mic-Nois." Ligach was the daughter of the Scottish princess Máel Muire and her second husband, Flann. CS928: "Muirgel daughter of Flann son Máel Sechnaill rested in old age in Cluain moccu Nóis."

[674] With ninety entries, Fland or Flann is eleventh on the list of most common masculine names appearing in Michael Alphonsus O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), a collection of Irish genealogical material from the pre-Norman period (i.e., roughly pre-12th century). Flann means "ruddy" and Máel Sechnaill's father "Ruanaid" also implied "redness." "100 Most Popular Men's Names in Early Medieval Ireland," compiled by Heather Rose Jones, accessed June 15, 2018, https://www.s-gabriel.org/names/tangwystyl/irish100/.

[675] "100 Most Popular Men's Names in Early Medieval Ireland." Muiredach is twelfth (93) and Colmán is seventeenth (74). This lack of additional knowledge about those being

Cross of the Scriptures directs attention to the two high crosses attributed to his patronage that flank the Cross of the Scriptures, in addition to his burial at the monastery.

Written accounts also emphasized Máel Sechnaill's descent from Diarmait and his illustrious pedigree, as shown in his obituary recorded in the entry AU862.5. The passage included a genealogical record far more detailed than many of his contemporaries, which read:

> Máel Sechnaill son of Máel Ruanaid, son of Donnchad, son of Domnall, son of Murchad of Mide, son of Diarmait the Harsh, son of Airmedach the one-eyed, son of Conall of the Sweet voice, son of Diarmait the red, son of Fergus Wrymouth, king of all Ireland, died on the third feria, the second of the kalends of December, in the 16th year of his reign.[676]

Clonmacnoise also felt Máel Sechnaill's continued presence after his death, according to the medieval lore of the monastery. In a story representing the fundamental tenets of the cooperation between lay and ecclesiastic leaders, the high-king's ghost appeared to ninth-century Bishop Cairpre Crum.[677] After failing to use a confessor (*anmchara*) in his life,

referred to adds to the problems of dating, as names like Colmán and Muiredach were also common names for both lay and religious leaders. Máel Sechnaill's cross at Kinnitty (Castlebernard) is the only other example from the ninth-tenth centuries that includes the patronymic of the person inscribed, in this case including his father Máel Ruanaid. It is not until the twelfth century that crosses include the full names of the members of the patronage network. Also associated with kingly patrons, the Tuam cross asks for prayers for King Toirdelbach, descendant of Conchobair, as well as for Áed Ó Ossin, successor of Iarlathe and abbot of Tuam, and for the artisan, Gillachrist, descendant of Tuathal.

[676] CS862: "Máel Sechnaill Son of Maelruanaid, king of all Ireland, died on the third feria, the second of the Kalends of December *30 Nov.*, in the 16th year of his reign." AI: Kl. "Death of Máel Sechnaill, son of Mael Ruaniad." Also, both the notices of his death in the AU and the AFM call Máel Sechnaill the "King of all Ireland."

[677] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 112. Cairpre's obituary, CS904, named him as the bishop involved in Máel Sechnaill's redemption.

the spirit of Máel Sechnaill pleaded for the state of his soul that was suffering in hell. A year of prayers by the bishop and his men saved the high-king. In thanksgiving, Máel Sechnaill's spirit divulged to the bishop where he had buried his hoards acquired through victory over the Vikings.[678]

Máel Sechnaill rose to power in the 840s when he killed his cousin Diarmait mac Conchobair, who had attempted to take the kingship of the Mide from the former's father, Máel Ruanaid, in 841.[679] He also committed *fingal*, killing his older brother Flann mac Máele Ruanaid in 845.[680] In his youth, he most likely experienced the ravaging of the midlands, especially the "sensitive area" of the Delbna Bethra, by both Vikings and fellow Irish.[681] The political maneuverings adversely affecting Clonmacnoise and its region were inherited from previous generations. The monastery was a practical target in the ninth century both from southern incursions of Munstermen hoping to extend into the

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[678] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 112. Kehnel noted that the story is featured in the British Library MS Egerton 92, folio 28b, dated to the fifteenth century, as well as the copies in the *Leabhar Breac*. She pointed to an early date of the story, observing that the focus on the confessional rite "reflects the goals of the Céli Dé movement and points to a time when they were influential." This observation places the original composition of the story sometime in the ninth or tenth century. Furthermore, the story fits with other Clann Cholmáin dynastic propaganda, including the Cross of the Scriptures, created during the reigns of Máel Sechnaill and Flann Sinna.

[679] AU841.2. "Diarmait son of Conchobor subjected Mael Ruanaid son of Donnchad to compulsion (?), and Diarmait was later killed by Mael Sechnaill on the same day, and Mael Ruanaid was left alive."

[680] AU845.7 "Donnchad son of Follaman and Flann son of Mael Ruanaid were killed by Mael Sechnaill son of Mael Ruanaid."

[681] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High* Kings, 221-3.

Leth Cuinn and from the north by the Viking "Foreigners" entrenched nearby, up the River Shannon at Lough Ree. As an economic, cultural, and religious center, it was also an extremely lucrative target for plunder. Feidlimid mac Crimthainn, King of Cashel and the *Leth Moga*, attacked Clonmacnoise numerous times, but the monastery's founding saint ultimately punished him in a supernatural manner; he received "a thrust of [Ciarán's] crozier, [and with it], "an internal wound, so that he was not well until his death."[682] Máel Sechnaill's also slayed the Viking leader Turgesius (Thorgest) in 845 (AU) by drowning him in Lake Owell.[683] The AFM recorded a previous attack by Turgesius on Clonmacnoise, among other Midland monastic sites, and elucidated Máel Sechnaill's victory over the Viking leader as accomplished "through the miracle of God and Ciarán, and the Saints in general."[684]

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[682] AFM844.15: "The plundering of the Termon of Ciaran, by Feidhlimidh, son of Crimhthann; but Ciaran pursued him, as he thought, and gave him a thrust of his crozier, and he received an internal wound, so that he was not well until his death." M846.7: "A battle was gained by Maelseachlainn, son of Maelruanaidh, over the Danes, at Forach, where seven hundred of them were slain by him."

[683] AU845.8: "Tuirgéis was taken prisoner by Máel Sechnaill and afterward drowned in Lake Uair."

[684] AU845.3: "There was an encampment of the foreigners i.e. under Tuirgéis on Loch Rí, and they plundered Connacht and Mide, and burned Cluain Moccu Nóis with its oratories, and Cluain Ferta Brénainn, and Tír dá Glas and Lothra and other monasteries." Hudson, *Prophecy of* Berchán, 124-5. There are two unsubstantiated stories regarding Turgeius's time in the Midlands that pertain to Máel Sechnaill and Clonmacnoise. First, Geoffrey Keating, writing in the seventeenth century, tells of how the Irish king tricked Turgeius into his downfall. The Viking desired to marry the king's daughter, but in return Máel Sechnaill sent twelve young men disguised as her ladies to capture him and defeat his men. According to the second story found in *Cogad Gaedel re Gaillaib* "*The war of the Irish with the Foreigners*," Ota, the wife of Turgeius, had profaned the altar of Clonmacnoise by performing Norse religious ceremonies, possibly divination.

As Byrne succinctly observed, "the frequency of lay attacks upon religious houses was a product of the Viking wars [and the] monasteries that survived [did so by winning the] protection of local princes."[685] These rulers patronized the monastery by providing churches, round towers, and crosses of stone, which "brought further secularization and the churches became more closely associated with interests of local kingdom[s]," making them "fair game" for Viking and Christian alike.[686] Collaborations between abbots and high-kings were necessary for the survival of certain monasteries that benefited high-king's status and power. When Clann Cholmáin came to power in the midlands, Clonmacnoise experienced an unprecedented period of prosperity under Máel Sechnaill, Flann, and their descendants. The success of his descendants reconfirmed Diarmait's efficacy as a legitimate protector of the monastery and his family, and, in turn, supported the validity of the dynasty's rule and partnership with the monastery. These stories made it Flann's prerogative as a descendent of Diarmait to lay claim to Clonmacnoise and the authority it represented; an assertion that endured long after his death due to the messages in stone on the Cross of the Scriptures. Acting on this claim also reconfirmed the truthfulness of his reign, for as the "*Audacht Morainn*" counseled: "*Is tre fhír flathemon cech comarbe con a chlí ina chainorbu clanda*" ("It is through the justice of the ruler that every heir plants his house-post in his fair inheritance.")[687]

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[685] Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 212.

[686] Idem.

[687] Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, 6-7. §16.

4.2.4 Ciarán the Younger: Founder and Patron Saint of Clonmacnoise

By including Ciarán and Diarmait in the foundation panel, the designers of the Cross of the Scriptures sought equally to remind viewers of the continued presence and protection of the monastery's founding saint. The panel recorded a pivotal moment in Ciarán's life and the future of the Christian faith in Ireland. As established earlier in this chapter, when burials shifted predominantly to Christian graveyards, the patron saint of a place assumed some of the role once held exclusively by the ancestral protectors of the kin-group. Clann Cholmáin and the previous Connachta powers interred their kin at Clonmacnoise in an effort to exert dominance in the area and to promote their special relationship with the monastery. Nevertheless, these lay rulers ultimately recognized Ciarán's superior power of protection of the monastery and its territorial holdings.[688] This section first summarizes noteworthy moments from the saint's hagiography, then discusses how the Cross of the Scriptures' form and imagery served as a witness and reminder to his lasting influence at Clonmacnoise. As the Clann Cholmáin kings of Tara emphasized their connection to Diarmait as their physical ancestor in order to support their political aims, the abbots of Clonmacnoise viewed themselves as Ciarán's successors. Using similar methods as his lay counterpart, Abbot Colmán Conaillech displayed his legitimacy through the high cross by alluding to his spiritual descent from the founding saint. He wielded the symbolic power that this association bestowed, bringing the monastery further stability, affluence, and status.

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[688] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 137.

It is uncommon to feature specific high-kings among the many recorded biblical images depicted on high crosses, whereas representations of hagiographic scenes are decidedly more prevalent. Figures identified as the founders of Christian monasticism, Sts. Paul and Anthony, appear on the high cross of Armagh, the South and North Crosses of Castledermot, and the Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice, among other examples (Figures 140-143).[689] Beyond the Cross of the Scriptures, there are also identified examples of Irish saints, such as the image and inscription of Patrick and Columba on the Kells cross, and a supposed representation of the warrior-cleric, Mac Táil (son of the adze), with self-referential weapon in hand, beheading his enemy on the Kilcullen Cross (Figures 143a-145).[690] Aspects of the physical landscape, including rocks, trees, and wells, also preserved the memory of Irish saints' lives and deeds, in addition to more official ecclesiastic works such as crosses, graves, and churches.[691]

As summarized in the first chapter, the majority of information on Ciarán comes from the four versions of his hagiography, three in Latin and one in Irish, as well as appearances in the *Lives* of other saints and references in various historical records (AU, AC, and AFM). Although these accounts survive in later manuscripts in redacted forms, scholars place the original Latin *Vitas* to the seventh or eighth century and the Irish

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[689] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:302-309.

[690] Ibid., 1:108, 159-161, and 309.

[691] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World*, 10.

version of his life to the tenth century during Flann Sinna's reign.[692] Again, the primary

concern of this dissertation is the perception of Ciarán's role and the founding of

Clonmacnoise in the early tenth century, not the exact historical account of the events as

they occurred in the sixth century. Diverging in the details, the *Lives* generally follow the

same main phases, including Ciarán's birth and childhood, schooldays with St. Finnian at

Clonard, wanderings throughout Ireland, the founding of Clonmacnoise, and his death.

Ciarán of Clonmacnoise, or Ciarán the Younger to distinguish him from another Irish

saint called Ciarán of Saighir (associated with Seir Kieran), was born in 516 CE to a

wright named Beoedus and his wife Derercha of the Latharna people.[693] The locations of

his birth and homeland of his kin-group are debatable with different polities over time

attempting to claim Ciarán as their own. The Latharna are described as either a people

centered in southern County Antrim, Ulster (as a branch of the of the Dál nAraide) or a

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[692] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 21, 111, 209. To reiterate pertinent information what was
discussed in the first chapter, the extant manuscripts containing the four versions of
Ciarán's hagiography come from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Macalister, *The
Latin and Irish Lives of Ciaran*, 5-7. Three of the Lives are written in Latin, and the
fourth is in Irish. The First Latin "Life" is found in an early fifteenth-century manuscript,
the Codex Kilkenniensis (Dublin, Marsh's Library, MS Z 3.1.5). The Second Latin
"Life" appears in two manuscripts in the Bodleian Library (Rawl. B 485 and Rawl. B
505) dating from the first half of the thirteenth century. The Third Latin "Life" is in a
fourteenth-century manuscript in Brussels known as the Codex Salmanticensis (Brussels,
Royal Library, 7672-4) and is composed basically of fragments. Finally, the record of the
Irish "Life" dates to the fifteenth-century "Book of Lismore" (Dublin, Royal Irish
Academy, MS 23 P 2) and is the longest and most detailed.

[693] Ciarán also held the epithet of "mac an tSaeir" or "son of the wright" and his father
supposedly made chariots.

place in the Mide according his *Lives*.[694] His father supposedly migrated to Connacht,

however, and Ciarán was born at the royal site of Crúachan Aí (Rathcroghran) on the

plain of Mag Aí (current-day Co. Roscommon). Although some elite craftsmen attained a

position in the upper levels of society in early medieval Ireland,[695] Ciarán was not from a

noble family. The Latharna were traditionally an *Aithech-tuatha*, loosely meaning "rent-

paying people" or "tenants at will." In the highly complex social structure of early

medieval Ireland, this designation meant they were a subject people and unfree,

characterized by the provision of services, i.e. goods or military duty, they supplied to a

non-familial lord in exchange for working his land.[696]

Similar to the great heroes of Irish sagas, Ciarán was a special child. As a young

boy, he performed miracles and had an unnatural control over animals; he raised a horse

from the dead, provided enough milk from his dun cow for the whole community of

Clonard while at school, and had wild animals do his bidding.[697] In the second phase of

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[694] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 47. Macalister, "First Latin Life," 15; "Irish Life," 69-70, 111.

[695] Mac Lean, "The Status of the Sculptor in Old-Irish law and the evidence of the crosses," 125-55. If a wright mastered enough skills, then he could be considered a "chief master wright." This position equaled the status of a "high lord." Originally other craftsmen, such as metalworkers, and even jurists could not attain this social level.

[696] Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish* Law, 33-35. Nerys Thomas Patterson, "Clans are not primordial: pre-Viking Irish society and the modeling of pre-Roman societies in northern Europe," in *Celtic Chiefdom, Celtic State: The Evolution of Complex Social Systems* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 134.

[697] Macalister, "First Latin Life," 16. Before the saint was born, a wizard prophesized that he would be a man of great honor before men and God and "his holiness would shine in Ireland."

his life, he left his family to study under the revered Saint Finnian at Clonard Abbey with other soon-to-be great Irish saints, such as Brendan and Columba.[698] After completing his schooling, he moved to the Aran Island of Inis Mór to live and work with the renowned St. Enda. After years of toil dedicated to God, both men had the same vision of a great tree growing from the center of Ireland, shading and providing the land with fruit. Enda encouraged Ciarán to return to the mainland, prophesizing that he would be this mighty tree protecting Ireland and passing on his fruitful knowledge to the people.[699]

Prior to settling at Clonmacnoise, St. Ciarán traveled across Ireland, caring for the poor, visiting fellow saints, and founding religious communities. Seeking out a place to realize his ideal ascetic community, Ciarán chose Drium Tiprat near the banks of the Shannon; he believed its setting would allow many people to obtain entrance to heaven rather than be distracted by too many comforts.[700] The first *Vita* provided an alternative foundation narrative rather than the previously emphasized story that appears on the Cross of the Scriptures, in which Diarmait played an instrumental role. In the other story,

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[698] During the time of Flann Sinna's reign, Clonmacnoise and Clonard enjoyed a close relationship, as Abbot Colmán served as leader to both monastic communities.

[699] Macalister, "First Latin Life," 28; "Second Latin Life," 50; "Irish Life," 86. Ciarán's presence at Inis Mór was remembered, as a church was named after him at the monastery of St. Enda centuries after his stay. The saint's visit was also featured in Enda's hagiography, the *Vita Endei*.

[700] Macalister, "First Latin Life," 34-5; "Second Latin Life," 54; "Irish Life," 90. As with many monasteries that began with the intention of becoming "deserts" comparable to where the Egyptian founders of the ascetic Christian tradition would go to leave behind the material world, Clonmacnoise became a thriving cultural community with art, education, trade, and craft; it attracted many more people and became increasingly secularized in the latter half of the early medieval period.

a wizard cautioned Ciarán that the hour the saint had begun building his church was inappropriate and would bring a curse upon his settlement. Ciarán ignored the warning and claimed the advice stemmed from pagan divination, which held no place in his Christian foundation.[701] The disparity between the two accounts highlights the different motivations of the authors; the earlier concern that focused primarily on the triumph of Christianity transformed into a story crafted to give the appearance of stability and legitimacy for political concerns present in the ninth and tenth centuries. The later effort shared similar motivations of patronage with the art and architectural investment of Clonmacnoise by Clann Cholmáin during the same period.

According to his hagiography, Ciarán spent only one year as abbot at Clonmacnoise before succumbing to sickness at the age of thirty-three, *in imitatio Christi*.[702] Ciarán's burial place at the site became the objective of many pilgrims seeking Ciarán's spiritual guidance in life as early as 606, as well as those who desired to gain his protection in the afterlife by dying there.[703] Although there was an indigenous precedent for deliberate entombment near a powerful protector, most likely one's ancestor, there

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[701] Macalister, "First Latin Life," 35, "Irish Life," 91.

[702] It is believed that Ciarán succumbed to the Justinian fever, a pandemic caused by the *Yersinia pestis* strain that exploded in Constantinople in the mid-sixth century and moved quickly to decimate populations from Arabia to Ireland. AFM543.2: "There was an extraordinary universal plague through the world, which swept away the noblest third part of the human race." AU549.1: "The falling asleep of the son of the wright, i.e. Ciarán, in the 33rd year of his age or in the 7th after he had begun to build Cluain Moccu Nóis." Macalister, "The Irish Life," 93-97.

[703] AFM606.4: "Aedh, son of Colgan, chief of Oirghialla and of all the Airtheara, died on his pilgrimage, at Cluain Mic Nois."

was also the simultaneous belief of hopeful Christians, who sought burial near a saint to increase their chances of ascending immediately into heaven at the Final Judgement. In Adomnán's discussion of Christ's place of resurrection (*locus resurrectionis*), he explained "those who belong to [Him]," i.e. saints, would be the first to join him heaven at the End of Days.[704] As followers considered Irish saints among this select group, their final resting places became the *foci* for both burial and the monastic layout of sites. Resembling the function of ancestral guardians interred in *ferta*, the presence of the saintly remains protected the site, elevating and setting it apart from land outside its boundaries. Thus, the Cross of the Scriptures simultaneously monumentalized Ciarán's claim to the land, demarcated the limits of the monastery, and reminded the viewer of the sanctuary the saint provided for the land.

The panel of Ciarán and Diarmait planting a boundary stave or a post of the first church provides the most overt record of the saint's role as patron and founder. The monument's capstone, however, also indicates Ciarán's lingering presence by alluding to his physical remains at the site in the form of his burial place and relics (Figures 146-149). There is a visual connection between the top-arm of the Cross of the Scriptures and two types of repositories associated with the cult of the relics in Ireland. The capstone takes the same form as a common reliquary-type in use by the seventh century, exemplified by the "Emly Shrine" of Ireland and the "Monymusk Reliquary" of Scotland

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[704] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 145, note 126. Adomnán wrote: "On the Last Day, when Christ would be revealed in glory, as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."

(Figures 151-152).[705] Above the four wall-like panels, the very top of the cross peaks to resemble a gabled roof with carved shingles, which may have once displayed more elaborate architectural finials similar to those appearing on Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice (Figure 150). The capstones of other midland crosses, e.g. the Tall Cross of Monasterboice and the Durrow Cross, also resemble that of Cross of the Scriptures (Figures 153-154).

On three sides of the Clonmacnoise monument's capstone, there are non-figural decorations imitating bosses, interlace, and champlevé cells. Harbison identified the triad of figures on the fourth side (eastern face) as the *Majestas Domini*, however the iconography also bears resemblance to Aaron and Hur holding up the arms of Moses while he rested on a stone, an action that facilitated Joshua's victory over the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-13) (Figure 149).[706] Porter previously identified a similarly-composed scene on the western face capstone of the Cross of Muiredach, albeit with the central figure's arms raised higher, as Moses with Aaron and Hur (Figure 150).[707] Stalley instead pointed to Roe's observation of the Cross of Muiredach that the flanking figures may have wings,

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[705] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 133, referring Cormac Bourke, *Patrick, The Archaeology of a Saint* (Belfast: H.M. Stationery Office, 1993), 17-18; and Richard Sharpe, "Martyrs and local saints in Late Antique Britain," *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141, 148, and 151.

[706] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:49, 301-2. Thank you to Ben Tilghman for this observation.

[707] Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland*, 51-3. Stalley, "European Art and Irish High Crosses," 138. Stalley also pointed out a similar scene on the south cross at Castledermot, as well as on the crosses at Templeneiry and Galloon.

which would negate this Old Testament identification.[708] He further argued that this image is most likely a depiction of the Ascension based on its composition, placement on the high cross, and comparable European examples, like the Rabbula Gospels, Carolingian and Ottonian ivories, and the twelfth-century tympanum of the Porte Miégeville at Toulouse.[709] However, the present state of the carvings on both of the capstones in question make the identification of "wings" uncertain. In current photographs and scans of these crosses, the flanking figures could equally be wearing robes draped over long tunics rather than displaying closed wings.[710] Porter's identification is also fitting with the ideas of divinely-aided victory, protection, covenant, and compromise already present on the high cross, and its specific placement on reliquary-like capstone calls to mind another important container of *res sacra* (holy things), the ark of the covenant, holder of the Ten Commandments.

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[708] Stalley, "European Art and Irish High Crosses," 138. Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "The meeting of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony: visual and literary uses of a eucharistic motif," in *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney*, ed. Gearóid Mac Niocaill and Patrick F. Wallace (Galway: Galway University Press, 1988), 26-30. Stalley referred to Éamonn Ó Carragáin's eschatological identification of the panel relating to the canticle of Habbakuk that further supported Roe's stance.

[709] Stalley, "European Art and Irish High Crosses," 139-140.

[710] The Discovery Programme, "The Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise," Sketchfab.com, https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/cross-of-the-scriptures-clonmacnoise-e58c309514fb4899b5d98a6ae93d0928 (accessed May 8, 2019). The Discovery Programme, "Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice," Sketchfab.com, https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/muiredachs-cross-monasterboice-d59 (accessed May 8, 2019).

In a cautious reconsideration of Porter's identification, the major themes of protection and cooperation that characterized other elements of this high cross emerge once again. In his thoughts on this image, Porter referred to how the Irish saints Finnian and Columba both raised their arms like Moses in a "cross-vigil" and prayed for the protection of their respective armies, as they stood on opposite sides of the field at the aforementioned Battle of Cúl Dreimne.[711] As the men under Finnian and the High-King Diarmait were destined to lose, Columba sent messengers to the other saint requesting that he stop praying this way because he knew that the king would never stop as long as Finnian persisted, subsequently causing the needless slaughter of all his men.[712] The central figure of the cross arm on the Cross of the Scriptures may thus simultaneously represent Moses, Christ, and St. Ciarán, raising arms in a pose of protection and victory. The idea can at least be entertained in light of the established apotropaic quality of both reliquaries and high crosses.

The house-shaped reliquary-shrine and high cross capstone also share architectural components with a small building-type known as a tomb-shrine, or shrine-chapel. *Teampull Ciarán*, located behind and to the left of the "Cathedral" at Clonmacnoise, is badly damaged and roofless, but in its original form it most likely resembled the top arm of the Cross of the Scriptures (Figures 155a-b). Written and archaeological sources revealed that a function of the building-type was to house the holy

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[711] Porter, *The Crosses and Culture of Ireland*, 52, note 187. O'Kelleher and Schoepperle, "Betha Colaim Chille," 183, §175-6.

[712] Idem.

remains of saints, prompting Tomás Ó Carragáin's discussion of it in relation to the cult

of the relics in Ireland.[713] Previous antiquarian excavations of the Clonmacnoise shrine-

chapel uncovered a small stone cist that either preceded or coincided with the creation of

the building, as well as the "Chalice" and "Crozier of the Abbots of Clonmacnoise."[714]

Other accounts lend support to the building's function as a repository, such as Bishop

Anthony Dopping's note that Ciarán's hand was present in the saint's "Chapel" in the

seventeenth century.[715] Ó Floinn pointed to records that placed the relics of Ciarán in the

Erdamh Chiarin, which scholars variously interpreted as a sacristy, small building, porch

or vestibule.[716] Ó Carragáin provided persuasive evidence that this small church reflected

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[713] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 130. The author provided other examples of the group, including instances at Iona (Argyll), Ardmore (Co. Waterford), Inishmurray (Co. Sligo), Inishcleraun (Co. Longford), and Labamolaga (Co. Cork).

[714] Ibid., 136. Another cist was found at Ollaunloughan, and Columba's relics were recorded as being found buried in his house. William Frazer, "On an Irish Crozier, with Early Metal Crook, Probably the Missing "Crozier of Ciaran" of Clonmacnoise," *PRIA* 1, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1891): 210. Frazer recorded that George Petrie (1821) wrote "Some thirty years ago the tomb of St. Ciaran was searched in the expectation of finding treasure, when a rosary of brass wire was discovered, a hollow ball of the same material, which opened, a chalice and wine vessel for the altar, and the 'Crozier of St. Ciaran,' were also found."

[715] Ibid., 136. Ó Carragáin referred to John O'Donovan, "The registry of Clonmacnoise; with notes and introductory remarks," *JRSAI* 4 (1856-7): 446-7. O'Donovan mentioned that James Ware, an eighteenth-century historian, noted that "there was a relic of Ciaran's hand 'in the great church,' but when Bishop Dopping visited Clonmacnoise in 1684 this was housed in 'St Kyran's Chap.'"

[716] Ó Floinn, "Clonmacnoise: Art and Patronage," 93-94. Ó Floinn also mentioned other relics associated with the saint, including the *Fraechan Chiarain* ("Chalice of Ciarán") that Connacht High-King Ruaidri Ua Chonchobair took communion from before dying, and the *Bearnan Ciarain* ("Gapped Bell of Ciarán") mentioned in the CS972 and again in AT1114. The bell was supposedly kept in its own church, most likely the round tower. There are a number of other relics associated with Ciarán and Clonmacnoise that are

the need to separate reliquary architecture from liturgical spaces, such as the "Cathedral."

He further argued that patrons in the eighth and ninth centuries looked to early Christian

memoriae for broad inspiration when designing their shrine-chapels, most notably the

aedicule that marked Christ's tomb in the Holy Sepulchre complex.[717] The full-page

illumination of the "Temptation of Christ" (folio 202v) featured in the "Book of Kells"

supports this concept, as Christ stands atop the Temple expressed in the form of a

brightly-colored Irish shrine-chapel (Figure 156).[718]

Beyond the belief that *Teampull Ciarán* held the remains of the saint in some

form, the attempt to tangibly express Ciarán's presence in the shrine-chapel affected the

building's design and the layout of the monastery. The stone structure possibly

monumentalized the scale (measuring 2.8m by 3.8m internally), unicameral form, and

antae of the original wooden one that the saint built, and within which he died and was

supposedly buried. In comparison to the later medieval stone churches at Clonmacnoise,

Teampull Ciaran stands out as the smallest building, and also for its unusual orientation

within the organization of the rest of the site (Figure 135). From a bird's-eye view of the

monastery, the early medieval layout appears to be that of the central Latin cross, formed

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recorded at later dates, which include the *Carracan* (a model of Solomon's Temple) given to Clonmacnoise by Flann's descendant Máel Sechnaill mac Domnall (d.1022) that was recorded as stolen in 1129. "The altar of Ciaran, with its relics; the shrine of Ciaran, called the *Oreineach*" are mentioned in AFM1143, as they served as protection and guarantees of Murchadh Ua Maeleachlainn, King of Mide and its Fortuatha, when he was taken prisoner by Toirdhealbhach Ua Conchobhair, King of Connaught.

[717] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 130-153.

[718] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 22, 143. Mt 14:1-11.

by the three high crosses and the "Cathedral," within the roughly circular *termon*.

Although the wooden structures of the site no longer stand to provide insight as to their

placement within the plan, the stone buildings erected after the tenth century loosely align

with this layout.[719] The special orientation of the shrine-chapel suggests that its

alignment preceded the restructuring of the site and was purposely preserved, an

interpretation further supported by mortar testing dating the structure to the eighth-ninth

century.[720] It seems highly likely then that this structure was already present and in use

before the Cross of the Scriptures was erected. *Teampull Ciarán* functioned as the locus

of pilgrimage and the most desired place to die at the monastery. The AFM listed the

death of Egeartach*, airchinneach* (head cleric) at the shrine chapel (*Eaglais Beag*, small

church) of Clonmacnoise in 893, and Carlsruhe Bede (c.836-848) noted King Murchad

son of Máelduin (d.826) died on the "*Imleach Chiaran*" (bed or pillowstone of

Ciaran).[721]

Following his death, Ciarán's power was manifested through his human remains

and objects associated with his life and office, but stories about his spirit and the very soil

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[719] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 135.

[720] Ibid., 135. Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 76. "Its deep antae and sandstone masonry with putlog holes are very similar to phase 1 of the Cathedral and the two buildings would seem to be roughly contemporary. The calibrated date range for it is AD 660-980 (at 95% confidence level) based on a residue of charcoal in the mortar." Rainer Berger, "Radiocarbon dating of early medieval Irish monuments," *PRIA* 95C (1995): 169-70.

[721] Ibid., 132. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 42. The "bed of Ciarán" was considered the saint's grave in the shrine chapel.

of Clonmacnoise also demonstrated the belief in his continued presence. The remains of St. Ciarán's bovine companion, his famed dun cow that followed him to school against his parents' wishes, also became an important relic.[722] Whoever died on the hide, called the *Odhair Chiaráin*, would not suffer the torments of hell and go immediately to heaven.[723] The AI further instantiated this belief, as it recorded that the High King of Connacht, Tadg mac Conchobair, departed on the hide after renouncing the world in the 900.[724] When St. Cóemghen (Kevin) of Glendalough came to pay his respects, he found the soul of his friend present in the small church (*Imdhai*).[725] The former school-mates talked, exchanged clothing, and participated in communion together, before Ciarán blessed Kevin and gave him his bell in a gesture of unity (*óentad*) and friendship between the two men and their respective monastic communities.[726] Following Ciarán's death, his

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[722] Macalister, "First Latin Life," §17, 23-5; "Second Latin Life," §17, 45-6; "Third Latin Life," §17, 63-4; and "Irish Life," §9, 75.

[723] Macalister, "Irish Life," §9, 77, 124. Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 117, 209. "The very soul that would part from its body on the hide of the cow would not be tormented in hell."

[724] Whitley Stokes, ed., *Lives of saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 122f, 127. AI900.1: "Repose of Tadc son of Conchobar, king of Connachta, after he had renounced the world on the hide of Ciaran's Dun Cow."

[725] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 73-4. Macalister, "Irish Life," 97. "This man [Ciaran] arose after three days in his [*imdhai*] in Cluain to converse with and to comfort Coemgen, as Christ arose after three days from the grave in Jerusalem, to comfort and strengthen His mother and His disciples. So for these good things, and for many others, is his soul among the folk of heaven. His remains and relics are here with honour and renown, with daily wonders and miracles."

[726] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 62. Stokes, "Lives of Saints," 132f. Kehnel referred to the exchange of personnel between Clonmacnoise and Glendalough in the tenth and eleventh century.

co-founder Diarmait also benefited from the saint's continued presence at the monastery. Either ear or head pain afflicted the king upon hearing of the saint's death, causing him such distress that it distracted him from ruling. Columba advised Diarmait to travel to Clonmacnoise and place dirt from Ciarán's grave into his ear; the proposed remedy instantly cured him. The earliest extant account of this story comes to us from a seventeenth-century manuscript, but the legend reflected an earlier idea of the power of the saint present in the earth of Clonmacnoise, as did the practice of sprinkling Ciarán's grave soil over land to produce good crops that continued into the modern era.[727]

The visual appearance of the capstone of the Cross of the Scriptures worked to establish St. Ciarán's presence and authority at Clonmacnoise by evoking the containers of his holy remains, both tomb-shrine and a possible portable reliquary. Relics and their repositories served multiple purposes in the early medieval period, performing as insignia, cures, protective talismans of battle and sanctuary, and acceptable guarantors for

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[727] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 115, notes 95 and 96. The author referred to O'Clery manuscripts in the Royal Library in Brussels, MS 5057-5059, fol. 37r-37v. Paul Grosjean, ed. and trans., *Notes d'hagiographie Celtique* 17: "*Aní día fil manchine Chloinde Colmáin ocus Síl Aodha Sláine do Chlúain. Un miracle posthume de St Ciarán de Clúain en faveur du roi Diarmait mac Cerrbéoil*," *Analecta Bollandiana* 69 (1951): 96-102. Kehnel noted that the story was translated and included by Conell Mageoghagan in his version of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*. A.T. Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland," *JRSAI* 116 (1986): 33. The AC elaborated further that the priest Lowna helped Diarmait, mixing the earth with some holy water in the "White Bell" before placing it in his ear. Lucas commented "the bell plays a secondary part in the cure but does form with the sanctified earth and holy water the third member of a miraculous trinity."

oaths.[728] The holy objects stood witness to a variety of agreements that involved the taking of hostages, land and peace treaties, the holding of synods and *óenacha*, the promulgation of *cana*, and judiciary hearings. A.T. Lucas observed in his study of relics in early medieval sources that "[v]irtually all references to swearing which occur in the ancient documents in what purported to be Christian contexts involve relics and reliquaries."[729] According to the AFM539, Ciarán's hand was present at the *Óenach Tailtiu*, exacting revenge upon a man named Abacuc who swore a false oath upon it. In retribution for the offense, "St. Ciaran put his hand upon his neck," so that "gangrene took [Abacuc] in his neck [and] cut off his head."[730]

The presence of the saint's body sanctified and protected the monastery, but Lucas suggested that his relics offered something both "visible and tangible, and the responsibility for telling the truth seemed all the greater because the person taking an oath could place his hand in contact with them or the shrine in which they were kept."[731] Ciarán's enshrined remains had the advantage of being moveable and thus served as guarantors of important agreements and summits, and battle totems beyond

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[728] For more on the nature and use of relics and reliquaries in early medieval Ireland, see Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland;" and, more recently, Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland*.

[729] Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland," 10.

[730] AFM539.2: "The decapitation of Abacuc at the fair of Tailltin, through the miracles of God and Ciaran; that is, a false oath he took upon the hand of Ciaran, so that a gangrene took him in his neck (i.e. St. Ciaran put his hand upon his neck), so that it cut off his head."

[731] Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland," 25.

Clonmacnoise. Ó Floinn highlighted records included in the AFM, AT, and CS that noted the "shrine of Ciarán" at Hare Ireland in Lough Ree in 899; it likely served as a sanctifying witness for the synod held there that year.[732] The mobility of reliquaries was a double-edged sword, however, opening the objects to attack by those seeking to capitalize economically from their often-precious enshrinements, or politically by insulting the symbolic authority they represented. Since Ciarán's reliquary served as a status symbol for the ecclesiastical elites of Clonmacnoise attending the synod, the assault on Hare Island was a major slight to the monastery, and to Clann Cholmáin by association. By contrast, the material of the capstone of the Cross of the Scriptures and *Teampull Ciarán* communicated the presence of Ciarán in a more permanent manner than wooden precursors or highly-coveted metals. Although the Viking invasions played a role in the monumentalization of these forms associated with the cult of relics in the eighth and ninth centuries, so did inter-monastic rivalries.[733]

It is fitting for an object used for the swearing and maintenance of oaths to appear atop a high cross with iconography depicting many different forms of compact.[734] The capstone not only enhances the Cross of the Scriptures' major theme of covenant, but it

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[732] Ó Floinn, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral*,*" 93. A shrine of Ciarán also possibly accompanied Cairpre Crom, Bishop of Clonmacnoise to Inis Aingin, according to the AFM which stated both were present when the holy site was "profaned" in 894.

[733] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 149.

[734] Ibid., 149, note 193. Although initially only used for oaths concerning ecclesiastics, they became viable guarantors of secular oaths during Charlemagne's reign in continental Europe.

contributes additional potency, as evidence exists of the practice of placing relics upon the objects used in oath-swearing to increase the power of the bond.[735] The shrine-like capstone also connected the Cross of the Scriptures to both indigenous and Christian customs of invoking the memory and remains of ancestors to establish protection. Related to earlier traditions in pledging oaths upon the graves of kin, the swearer "[believed] himself to be invoking the spirit of an ancestor or testifying in his presence."[736] Additionally, relics were often associated with "cemeteries (*reilgi*) for the purpose of taking oaths," as they were sacred remains.[737] The Church subsumed many of the pre-existing social functions associated with burial rites, including oath-taking upon graves. It also relocated community events like the *óenacha* and court proceedings to their own lands, as evident in the canon law stating: "courts were now to be held near the entrances of ecclesiastical sites." As this chapter established above, high crosses demarcated this liminal space providing access to the monastery.[738] With the concurrence of high crosses marking entry, binding oaths, and serving as a locus of judgement, the scenes on the eastern face dividing the saved from the damned provided an all the more poignant setting for the deliberation of legal cases. The confluence of the past, present,

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[735] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 149, note 193. The example provided stated that the relics were placed upon a tomb. Oaths could also be taken on other symbols of power, such as the lord's chair, ring, and beard.

[736] Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland," 25.

[737] Ibid., 24.

[738] Ó Carragáin, "Architectural Setting," 149, note 189.

and future in the decorative program of the Cross of the Scriptures allows the reliquary-topped cross to protect and bear witness to any oaths sworn upon the monument in perpetuity.

4.2.5   The Successor of Ciarán: Abbot Colmán Conaillech

The patrons of the Cross of the Scriptures expressed Ciarán's continued presence through multiple forms. His saintly authority as monastic founder imbued the high cross with the ability to function as an apotropaic landmark for all who dwelt, worked, visited, and rested eternally at Clonmacnoise. The inclusion of Ciarán's past on the monument and the implied association with his holy remains linked the monument to those who controlled access to the site and the saint's power, his spiritual descendants, the abbots of Clonmacnoise. As Flann Sinna associated himself with Diarmait to claim inheritance and kingship through descent, his ecclesiastic counterpart Colmán Conaillech (d.926), thirtieth Abbot of Clonard (r.888) and forty-seventh Abbot of Clonmacnoise (r.904), served as Ciarán's successor.[739]

Liam De Paor argued that the Colmán listed on the Cross of the Scriptures' worn eastern inscription ("DO COLMAN DORRO … AN CROSSA AR RIG FLAIND" (For Colman who...the cross for King Flann)) was an undocumented sculptor and the artist

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[739] AFM904.7: "The Daimhliag of Cluain-mic-Nois was erected by the king, Flann Sinna, and by Colman Conailleach;" AFM924.2: "Colman, son of Ailill, Abbot of Cluain-Iraird and Cluain-mic-Nois, a bishop and wise doctor, died. It was by him the Daimhliag of Cluain-mic-Nois was built; he was of the tribe of the Conailli-Muirtheimhne. The tenth year, a just decree, joy and sorrow reigned, Colman of Cluain, the joy of every tower, died; Albdann went beyond sea." The Conaille Muirthemne were from Southern Ulster, current-day Co. Louth.

responsible for other crosses, such as the Kinnitty (Castlebernard) example (Figures 22,

32b, 33, 34a-b). Artists' names do occur in the ninth and tenth century, at least on the

Continent, although they are not common, and the inscription implies that Colmán

"made" the cross for Flann. Hagiographical allusion, pervasiveness of the theme of

compact, the chronology of events, and prominence of the name ultimately point to

Abbot Colmán, the other patron of the "Cathedral" as the figure named in the

inscription.[740] Making the case for an abbot rather than artist, Ó Floinn noted that there

was also a Colmán recorded at Kinnitty, who died in the early tenth century.[741] Being the

heir (*comarba*) to Ciarán, the Clonmacnoise Colmán ruled as the spiritual and practical

superior of all those pledging themselves to the saint's rule and controlled the

monastery's strategic territorial holdings and many physical assets.[742] His dual

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[740] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 154. De Paor argued that the Colman "mentioned on the Cross of the Scriptures was the artificer who made the cross, and the wording of the inscription certainly supports this interpretation." This would make the date in the early tenth century nearly impossible and would mean "that Colmán and Flann would have built a major church at Clonmacnoise…while a magnificent cross already stood in front of it with a prominent inscription mentioning Flann and some other obscure Colmán, who carved it." Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 74. Manning questioned if wrights could hold a special position at Clonmacnoise because of Ciarán's father and other noted abbots were involved in stonework projects, including: Breasal of the Conaille Muirthemne, who made the *clocchán* from the garden of the abbesses to the Cairn of the Three Crosses in 1026 (AFM, AC); and Abbot Maelchiaráin, son of Conn na mBocht, who created two other paved roads to Clonmacnoise in 1070 (AFM).

[741] Ó Floinn, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly, Kinnitty, and Related Sculpture," 155. On the other side of the argument, i.e. Colmán was an artist responsible for both works, the possible range of dates for the creation of the two crosses is anywhere from 17 years to 70 years.

[742] See T.M Charles-Edwards's brief discussion of *manach* – ecclesiastical client- in *Early Christian Ireland,* 121. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 102-5. The title of

appointment at two elite monasteries, Clonard and Clonmacnoise, allowed him to attain

high status in Irish society. According to the religious hierarchy, he would be considered

an *ollam mórchathrach* ("supreme head of a great monastery"), a position that possibly

held the highest honor-price of 14 *cumala*, which it shared with the *ollam úasalepscop*

("supreme noble bishop") and the over-king of a region.[743] Thus, Colman's inclusion on

the Cross of the Scriptures provided a suitable counterpart to the high-king featured in the

opposite inscription, as Ciarán did to Diarmait in the foundation panel.

Major monasteries in the later centuries of the early medieval period moved

further away from their small, ascetic foundations of the sixth and seventh centuries, save

several dispersed reforming attempts, most notably that associated with the Céilí Dé

movement. The larger institutions came to function more as secular establishments and

were formidable entities whose assets included many lay clients and large landholdings.

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comharba Ciaráin had become the standard title in the annals for the abbot of Clonmacnoise by the mid-tenth century. In legal texts, the term *comarba* was also used in laws dealing with the inheritance of land and other assets.

[743] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 132. Charles-Edwards highlighted that the *Uraicecht Becc* (CIH2269.35-7) explained that the honor-prices for the different ranks of the nobility were the same as for the Church hierarchy. He also noted that his translation of these to grades of churchmen are based on his reading of CIH 2282.27 and CIH1617.7. The term "ollam of a great church" was used to describe the heads of both the monasteries of Cork and Emly. The status of "heirs of church" were based on the "grades of the churches to which they are attached, although they do not themselves have the grades, provided that their deserts be good otherwise." The leader of a church's "bad behavior deprived him of the high rank flowing from the institution, but it did not permanently affect the ranking of the institution itself (CIH2269.35-2270.4, CIH2211.17-18). However, later in the source (p.269), Charles-Edwards stated abbots of important institutions, such as Clonmacnoise, would have the "equivalent status of an ordinary bishop but inferior to a 'bishop of bishops.'"

Yet, the religious roots and structure of the ecclesiastical hierarchy remained their chief sources of authority and legitimation of power. Diverging from conventional scholarship on the primacy of monastic leadership of the Irish church, Richard Sharpe proposed that an abbot acted more as a secular leader; certainly, many had of them held familial ties to powerful royal families.[744] These men ensured the physical prosperity of the community, whereas bishops decided spiritual affairs and held ultimate control over church procedures. The division of responsibilities was likely, not so straightforward, but rather subject to personality, means, and status of the abbot in question and the monastic community he governed. By dismantling the traditional scholarship that supported a monolithic "Celtic" Church *and* a strictly imposed division of secular and sacred leadership, the study of these premier monuments as the joint production of clerical and lay elites, rather than simply ecclesiastical works of devotion, gains further credibility.[745]

A passage from the *Córus Bésgnai* described a customary procedure for the selection of an abbot related to the overarching discussion of protection grounded in ancestral patrons.[746] It explained:

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[744] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 33-34. Richard Sharpe, "Some Problems concerning the organization of the church in early medieval Ireland," *Peritia* 3 (1984): 263. The authors noted that the previously held misinterpretation that abbots were more powerful than bishops or kings was because of "misleading linguistic conventions," i.e. that "monastic vocabulary was applied to the temporal dimension of the church." "Princeps, airchinnech or comarba" were such terms used for monastic leadership.

[745] Ibid., 28.

[746] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 34-5, §38. "The entitlement of the laity in relation to the church, when it is in its proper relationship of joint obligation, is to demand prerogatives from a church, that is, baptism and communion and hymns for the soul and mass from every church to all, by virtue of the rightness of their faith, together with expounding the

[w]hen there is no suitable candidate for the abbacy from the kin of the patron saint, he is then sought from amongst the original kin of the land, [to hold office] until such time as there is one from the kin of the patron saint. But it is not removed from the man in power who happens to be there from the kin of the land, unless he is rejected or unless misconduct contaminates him, except if the person to whom he may cede is better, for the junior cedes to the senior, excellence is senior to age.[747]

According to the text, the first and pre-eminent condition for determining the appointment of an abbot was his lineage. It was preferable that he came from the *fine* and *túatha* of the monastery's patron saint in question, regardless of the man's status within the church hierarchy. If this was not possible, then the monastic superior should come from the kin-group that controlled the larger region containing the monastery. Comparable to secular laws and land entitlement, kinship was the basis for claiming monastic land and positions of power, at least in theory.

From his study of abbatial lists, John Ryan observed that the lineal succession of abbots did not usually occur, but there was a "marked *tendency* to attach churches and monasteries to certain septs and families."[748] This was not the case at Clonmacnoise,

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word of God to all who listen to it and fulfill it. Every order functioning correctly, ensuring that proper use is made of their offerings, of their tithes, of their first-fruits and of their firstlings and their testaments, their bequests, so that the church may have them by virtue of [its] state of purity, along with coming to the aid of every pure person if an impure person who intends evil assails him."

[747] Breatnach, *Córus Bésgnai*, 44-5, §92.

[748] John Ryan, "Abbatial Succession at Clonmacnois, from the foundation of the monastery to the coming of the Norse (A.D. 545-799)," in *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill: Essays and studies presented to professor Eóin McNeill on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, May 15th, 1938*, ed. John Ryan (Dublin: Three Candles, 1940), 491. The word sept refers to divisions within a larger family. The quote is emphasized by the author.

however, with Colmán's appointment specifically, nor the office of abbot in general. No members of Ciarán's hereditary family nor Delbna Bethra men appeared on the abbatial lists of Clonmacnoise from the mid-sixth to the thirteenth century.[749] Abbot Colmán was of the Conaille Murithemne, a people located in southern Ulster, (Co. Louth) and a branch of the Ulaid. Several dynasties, the Uí Briúín and Uí Maine of Connacht and Clann Cholmáin of the Southern Uí Néill, enjoyed special relationships with Clonmacnoise and positioned men within its ecclesiastic hierarchy, however, the monastery never became a dependent of any these polities. Nominal attempts to follow the *Córus Bésgnai* prescriptions may explain the ambiguity in assigning Ciarán's birthplace and origin of his people; each of these reigning powers in the Shannon River area sought to justify their seizure of the land in a legal manner by claiming the saint as from their own region.

During Clonmacnoise's first century, the monastery drew abbots from all corners of Ireland. It then became firmly associated with the *Leth Cuinn*, in that no representative from Munster or Leinster became the successor to Ciarán thereafter.[750] From the seventh to mid-ninth century, half of the abbots of Clonmacnoise hailed from Connacht, with six from the kingdom of the Uí Maine located directly across the Shannon from the

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[749] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 31

[750] Ibid., 97. There was a vice-abbot from Munster, Flann, son of Flaithbertach, in the mid-ninth century, drowned in the Shannon by Cathal son of Ailill, King of the Uí Maine. Kehnel noted that the death may have been a retaliatory action by the Cenél Cairpre Cruim of the Uí Maine for a previous attack made by Munster High-King Feidlimid mac Cremthainn as he attempted to expand into the *Leth Cuinn*.

monastery. The concentration of Connachtmen further suggested the monastery's

partnership with the lay leaders of that overkingdom. There were also men from the other

major regions serving as abbot, including several from various dynasties within the

Airgialla of Ulster and Ciannachta Brega of the Southern Uí Néill. Sources noted Ruaidrí,

the possible brother of the High-King Conchobar mac Donnchada (r. 819-833, King of

Mide and High King of Tara (with opposition)), was the *tanaise abbaid* (the abbatial

successor and second-in-command) of Clonmacnoise in the early part of the ninth

century. Some members of the Ua Máeldún, relatives of Clann Cholmáin, were also vice-

abbots of Clonmacnoise.[751] Colmán Conaillech's joint abbacy with Clonard (ab.888) was

also telling, as this centrally-located Mide monastery was another of Clann Cholmáin's

formidable allies and its founder, Finnian, shared a close relationship with Ciarán in the

saint's hagiography.[752]

Apart from the tendency towards selecting abbots from regions falling under the

aegis of the associated ruling polity, Ryan also detected an inclination in the abbatial lists

of Clonmacnoise toward selecting its leaders from "peoples of lower status," akin to their

patron saint, Ciarán "Son of the Wright" of the Latharna. Instead of strictly following the

guidelines provided by the *Córus Bésgnai*, it seemed more important for the abbot of

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[751] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 38.

[752] Ibid., 31. Two other abbots held joint control of this institutions after Colmán,
Céilechair son of Robartach (d.954) and Flathbertach son of Domnall (d.1014), as well as
Ruaidrí son of Donnchad (d.838) who served as vice-abbot to both. Centrally located in
Mide, Clonard was also considered a Clann Cholmáin stronghold, which Kehnel called
"the greatest of the churches in the kingdom" over which the dynasty ruled.

Clonmacnoise to share certain qualities with the saint, instead of his blood. In her study of relics, Niamh Wycherley also argued that the perceived or shaped "personality" of a patron or founding saint provided the *modus operandi* of an ecclesiastical institution long after his or her death.[753] Without a line of succession based in the kin of the saint or the surrounding region, the successorship of Ciarán may have been open to question more so than was the case in other monasteries. Thus, Colmán had added reason to emphasize his legitimacy as the rightful ecclesiastic heir to Clonmacnoise. Furthermore, records listed eighty-some men serving as Abbot of Clonmacnoise starting with Ciarán in the sixth century to the Norman invasion in the twelfth century, a total much higher than comparable monasteries. Kehnel suggested that "political instability" at the heavily-contested borderlands played a role in the high rate of turnover. She observed "disturbances" in the rule of two of Colmán's predecessors in the beginning of the tenth century; Dedimus (d.923) resigned in 901 after five years in power, followed by Joseph of Lough Conn (Co. Mayo), who survived the position for only three years.[754] Preceding these events, Maelchaidh, the Vice-Abbot of Clonmacnoise and Abbot of Daimhinis, "suffered martyrdom" at the hands of the *túatha* of Delbna Bethra ("*Dealbhna Eathra*"), who held him accountable for killing their lord, Scolaighe, son of Macan (AFM891).[755]

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[753] Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland*, 164-6.

[754] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 32.

[755] AFM893.14 and AFM891.5. Máelachaid "took an oath at his death, that he had no part in killing Scolaighe."

Colmán brought stability to Clonmacnoise during his twenty-two-year reign as abbot. He was also one of the few superiors of Clonmacnoise the annals recorded as *princeps*.[756] The term is relatively synonymous with abbot, but perhaps signaled a change in the office, Colmán's particular position, or the status of the monastery. Charles-Edwards reasoned that the "abbots of Iona, Clonmacnoise, Clonard and Bangor were without a doubt *excelsi principes*."[757] Along with the longevity and prosperity of his own reign, Colmán's lineal descendants also occupied positions of power. His son Máel Tuile led the school at Clonmacnoise, or a position referred to as *fer léiginn* (man of letters), and a later relation Bresal Conailleach occupied the same position before becoming the *comarba Ciarain* in 1025.[758] A further attempt to convey Colmán's rightful accession to the abbacy was the evidence of his family playing a crucial role in the Ciarán-Diarmait foundation narrative that emerged around the tenth century. The AT and the CS stated that Máelmor, the slayer of Diarmait's predecessor to the High-Kingship of Tara, Tuathal Máelgarb, was a member of the Conaille-Muirethemne and thus related to Colmán through his ancestral *túatha*.[759] The reminder of Conaille-Muirethemne's support of the

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[756] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois,* 32-3. The first was Ferdomnach, of the Mugdorna Maigen d.872, who bore the title *princeps Cluana*, instead of *abbas*, as well as Blamac son of Tarcedach from Bregmaine d.896. Colmán is listed as a bishop in the AU alone.

[757] Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 269.

[758] Kehnel, *Clonmacnois*, 48.

[759] Ibid., 116. AT543.1: "Tuathal Maelgarb, son of Cormac Caech son of Cairbre son of Niall, king of Tara, fell at Grellach Eilte by the hand of Maolmór son of Argadan, of Conaille Muirthemne. A son of the mother of Diarmaid son of Cearball was that Maelmór, and Maelmór himself fell on that spot, from which is said 'Maomór's murder.'" CS544: "Tuathal Maelgarbh, son of Cormac Caech, son of Coirpre, son of Niall, King of

monastery through the abbot's name in the inscription was immediately below the figures

of Diarmait and Ciarán performing their pivotal role of founding the Church. Colmán

emphasized his legitimacy as the successor of Ciarán on the Cross of the Scriptures by

welcoming the allusion to the saint in the foundation panel and through the inclusion of

his name denoting his patronage.

4.3   Founding the "Cathedral" of Clonmacnoise

Upon exiting the "Cathedral" of Clonmacnoise (also called *damliag*, or stone

church), from its western doorway, the viewer encounters the eastern face of the Cross of

the Scriptures, with its image of the Last Judgement and many representations of compact

between holy men, esteemed kings, and ancestral patrons of the site (Figure 157). The

joint claim to the monastery and partnership of Flann Sinna and Abbot Colmán featured

on the inscriptions and prefigured in the foundation panel further clarify the dialogue

between the building and the high cross.[760] The church's impressive size and materiality

for the period marked a considerable effort to restructure the site and tangibly expressed

the mutual legitimacy of its current rulers by surpassing all previous architectural and

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Temhair, died from a wound inflicted by Maelmor Ua Machí, who also was forthwith
slain himself. Hence is said 'the feat of Maelmor.'" See David E. Thornton," Early
Medieval Louth: The Kingdom of Conaille Muirtheimne," *Journal of the County Louth
Archaeological and Historical Society* 24, no.1 (1997): 139-150.

[760] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72. CS908: "The stone church of Cluain-mac-
Nois was built by Flann, son of Maelsechlainn, and Colman Conaillech" *("Damliag
Cluana muc Nois do denem la Flann mac Maoileclainn et la Colman Conaillech*"). See
this article for a summary of previous major scholarship, including studies by Petrie,
Macalister, Leask, and Henry.

artistic donations (Figures 158-160). Its construction appears to be contemporaneous and

motivated by the same agenda as both the Cross of the Scriptures and the writing of the

Diarmait-Ciarán narratives, i.e. tying the history of the site to Southern Uí Néill ancestry.

Manning noted its title of "Cathedral" likely came about in the twelfth century, it

was previously referred to as the Clonmacnoise's *damliag*, or stone church, so-styled by

its yellow-brown sandstone masonry.[761] Scholarship has tied the building to the cross

since Petrie's *Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland* in 1845, which valued the sculpture

primarily because it helped him to date this church, the largest pre-Norman example still

standing in Ireland. The "Cathedral" experienced four phases of renovation over a

millennium, but in its original form it was rectangular with antae extending from each of

its corners and supported a gabled roof.[762] The "Cathedral's" height and large

dimensions, once measuring 18.8m by 10.7m internally and a length to breadth ratio

close to 1:1.75, physically overshadowed the sacred *Teampull Ciarán*.[763] Manning dated

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[761] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 57, 60. Manning observed that the initial phase
of the building, credited to Colmán and Flann, is "almost exclusively of [undressed]
yellow/brown sandstone, horizontally laid" with many of the stones measuring between
.15 and .7 m in length and .1m and .3m in height. The walls display a "series of regularly
spaced putlog holes," which held the timbers that supported the scaffolding planks during
construction. These were filled in with small stones and plastered over after the walls
were completed. Another common name for the building is Temple Dermot, or Mac
Dermot's church.

[762] Ibid., 58-9. The building experienced five phases of construction occurring in the
tenth century, late twelfth-early thirteenth, late thirteenth-early fourteenth, c. 1460, and
the modern era. Evidence of the gabled wall can be found "where the east and west walls
meet the south wall," but little is known of the actual roof structure.

[763] Ibid., 74. Manning noted that the current internal dimensions are 19.8 by 8.7m, and
nearly 1:2 ratio.

the great church to the year 909 based on a corrected reading of CS908.[764] Both the

replica of the Cross of the Scriptures and the current doorway of the western wall of the

"Cathedral" framing it are modern approximations of the original interaction between the

two works associated with Flann and Colmán. The neo-Gothic portal with pointed

archivolts that now substitutes for the original entrance is off-centered, but Manning

provided evidence that the southern wall once stood 2m further out than its replacement,

thus accounting for the current asymmetry and visual imbalance.[765]

In his study of the ecclesiastical architecture of early medieval Ireland, Tomás Ó

Carragáin stated that many of the mortared churches of the tenth and eleventh centuries,

are "the clearest expressions of royal authority in Ireland."[766] He posited that sixteen of

the twenty-seven mortared churches built during the period are credited to the Southern

Uí Néill in the Midlands and the Dal Cais dynasty in Northern Munster, along the

Shannon.[767] Like the Cross of the Scriptures and other high crosses at Clonmacnoise,

these were donations based in devotion, but they also were erected to advance political

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[764] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 72-3.

[765] Ibid., 74.

[766] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 120. He (p.73-5) also suggested that the "Cathedral" may be an intentional allusion to the sacred architecture of Jerusalem, including Solomon's Temple and the Holy Sepulchre. The Clonmacnoise "Cathedral" measures 61 feet and 6 inches long internally, while the biblical temple is said to by 60 cubits long. Ó Carragáin cited Tírechán's account of Patrick measuring out the church at Donaghpatrick "with sixty of his feet." Máel Sechnaill mac Domhnall (d.1022) donated a stone from Solomon's Temple to the cathedral during the eleventh century.

[767] Ibid., 140. Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 74.

agendas. The association with the relationship between the church, the cross, and kingship persisted in the following centuries. Flann's descendants continued to endow the church, the "*eneclar*" (perhaps the screen) of the great altar of Clonmacnoise was donated by Máel Sechnaill mac Domhnaill in the beginning of the eleventh century. Both Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, the twelfth-century King of Ireland, who erected high crosses at Tuam, and his son Ruaidhrí (also High-King of Ireland) chose to be buried beside the altar of Ciarán at Clonmacnoise.[768]

Similar to Diarmait and Ciarán planting the *cleth* on the site to realize the saint's vision for the monastery and for all of Ireland, Flann and Colmán transformed the site's architecture to reflect Clonmacnoise's power and wealth centuries later, as well as its large population of permanent residents and religious and lay visitors.[769] Manning rightly argued that Flann built the "Cathedral" in thanksgiving for victory, as part of a larger effort that included the Cross of the Scriptures, and that its impressiveness at the time warranted mention in the annals.[770] However, apart from its status as an architectural achievement for the era, the reason for the inclusion of Flann and Colman's joint patronage of the "Cathedral" among the annals that mentioned few works of art and architecture was to ensure these men remained forever tied to Clonmacnoise. Colmán became the respected ecclesiastical head of one of the illustrious monasteries on the

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[768] AFM1156, AFM1198. Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 78.

[769] Bradley, "The Monastic Town of Clonmacnoise."

[770] Manning, "Clonmacnoise Cathedral," 74.

island and Clann Cholmáin firmly implanted themselves as the most prodigious dynasty of Clonmacnoise's associates, the *Leth Cuinn*, and Ireland. The great church further monumentalized Flann and Colmán's collaboration and legitimized their status as leaders of Clonmacnoise; it exemplified the prosperity of the monastery that could only occur if just rule reigned supreme.

4.4   Summary

This chapter investigated how the high cross functioned as a protective boundary and land claim marker within the social formations of early medieval Ireland. Based in indigenous traditions of using ancestors and monuments to claim and protect territory, the Cross of the Scriptures summoned the memory of St. Ciarán and High-King Diarmait to declare the joint ownership of Clonmacnoise by their descendants, the abbots of Clonmacnoise represented by Colmán Conaillech, and High-Kings of Clann Cholmáin by Flann Sinna. The monument's form and iconography interacted with its location and built environment to project both the corporeal and spiritual presence of these protectors felt by those assembled at the monastery. The Cross of the Scriptures, among similarly-purposed literary and architectural efforts, also highlighted the special Clann Cholmáin-Clonmacnoise relationship and further asserted Flann Sinna's power in a highly-contested region at the center of Ireland, along two major travel routes and on the border of three great overkingdoms. These circumstances suggested the high cross was part of an attempt to further establish Clonmacnoise as a preeminent Christian royal site in Ireland, rivaling, Armagh to the north and Cashel to the south.

There is an inherent paradox present in the form and proposed functions of the high cross. It is a free-standing and accessible public monument with four sides, each carved with meticulous attention; it physically moves the viewer around to admire the artistic virtuosity and contemplate its Christian and historical "truths" presented. Yet, its materiality and intended permanence also stressed its purposeful immobility. The cross served as a boundary marker of liminal spaces, simultaneously demarcating and connecting territories and the limits of the sacred and profane, but it was also a pivot, the center around which life and death, heaven and earth, the past, present, and future converge and oscillate in the viewer's mind.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to explore the alternative functions and purposes of the high cross through a site-specific case study of the Cross of the Scriptures. My analysis examined this high cross through the lenses of kingship, politics, and placement, as well as the customs and laws that ordered society, to highlight the possibilities of the monument-type's use as an apparatus for claim-making and boundary-marking. It considered the intersection of the form and decoration of the high cross with its royal patronage by the High-King Flann Sinna and its situation in the geographical and political landscape of its time to understand its multifunctional role as a marker in a contentious political landscape, a celebration of victory, and an expression of the legitimate rulership. In doing so, this project moved beyond traditional iconographic and stylistic comparison used for dating purposes. It also challenged some of the conventional assumptions about high crosses, such as their strictly didactic or devotional natures and their production by a monolithic monastic elite that controlled Ireland.

The association between the Cross of the Scriptures and kingship has existed in scholarship since the nineteenth century with the antiquarian research of George Petrie, but this connection was primarily used to tie the work to a historical personage in order to establish a date and a stylistic chronology. Peter Harbison and Françoise Henry initiated the serious consideration of the royal patronage of high crosses in the late 1970s-early 1980s with the former continuing the discussion through the 1990s. Providing a date for

this and other high crosses, as well as other notable works of the Irish Middle Ages, continued to be the overall goal of these studies, but they also attempted to tie these works to Carolingian artistic practices. This dissertation placed the Cross of the Scriptures within the traditions of Irish society and culture *and* general artistic trends related to Christian Europe during the early medieval period, especially as it pertained to concepts of kingship and boundary-marking. It did not attempt to provide a glimpse of the so-called "Celtic past," but instead looked to historical annals, wisdom-texts, heroic sagas, hagiographies, biblical exegesis, poetry, and law texts to recreate the culture responsible for the high cross, one that fused a respect for its ancestral past and traditions with a Christian present and future. Instead of focusing on a strictly ecclesiastical outlook for creation and interpretation, this dissertation viewed the Cross of the Scriptures in relation to Irish kingship and the prevailing social order to argue for its role in one regional ruler's pursuit of hegemony. It also engaged with a site-specific approach to consider the monument in the context of its geographic, cultural, and political placement. The scholarship of Raghnall Ó Floinn, Stephen Driscoll, Catherine Forsyth, Nancy Edwards, Howard Williams, Joanne Kirton, and Meggen Gondek served as foundations for considering the Cross of the Scriptures in relation to its situation in space and history. This approach, coupled with the study of its iconography and form, revealed intended messages of power, identity, and control. In its performance as a witness to Flann Sinna's divinely-sanctioned rule, it helped to provide evidence of his legitimate rule.

In the second chapter of my analysis of the Cross of the Scriptures, I determined that its location at the once powerful and wealthy monastery of Clonmacnoise supplemented its intended message. This high cross was situated both in a contentious

borderland between three overkingdoms, the Mide, Connacht, and Munster, as well as at the crossing of Ireland's major overland and water traveling routes, the Eiscir Riada (*An tSlí Mór*) and the Shannon River. In the medieval period, the former also served as the traditional line of division between the north (*Leth Cuinn* or Conn's half) and the south (*Leth Moga* or Mug's half); this border loosely ordered ancestral identities and allegiances, as well as political alliances in early medieval Ireland. The central location of Flann's kingdom in the geographic middle of the Ireland, and Clonmacnoise's prosperity and association with the Clann Cholmáin dynasty invited attack on all sides from other Irish groups and Vikings.

The Cross of the Scriptures was a part of a considerable restructuring of the site in the tenth century that also included the building of Ireland's largest extant early medieval church, a joint effort between Flann Sinna and Clonmacnoise's Abbot Colmán mac Ailella whose names appear on the cross. The impressive works pointed to the continuance of a successful alliance between the monastery and Clann Cholmáin. They also expressed the physical protection provided by Flann Sinna and his ancestors and the spiritual protection provided by Abbot Colmán and his predecessor St. Ciarán. The monument and church are believed to be offerings by the high-king in thanksgiving for a significant northern-allied victory at Belach Mughna over powerful enemies from the south led by High-King of Munster, Cormac mac Cuilennáin. Flann Sinna had ruled his overkingdom for decades, but it was this victory that made him the most powerful king in Ireland and substantiated the claim of "Rig Herenn" made on the cross's inscription. Although Flann was the son of a former high-king, Máel Sechnaill, the most powerful man in Ireland during his own reign, his rise to power was not guaranteed. Flann earned

his primacy through victory on the battlefield and crafting alliances with different regional leaders and powerful monastic communities. The panel expressing a compact between two kings, mostly likely Flann Sinna and Cathal mac Conchobair of Connacht, on the eastern face of the Cross of the Scriptures represents one such example of his skillful rulership that led to his consolidation of power. This alliance brought a cessation of hostilities between the two regions, uniting them in the face of southern attempts of expansion and upheaval to the political norm. Flann conflated his kingship with the prestigious form of the high cross and the authority expressed in its iconography to ensure his claims of legitimacy and superior kingship were recognized by both subjects and enemies alike at Ireland's physical and cultural crossroads.

In chapter three, I further supported the political function of the Cross of the Scriptures by tying its form and iconography to both universally Christian and characteristically Irish motifs of kingship. The Cross of the Scriptures' monumentality, materiality, and aesthetic value conveyed its prestigious nature to the early medieval viewer. For the more learned levels of society, the presence of Flann Sinna's name and title of "King of Ireland" among the iconographic panels also encouraged an association with the symbol's imperial connotations. Constantine's triumph under the cross was emulated by earthly rulers across early medieval Christendom, who used the symbol to convey their own divinely-sanctioned rulership and victories. The elite presented the cross in impressive forms as thanksgiving for their favorable conditions and as signs of adoration of the Godhead. They also adopted the symbol as a sign of their authority, a weapon and a standard of their rule granted to them by God.

The high cross's exceptional form also drew from a previous tradition in Ireland which viewed stones as impactful, sacral, and authenticating. Several stories recall their performance in the ritual legitimation and commemoration of kings. Appearing alongside the inscriptions naming Flann Sinna as king and his possible representation in the compact panel are several common motifs of universal Christian kingship. The iconographic models of the victorious *Christus Rex*, the Old Testament warrior-king and psalmist David, and the all-powerful Judge at the End of Days work to further conflate Flann Sinna's kingship with divinely-sanctioned rule. These images conformed to universal depictions and concepts of Christian kingship, but they also prompted interpretations related to Irish society and high-kingship, such as *Fír Flathemon* (ruler's truth), *lóg n-enech* (honor-price), *fingal* (kin-slaying), and the obligations and counter-obligations of a king and his people within the *célsine* system.

The last substantive chapter of this study further explored the high cross's performance as a protective boundary marker and connected this function to Flann Sinna's political aims and his family's special relationship to Clonmacnoise. The symbol of the cross was a powerful apotropaic sign in its own right, but the Cross of the Scriptures' form and imagery interacted with its built environment to convey a sense of territorial demarcation and control. An essential component of this function was the authority early Irish society placed in its ancestral past. Similar to the legal process of claiming land that involved the burial of ancestors and erecting stones with inscriptions, the Cross of the Scriptures called to mind the continued presence of Flann's immediate family at the site, as well as that of his heroic forefather and forerunner to the ordained kingship of Ireland, Diarmait mac Cerbaill. The creation of the high cross and the

composition of the story of Diarmait's co-founding of the monastery in the Irish "Life of St. Ciarán" occurred roughly around same time period. Together, they conveyed an attempt to advance Flann Sinna's claim to a special relationship with Clonmacnoise and his divinely-sanctioned right to rule. Although Diarmait's faith is variously portrayed in hagiographies, sagas, and historic annals, he is the helpful servant of Ciarán on the Cross of the Scriptures, sanctioned by the saint to rule all of Ireland. Ciarán's continued presence as the monastery's founding ecclesiastical figure is represented in the foundation panel, but also in the church-like capstone that evoked his nearby burial place in Clonmacnoise's shrine-chapel, and the eastern inscription naming his abbatial successor and Flann Sinna's religious counterpart, Colmán. Together these men were responsible for creating the high cross and, like their ancestors, building a church at Clonmacnoise. Subsequently, they were tasked with a joint protection of the site.

Throughout this study, the theme of compact occurs time and time again, namely the truce between the northern kings of Connacht and the Mide, the agreement between Ciarán and Diarmait, the alliance between Flann Sinna and Colmán, the broken covenant that resulted in the Crucifixion, and the new one that would lead the righteous to heaven at the Last Judgement, as well as Peter and Paul's promise to Christ to lead his people after he left this world. The proposed functions of the Cross of the Scriptures, as a boundary marker and a witness to Flann Sinna's divinely-sanctioned primacy, are also based in the mechanisms of the contracts and agreements that ordered Irish society. Biblical covenants, both those kept and broken, and evidence of the agreements expressed through God's divine interventions are popular images throughout the corpus of high crosses. For example, divine covenants are central concepts in three of the most

popular images, the Crucifixion, Adam and Eve, and the Sacrifice of Isaac.[771] Evidence

of God's good lordship are also variously represented by the Miracles of the Three

Children in the Fiery Furnace, Daniel and Lions' Den, various images of David's rise to

kingship, the Multiplication of Fish and Loaves, Sts. Anthony and Paul in the Desert, and

the *Manus Dei*, as well as several other examples. The idea that the theme of compact is

consistently present in the form of the high cross throughout Ireland further underscores

the appropriation of type's form, its authority, and its images to advance the agenda of

Flann Sinna, and perhaps those of his father and other kings and their related monuments.

By association, these kings' reigns and their political agreements became examples of

divine-sanctioned agreements.

This kind of intensive study of one monument revealed a number of

interpretations regarding its possible functions that otherwise might not be fully

considered in a broader study of the type. However, this focus is also the foremost

limitation of the project, in addition to the Cross of the Scriptures being rare among the

corpus for its condition of being firmly tied to its existing location and having two

inscriptions related to well-documented, historical persons. The monument is not typical,

nor is the monastery of Clonmacnoise. Although the preceding arguments apply to this

high cross alone, many of the concepts presented may be applicable to other monuments,

such as crosses with clear royal patronage, those with inscriptions, those at prodigious

monasteries, and those marking compacts and borders. When these works are drawn

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[771] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:189-194, 198-200, 273-286 and 387-392.

together and their geographical and historical situations are considered and their

iconography compared, they reveal a larger network of artistic patronage of high crosses

for political purposes. I am particularly interested in crosses at midland sites located in

borderlands, on major travelling routes, and associated with Clann Cholmáin. The second

half of this conclusion provides a brief look at a number of case studies that fall within

these categories.

Another suggested example of a high cross acting as a marker of compact is the

Cross of Patrick and Columba (Figure 161), one of the four intact high crosses at the

monastery of Kells, along with the Market Cross, the Broken Cross, and the Unfinished

Cross.[772] De Paor called this monument "a document of compromise" due to its now-

eroded inscription: "PATRICII ET COLUMBE CRUX."[773] He posited that the

agreement it represented was the monastery's recognition of two spheres of ecclesiastic

influence, that is the law of Patrick stemming from its head church, Armagh, and the law

of Columba and this saint's institutions at Kells, Iona, and Durrow, among others. De

Paor proposed that the inscription "registers an agreement, or at least an understanding:

Armagh's primacy is acknowledged." [774] Harbison's identification of the two robed and

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[772] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:100-112.

[773] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 147. Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:101. R.A.S. Macalister, "The Ancient Inscriptions of Kells," *JRSAI* 4, No.1 (1934): 17. Harbison noted that Macalister claimed to have observed an inscription on the eastern face of the Broken Cross, "OROIT DO ARTGAL DO RIGNE I CHROISSE MUIREDAIG."

[774] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 147.

seated figures on the north side of the capstone as Patrick and Columba supported this idea (Figures 144a-b).[775] This cross and the decoration of the other monuments at Kells reflected that a dialogue existed between this site and other regional groupings in Ireland, including Midland crosses like Kinnitty and Clonmacnoise, those in the Barrow Valley like Castledermot and Moone, and the Ossory (Ahenny) crosses, in addition to Scottish crosses at Kildalton and Islay. De Paor suggested that the design similarities between the Scottish examples and Kells may reflect a continued tie among the Columban monasteries, as the Irish site served as the haven for the Ionan monks fleeing Viking attacks in the early ninth century.[776]

Apart from these connotations of compact and exchange, the concentration of high crosses at Kells is deserved of a site-specific case study similar to the proceeding chapters. Previously, Roe and Harbison have provided iconographic descriptions and *comparanda* for the Kells crosses.[777] The former included some biographic details for the site and notable works of art and architecture in her booklet produced with the aim of providing an illustrated survey of the works with photography. Éamonn Ó Carragáin and De Paor have added complementary studies, addressing the local influences on the Kells crosses; Ó Carragáin studied the Market Cross and Cross of Sts. Patrick and Columba

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[775] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:111.

[776] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 148-9.

[777] Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells*; and Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:100-12. Harbison also included a discussion of a cross base that may be the fifth example of a high cross at Kells.

through the intersection of theology and the movement of the sun and De Paor applied

the historic and geographic context of Kells to the study of stylistic motifs appearing on

the high crosses at the site and elsewhere in the Insular world.[778]

According to tradition, the site of Kells was a hill-fort and seat of kingship long

before its foundation as a monastic institution. It was supposedly founded as *Dún Chuile*

Sibhrinne and ruled by the mythological king Fiacha Finnailches (c.1200 BCE). Eighth-

and ninth-century histories, instead, associated the site with the legendary, third-century

king, Cormac mac Airt, grandson of Conn Cétchathach.[779] In the early medieval period,

the site was also portrayed as in the possession of Diarmait mac Cerbaill and called

Ceanannus (Head Fort). According to the Irish "Life of Columba," recorded in the Book

of Lismore, Diarmait granted the holy man the rights to Kells, akin to the king's role in

founding Clonmacnoise. Columba immediately marked out the boundaries of the

monastery and blessed it, as the king's advisor (*righflaith*), Becc mac Dé, witnessed the

claiming.[780] The first reference to the foundation, however, does not appear in the annals

until the early ninth century. AU803 (recte 804) recorded Columba's foundation, "[t]he

gift of Kells without strife to Colmcille, the tuneful," while AU806 (recte 807) noted the

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[778] Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells*; Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland,* 1:100-12; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "High Crosses, The Sun's Course, and Local Theologies at Kells and Monasterboice," 157-165; and De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 144-8.

[779] Ibid., 1. De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 146.

[780] Stokes, *Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore*, 111. De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 146.

building of a new city to house the Columban community that came to Ireland from Iona when their monastery there was destroyed by Vikings.[781] Unfortunately, the church at Kells was also destroyed in 807 (AFM802.5, recte 807).

Similar to Clonmacnoise, the monastery came under the protection of Clann Cholmáin during the latter part of the early medieval period. Kells also had direct ties to Flann Sinna and his family. As previously mentioned, Flann had profaned the church at the site in 904 by removing his rebellious son, Donnchad, who was seeking sanctuary, and beheading several of his men.[782] This type of action usually required some sort of repentance in the form of royal benefaction if a king wanted to continue good relationships with the site. In his "Martyrology of Donegal" (early seventeenth century), Michael O'Cleary's noted a story that involved the burial of Flann Sinna's daughter, Gormlaith, at Kells.[783] She was initially buried under a great cross there, however Gormlaith supposedly returned from the grave to request a more modest gravestone. Although the origin date of this tale is unverifiable, the story demonstrated that the site

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[781] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 147. Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells*, 1.

[782] AU904.2

[783] O'Cleary's "Martyrology of Donegal" is recorded in three manuscripts: Brussels, Bibliothéque Royale de Belgique, MS 4639 (505) and MS5095-5096 (506), both seventeenth century, and Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 27. John O'Donovan, James Henthorn Todd, and William Reeves, eds. and trans., *The Martyrology of Donegal: a calendar of the saints of Ireland* (Dublin: Irish and Archaeological and Celtic Society by A. Thom, 1864), xl. Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells*, 1.

seemingly continued to be associated with Clann Cholmáin dynasty into the early modern period.

Kells was located on the *Sli Assail*, another of the five ancient roads of Ireland that supposedly appeared at the birth of Conn Cétchathach (Figure 54). Through this route that connected the Mide to Connacht, Kells was linked to Tara, Tailtiu (the great *óenach*, or assembly place, associated with Uí Néill kings), and Monasterboice. Ó Lochlainn referred to a saga from the Ulster cycle, the "*Mesca Ulaid*" ("The Intoxication of the Ulstermen"), to demonstrate that the *Sli Assail* was also called the "*Rót na cCarpat*," (the Road of Chariots), which was a route that connected Kells-Tara-Tailtiu with another center of Southern Uí Néill power and assembly, Uisneach.[784] St. Columba's Irish "Life" mentioned Kells was also on another road, presumably one that ran south-east to northwest, that connected Durrow with Monasterboice.[785] There are a wealth of images on the Kells Market Cross, the Cross of Patrick and Columba, and the Broken Cross that are deserved of further study in relation to their political and historical

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[784] Colm Ó Lochlainn, "Roadways in Ancient Ireland," in *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill: Essay and Studies presented to professor Eoin MacNeill on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, May 15th 1938,* ed. by John Ryan (Dublin: Three Candles, 1940), 472. The *Mesca Ulad* is a text recorded in Old and Middle Irish in four manuscripts: the Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25 (1229) (*Lebor na hUidre*), eleventh-twelfth century (Old Irish); Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 (H 2. 18) (Book of Leinster), twelfth century (Middle Irish); Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 4, fourteenth century (Yellow Book of Lecan); and Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS. 72.1.40, fifteenth-sixteenth century. A translation of the text can be found in: Carmichael J. Watson, ed. and trans., *Mesca Ulad*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 13 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1941).

[785] Ibid., 469.

circumstances. The bases of the Market Cross and the Cross of Patrick and Columba, like the Cross of the Scriptures, emphasize movement in the form of riders, procession, herding, hunting, and fighting (Figures 30, 133, 162-163). There is more lengthwise space on the base that allows for these types of depictions in comparison to the often stationary and iconic depictions appearing of the shafts, but it is also worth considering that these images may gesture to these crosses' positionings at important points on major travelling routes. The concentration of high crosses at Kells, and its important location, along a major travel route and near the foremost site of gathering for the Uí Néill, invite the possibility that at least one of these crosses was created through the patronage of kings, either Clann Cholmáin or other regional rulers. However, only further study can properly evaluate this hypothesis.

If travelling from Kells eastward along the *Sli Assail,* the route met with another of the five legendary roads, the *Sli Midluacha*, which proceeded north to Armagh-Eamhain Macha from Tara-Dublin (Figures 54). The crossing was sited north of Drogheda, near the modern-day boundaries of Co. Meath and Co. Louth, and the River Boyne, which is about five miles south of Monasterboice. There are three intact crosses at the monastery, the Tall Cross (West Cross), the Cross of Muiredach (South Cross), and the North Cross, as well as three other fragments cited by Harbison that may be high crosses from the site (Figures 24, 45, 164).[786] The first two monuments are among the premier examples of the type in Ireland. The Cross of Muiredach, in particular, shares

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[786] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:139-153.

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iconographic and stylistic similarities with the Cross of the Scriptures, while the impressive height of the Tall Cross ties it to the tradition of large northern crosses like Ardboe and Donaghmore (Figures 165-166). The cross of Muiredach is traditionally associated with an abbot of Monasterboice, Muiredach son of Domhnall (d. 924), because of its inscription at the bottom of the shaft on the western face: "OR DO MUIREDACH LASNDERNAD…RO" (A prayer for Muiredach who had the cross erected) (Figure 25).[787]

De Paor raised the point that Muiredach could also be a king, based on the popularity of the name among northern rulers in the ninth century recorded in the annals, and suggested a local king, Muiredach, son of Cathal, king of Uí Cremthainn (d.867), as an appropriate patron.[788] He tied this idea to Monasterboice's location in a contentious landscape. During the ninth century, the Cenél nEógain became the most powerful ruling dynasty in the north and counterpart to Clann Cholmáin in the south. When Cenél nEógain rose to power, they did so at the expense of the Uí Cremthainn. However, the latter group still controlled this area immediately north of the River Boyne where Monasterboice was located, known as *Fir Ardda Ciannachta*.[789] The Boyne also played a

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[787] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:143.

[788] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related Sculpture," 154.

[789] Ibid., 154. The Síl nÁedo Sláine, who were the most powerful members of the Southern Uí Néill until Clann Cholmáin rose to power, held power below the River Boyne. Thus, the Ciannachta south of the river fell under their control in the seventh century.

larger role as the traditional border between the Northern and Southern Uí Néill. Thus, the area remained in the midst of kingdoms and overkingdoms jockeying for regional power, including the dynasties of the Uí Cremthainn, Síl nÁedo Sláine, Clann Cholmáin, the Airgialla, and Cenél nEógain. The Monasterboice crosses, especially the Cross of Muiredach, are among the most popular examples studied in scholarship, and have been featured in the work of De Paor, Roe, Stalley, and Harbison, among others.[790] However, the impressiveness of their forms, their iconographic variety, and their pivotal location provide another opportunity for future case studies in relation to geographical and political situation. A forthcoming publication through Yale University Press by Stalley will hopefully shed further light on the Monasterboice, the idea of Muiredach Master, and other crosses within the tradition.[791]

The two fragmented cross-shafts at the site of Old Kilcullen would also benefit from further reevaluation with locality and political significance taken into account (Figures 12, 167).[792] Old Kilcullen is another major monastic site that was home to a prosperous community and located near a site of kingship and a known travelling route. It

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[790] Roe, *Monasterboice and its Monuments*; Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:139-153; and Stalley, "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master.'"

[791] Stalley, *Early Irish Sculpture and the Art of High Crosses* (provisional title, forthcoming), assumingly expands upon the variety of the research questions and approaches to high crosses introduced in his important article "Irish sculpture of the early tenth century and the work of the 'Muiredach Master.'"

[792] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 159-161. Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare," 127-9.

sits atop a hill south-east of a fort of Dún Ailinne, which served as the symbolic capital of

Leinster, akin to Tara in the Mide.[793] Ó Lochlainn noted that one of the roads that Patrick

supposedly travelled in the "Tripartite Life" connected the monastery to the other notable

high cross sites of Castledermot and Moone (Figures 10, 11, 13).[794] One of the stories

involving its founders referred to Mac Tail (Son of the Adze or Ax), who was given

control of the monastery by St. Patrick. Herity identified an image on the western cross-

shaft of Old Kilcullen as the saint smiting his enemy with self-referential weapon in hand

(Figure 145).[795] The instruments of his position as abbot, his bell, crozier, and book, are

also present. Like the Cross of the Scriptures within the layout of Clonmacnoise, this

cross was situated in an open space in front of the western door of Old Kilcullen's church

and flanked by a round tower.

Although nearby Kildare held prominence among monastic institutions in

Leinster, Old Kilcullen's stone monuments and architecture point to its prosperity during

the ninth and tenth centuries. The annals record that it was also the target of a

"Foreigner" attack when the Viking Olaf Godfridsson sacked the site in the late 930s (CS

938) and seized 1000 prisoners.[796] The monastery was avenged in a joint attack on

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[793] The abandonment of habitation of Dún Ailinne occurred sometime in fifth century.

[794] Ó Lochlainn, "Roadways in Ancient Ireland," 468.

[795] Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare," 129.

[796] Ibid., 127. CS938: "Cell Cuilinn was plundered by Amlaíb son of Gothfrith and a thousand captives taken from it." The entry for CS936 recorded that Cluain moccu Nóis

Dublin by High-King Donnchad (d. 944), Flann Sinna's son and the high-king of the Mide and of Ireland, and High-King Muirchertach mac Néill, King of Ailech (AU, AFM), son of High-king Niall Glúndub and grandson of Áed Findliath (the two Northern Uí Néill kings that bookended Flann's reign).[797] AFM937 (recte 939) recorded that "[t]he foreigners deserted Ath-Cliath [Dublin] by the help of God and Mactail."[798] Through the help of the power of patron saint and God, the rival kings of the Uí Néill joined together to defeat a common enemy. Promising avenues of study regarding this case would be to explore the creation of the Old Kilcullen crosses' in relation to the emerging network of patronage discussed in this chapter, as well as the effect the political exchanges of the local Leinster kings, the expanding Clann Cholmáin domain, and the encroaching Vikings may have had on the patronage of the site, in particular the crosses, during the ninth and tenth centuries.

Castledermot is another site that should be considered in relation to this possible patronage network of crosses that mark both borders and claims of rulership. The monastery is located a few miles from Old Kilcullen on the River Lerr, a tributary of the River Barrow. It has two intact high crosses flanking the remains of a Romanesque

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was plundered by "Áth Cliath" and Donnchad, son of Flann, king of Tara, avenged the attack by burning Dublin.

[797] Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare," 128. AU938.6: "Cell Cuilinn was plundered by Amlaíb grandson of Ímar— something unheard of from ancient times. Donnchad grandson of Mael Sechnaill, king of Temair, and Muirchertach son of Niall, king of Ailech, led an army to besiege the foreigners of Áth Cliath, and they ravaged from Áth Cliath to Áth Truisten."

[798] Idem.

church at the site, and a third plain cross base in front of the building's doorway (Figures 10-11). Herity argued that the layout of these crosses is similar to the plan of Clonmacnoise and that they may also be boundary crosses.[799] The founder of Castledermot was an Ulster prince, Díarmata h-Áedo Róin, who was a member of the Céli Dé and described as an anchorite and religious doctor (CS825, AFM823.3).[800] As mentioned in chapter 2, High-King and Bishop Cormac mac Cuillenáin was buried at the site following his death at the hand of Flann Sinna's army at the Battle of Belach Mughna by his tutor Sneidghuis (d.887), who was the abbot of Castledermot.[801] Both crosses display martial imagery, including hunters and various warrior-hero types holding swords that have been identified as Daniel in the Lions' Den and David.[802] However, it is possible that not all of these figures are biblical representations of kingship. These martial images are balanced by pivotal events in the Christian narrative, such as the Fall of Adam and Eve and the Crucifixion, images of divine intervention, such as the Miracle of Loaves and Fish and the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, and a plethora of holy men identified as the apostles and Sts. Anthony and Paul.

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[799] Herity, "The Context and Date of the High Cross at Disert Diarmada (Castledermot), Co. Kildare," 123.

[800] Ibid., 113.

[801] Idem. Herity noted a cross-slab attributed as his grave that is located 8m northwest of the church's door.

[802] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:37-43.

The site of Castledermot also contains the only hogback in Ireland and a slab colloquially known as the "swearing stone." The former, a type more common to Viking territories in Northern England and Southern Scotland, is 1.7 meters long, inscribed with two crosses, and is dated to the tenth or eleventh century (Figure 168). The latter is a rectangular slab measuring three-feet-high erected on a two-stepped base (Figure 169). Inscribed on this monument is the form of a ringed high cross with a large hole cut through the center of its cross-ring. The hole measures five inches in diameter, allowing for a fist, arm, armlet, and presumably a large number of objects to be passed through it. Stones with perforations are not uncommon in Ireland. There several instances at ecclesiastic sites in which small holes were carved into to stones to hold the gnomon of a sundial, for examples the monuments at Kells, Donaghmore (Co. Meath), Kilmalkedar (Co. Kerry), and near Teampaill Chiaráin on Inis Mór (Aran Islands, Co. Galway) (Figures 170-171). However, the Castledermot holed stone does not appear to have served this function. The tradition of oath-taking that is evoked by the name of the stone may point to the original purpose of this monument, especially when the story from "The Colloquy of Ancients" involving the "Rock of Weapons" holding the king's armlet is taken into account. Of course, there is no evidence of the Castledermot stone being used as such in the early medieval period apart from its ascribed name and location at an important monastic site, but it is not out of the realm of possibilities given the authenticating quality of monumental stones established by this dissertation.

Another cluster of high crosses within this network of royal patronage are the monuments exhibiting inscriptions of Clann Cholmáin patronage, including the South Cross of Clonmacnoise, Kinnitty (Castlebernard) Cross, and the Durrow Cross. Although

Máel Sechnaill's reign was discussed in relation to Clonmacnoise in the previous chapters, this group provides an opportunity to study his reign and the degree to which he set strategical precedents both in rule and artistic patronage for his son. In comparison to the Cross of the Scriptures, the South Cross was also sandstone, of a similar height (standing 12¼ feet tall), and has a singular eroded inscription at the bottom of the western shaft possibly asking for prayers for Máel Sechnaill mac Ruanaid, King of Ireland (Figures 34d, 48). In overall proportions and scale, the two crosses are similar, yet the South Cross presents a decorative program dominated by non-figural imagery, closer in appearance to the crosses at Ahenny or Kinnitty. This monument displays raised bosses in a variety of sizes, inhabited vine-scrolls, key and fret patterns, and knotwork, although an image of the Crucifixion appears on the western cross-shaft, immediately below the crosshead. On the much-degraded base, Harbison identified several faint carvings, including five horsemen on the eastern base, a hunting scene of the western base, and supposed images of Adam and Eve and the Sacrifice of Isaac on the southern base (Figures 172-174).[803]

In De Paor's summary of rise and rule of Máel Sechnaill, he suggested that the ruler erected the Kinnitty Cross after he was recognized as the premier king in Ireland at the assembly at Rathugh in 859, in which the Osraige was also subsumed into the *Leth Cuinn*. Like the cross attributed to his patronage at Clonmacnoise, the Kinnitty Cross exhibits a balance of non-figural and figural images, with the Crucifixion, Adam and Eve,

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[803] Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland*, 1:54-56.

and King David as the featured images (Figures 33, 121, 175). It also displays two

inscriptions that bridge what is written on the Clonmacnoise crosses, one features the

name of Máel Sechnaill while the other mentions Colmán, who made the cross for the

King of Ireland (Figures 34ab). De Paor further pointed out that the cross's original

placement, the monastery of Kinnitty (Cenn Etig), was on the boundary of Éile, which

was the borderland between the Osraige and Mide and near the route Cerball mac

Dúnlainge and his men would likely travel to raid the Delbna Bethra and Cenél Fiachach

prior to the peace established at Rathugh (Figure 176).[804] Thus, De Paor's political

reasoning for the dating and strategic placement of the Kinnitty Cross reinforces this

dissertation's view that the high cross's alternative functions included commemorating

important events, claiming kingship, boundary-marking, and consolidating control.

Further study of this cross and its iconography in relation to Kinnitty's local history could

bring further insight to this network of royal crosses and their use, as could the study of

the similarly-decorated Tihilly cross, also located on the Eiscir Riada. As addressed in the

first chapter, both Harbison and Ó Floinn highlighted that high crosses bounded

Osraige's western border, including those at Ahenny, Kilkieran, Lorrha and Seir Kieran,

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[804] De Paor, "The High Crosses of Tech Theille (Tihilly), Kinnitty, and related
Sculpture," 140-4, 155. Related to this idea, De Paor suggested that the Cross of the
Scriptures was instead created either in 897 after the high-king of Connacht submitted to
Flann or earlier in 879 when he became high-king of the Mide. These dates are also
plausible, however, the earlier date of the Cross of the Scriptures fit De Paor's inclination
to support that the Colmán's mentioned in the Kinnitty and Clonmacnoise cross
inscriptions were the same person, that is the artist responsible for both high crosses. He
also traced Máel Sechnaill's possible patronage of crosses through the occurrence of the
"split-frame" motif on crosses, especially when they occur on monuments like Kinnitty
and Tech Theille that are not dominated by figures.

and may be the patronage of either Máel Sechnaill or a response by Cerbaill mac Dúnlainge. The Ahenny-Kilkieran crosses were located on a major travelling route through the Sliabh Dile mountains and straddled the traditional boundary between Munster and Osraige, the River Linguan, while the Lorrha-Seir Kieran crosses sat on the northern boundary of the Osraige at the point where the kingdom touched Leinster, Mide, and Munster (Figure 35).[805]

The Durrow Cross is similar to the Cross of the Scriptures in its form, proportion, and height. The two crosses also share instances of iconography both in terms of subject and composition, and, like the South Cross at Clonmacnoise and Kinnitty Cross, it has an eroded inscription possibly naming Máel Sechnaill.[806] Durrow (*Dermaig*, plain of oaks) is also located on the Eiscir Riada, around 20 miles east of Clonmacnoise (Figure 54). The study of the Durrow Cross could be another chapter or dissertation in itself, but a brief consideration of some notable historical and political events at the monastery expands the understanding of how this monument may have functioned in its original context (Figure 9, 177-179). Known as Druim-Cain (Beautiful Hill) before its establishment as a monastery, King Áed mac Brenainn (d.585) of Tethbae in Leinster

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[805] Ó Floinn, "Patrons and Politics: Art, Artifact, and Methodology," 9-10. The former names of the site now called Ahenny are: Kilclispeen (the church of St. Crispin), which Ó Floinn suggested is an Anglo-Norman rededication, and Druim Dúin, which was the name glossed next to "Cil Cnisbin on Sliab Dile" in a text of Irish Litanies. The name Ahenny comes from a nearby ford across the River Linguan, i.e. "*Áth Téine*, 'the ford of fire.'" See the notes on pages 116-7 of this dissertation for a discussion of the importance of the River Linguan in the foundation myth of the people of the Osraige.

[806] See the notes on page 47 of this dissertation for the inscription featured on the cross of Durrow.

granted the land to St. Columba sometime in the 550s, who, according to Bede, founded it before leaving for Scotland.[807] During Máel Sechnaill's and Flann Sinna's reigns, Durrow was within the domain of Clann Cholmáin, as evident by the patronage of the high cross and the record of Flann's gift of a silver book-cover. Accordingly, there was an important Clann Cholmáin ancestor associated with the site. Domhnall mac Murchadha (or Domhnall Midi) (d.763), High-King of Uisneach, the Mide, and Tara, was buried there. Domhnall was a great patron of Columban churches and enforced the "Law of Columba" in 753. He also entered into an ecclesiastic life twice in his life, taking a hiatus to protect the north from southern incursions and to expand Southern Uí Néill control into northern Leinster. As a warrior, he established primacy in the *Leth Cuinn* by defeating Áed Allan of Cenél nEógain, the High-King of the Northern Uí Néill, in 744. As Domhnall was ancestor to both Máel Sechnaill and Flann Sinna, perhaps their support of Durrow and erection of a high cross was an effort to claim control through the commemoration of their ancestors at the site, similar to the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise. There is also the possibility of competition playing a role in the creation of these two crosses. During Domhnall's reign, Clonmacnoise remained under the Connacht kings' sphere of influence. There was also a noted rivalry that existed between the two monastic communities. Following Domhnall's death, his son led the army of Durrow against another relation, Bressal mac Murchado, and the men of Clonmacnoise at

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807 Bede, EH, 142, book 3, chapter 4. John Healy, *Insula Sanctorum Et Doctorum: Or, Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars* (New York: Benzinger, 1902), 301.

the Battle of Argamoyne in 759, in which two hundred men associated with the first monastery died.[808]

This study of the Cross of the Scriptures revealed the different messages and the breadth of its uses beyond the monument's traditionally-considered devotional purpose. The form is indeed sacred and powerful, but these meanings could be conflated with other ideas and functions. This high cross and the others that were briefly surveyed were viewed and designed with many Christian stories, concepts, and rituals in mind, but they also were informed by societal customs, laws, and politics both with and within the Church. These alternative functions and multivocal messages can be better understood by focusing on historical context and site-specific research. This is true for the Cross of the Scriptures, but also for other high crosses and prestigious works of art in early medieval Ireland. Although historians have focused on the Uí Néill attempts of nation-building during the ninth and tenth centuries, the role of art in this historical milieu deserves further exploration.

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[808] Charles Doherty, "Donnchad mac Domnaill (733–797)," *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Online: Oxford University Press, 2004). AU 764.6. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 594.

FIGURES

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APPENDIX: THE DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF THE PANELS ON THE CROSS OF THE SCRIPTURES

West Face:

W1 Top arm: In the panel are five bosses, vertically-arranged in a 2-1-2 design and linked by trumpet-pattern interlace. Above this image is the cap carved with shingle-like decoration that slants inward towards the ridge-pole/top of the cross.

W2 Center of Crossring: (Crucifixion) A large-scale, crucified Christ with upright head occupies the center of the cross-ring. His long, modelled arms and bowed legs are fully on display because of the minimal coverage of his loincloth-like garment. Christ's hands with open palms are quite large compared to his body and his feet, which rest on a plinth, point outward and appear to be bound by a rope. Beneath his arms are two smaller figures, the one on the left (Stephaton) kneels and extends his sponge on a stick upwards towards Christ's mouth and the one on the right (Longinus) sits with legs bent in front of his chest and pushes the spear into Christ's side.

W3 Right Arm: (Offering figure, Luna or Terra) A single figure holding a round shield, bends one knee as it lifts up an object that may be a horn or torch towards the Crucifixion.

W4 Left Arm: (Offering figure, Sol or Oceanus) A single figure holding a sword across its lap, bends one knee as it lifts up an object that may be a horn or torch towards the Crucifixion.

W5 Ring: At the cardinal points of the ring are four roundels with varying shapes, including an image of a horse rider in profile at the top and a downward facing dove at the bottom. The roundels on the left and right arms were not carved as deeply and their design is no longer discernible. The arcs of the rings between the roundels are decorated with alternating designs of bosses linked by interlace on the upper left and lower right and animal interlace on the lower left and upper right. A cylinder projects from the center of the interior of each arc.

W6 Top Shaft Panel: (The Decision of the Soldiers to Cast Lots for the Seamless Garment) The top panel features a triad of figures, two of which hold taut a tunic, generally-accepted as Christ's seamless garment. The flanking figures are soldiers dressed in tunics and crested helmets. Each holds a spear with his outer hand and the garment with the other. The central figure, also in a crested helmet, but wearing a longer robe, holds a knife over the garment.

W7 Middle Shaft Panel: (Arrest or Flagellation of Christ) Two flanking figures wearing pointed helmets with crests stand in profile as they restrain and twist the central figure's (Christ) upper body. The figure on the right holds the central figure at his waist, while the figure on the left strikes him on the shoulder with a rod.

W8 Bottom Shaft Panel: (Christ in the Tomb): A rectangular tomb-slab rests above a body (Christ), which is tightly wrapped in a cloth embroidered with pearls or beads around the head. A small cross is depicted at his feet. A small figure, perhaps a bird, appears near the head of the body. Sleeping soldiers who are supposed to be guarding the tomb are slumped onto each other atop the slab. These men wear pointed helmets and rest their spears against their shoulders. Four other figures are depicted to the right of the guards. A seated angel in profile with a small figure in front of it appears in the foreground and in the background are possibly the women there to attend to Christ's body.

W9 Plinth: Inscription, "OR DO RIG FL[A]IN M[AC] MAEL SECHLAINN, OROIT DO RIG HERENN OR" (Pray for Flann son of Máel Sechnaill, Prayer for the King of Ireland, Pray).

W10 Top Base Panel: A seated and frontal figure is flanked on either side by three approaching figures in profile who raise their arms in a gesture of offering.

W11 Bottom Base Panel: The image is too eroded to discern much of the scene. Two human figures can be made out to the far right of the panel, as well as a quadruped on the left-hand side.

South Side:

S1 Top arm: In the panel are six bosses, vertically-arranged in a 2-1-2-1 design and linked by interlace. Above the image is triangular cap carved with shingle-like

decoration that slants inward. The top may have originally had carved finials, although they have since eroded.

S2 Topside of arc and arm: The upper half of the ring has interlace in a sunken panel.

S3 End of arm: A tronco-pyramidal boss with a fret pattern is featured at end of the arm.

S4 Underside of arc and arm: (*Manus Dei* or *Dextera Dei*) A hand with a pearled or beaded cuff/bracelet appears in front of a pearled diadem/wreath. Beneath the hand are two heads within the circles of a figure-8, formed by two gripping snakes. This panel is sunken and outlined on both sides by roll molding and is further framed by interlace.

S5 Top Shaft Panel: (Abbot, David as Shepherd, or John the Evangelist) A frontally-seated figure grips a curled-head crook while an angel hovers above him with outspread wings.

S6 Middle Shaft Panel: (David, the Psalmist) A long-haired man seated in profile plays the lyre/harp. The figure faces towards the right and raises the instrument above his lap. His left leg is lifted slightly higher than the other, as he sits above a leonine beast with a long, curled tail or an animal-like mound.

S7 Bottom Shaft Panel: Two x-shaped interlace patterns stacked on top of each other, connected by weaving. At each corner of the x-shapes is a human head.

S8 Plinth: The panel depicted two facing animals in a circular vine-scroll.

S9 Top Base Panel: Four men in profile hold staffs or spears and process towards the right where two standing figures are wrestling/embracing, their upper bodies interlocked.

S10 Bottom Base Panel: Appearing on the right side of the panel are two men wearing tunics and raising their right hands. They appear to direct the two dogs standing in front of them to chase after two running deer. The central deer may have a spear in its back.

East Face:

E1 Top arm: (*Majestas Domini*, St. Ciarán, Moses with Aaron and Hur) A seated, central figure with arms outspread and palms facing forward is flanked by two figures in profile. The middle figure has an object on his lap, perhaps an open book. Above the image is the cap of the cross arm carved with shingle-like decoration that slants inward towards the ridge-pole/top of the cross.

E2 Center of Crossring: (The Last Judgement) A large-scale and central Christ is fully clothed in a long and sleeved *tunica manicata*. He stands with feet facing outwards on

a plank. The figure tilts his head to stare down at the viewer from the center of the composition while an upright bird (dove, Holy Spirit) hovers above his head. The Judge holds a scepter topped with volutes and a cross diagonally across his upper body, the handles overlap near his stomach. To his right is a larger piper or trumpeter leading a trail of three smaller figures towards the Judge. To his left, a winged- and taloned-creature with a leonine head prods three figures (the damned) away from the Judge. The members of this group turn their backs on the central figure.

E3 Right Arm: (The Damned) Four seated figures stacked in rows of two tilt their heads downward and face away from the Judge in the crossring.

E4 Left Arm: (Awaiting Judgment or the Saved) Four seated figures stacked in rows of two face towards the Judge, presumably awaiting to be led to judgement or are already "saved."

E5 Ring: At the cardinal points of the rings are four roundels with varying projecting shapes, including a triskele with a central boss, as well as entwined serpentine figures. The arcs of the rings between the roundels are decorated with knotwork interlace. A cylinder projects from the center of the interior of each arc.

E6 Top Shaft Panel: (*Traditio Clavium et Legis* (Giving of the Key and Law)) The long robes and tunics appearing on all three figures of this image, along with the tonsured haircut of the central person, indicate these men are holy. The central figure is seated

and frontally-facing, as two smaller-scale figures stand flanking him in profile. Christ extends both arms outwards to present each man with an object, a long key to the figure on his right, presumably Peter, making the figure on his left, Paul, and the small book being exchanged, most likely the gospels.

E7 Middle Shaft Panel: (Flann Sinna and Cathal mac Conchobair Exchange a Horn in Compact) Two men stand side-by-side and sport large, handle-bar mustaches and long, plaited beards. Dressed in long garments with embroidered hems and cloaks pinned at their right shoulders with large, circular brooches, they are elite members of society. The sword grasped at each man's hip points to their warrior-status. The two noblemen stand frontally, their positioning allows for the simultaneous actions of giving and receiving the horn.

E8 Bottom Shaft Panel: (St. Ciarán and High-King Diarmait mac Cerbaill Founding of Clonmacnoise) Two figures in profile face each other and clasp a central staff. Styled with tonsured hair, clean-shaven face, and longer embroidered garment and cloak is a holy man, most likely Ciarán. On the right-side of the panel, his position is mirrored by a warrior, mostly likely Diarmait, identified by his long hair and beard, short tunic, and thick sword.

E9 Plinth: Inscription, "OROIT DO COLMAN DORROINDI IN CROSSA AR IN RI FLAIND" ("A prayer for Colman who made this cross on/for the King Flann").

E10 Top Base Panel: Three men ride horses that process in a line towards the left.

E11 Bottom Base Panel: Two chariots with large, spoked wheels are pulled by horses and carry riders as they travel towards the right.

North Side:

N1 Top arm: In the panel are four bosses vertically-arranged in a 1-2-1 design and linked by interlace. Above the image is triangular cap carved with shingle-like decoration that slants inward. The top may have originally had carved finials, although they have since eroded.

N2 Topside of arc and arm: The upper half of the ring has interlace in a sunken panel.

N3 End of arm: A tronco-pyramidal boss with a fret pattern is featured at end of the arm.

N4 Underside of arc and arm: On the underside of the arm, a cat sits and eats its prey. Below the animal are two heads within the circles of a figure-8 formed by a gripping snake.

N5 Top Shaft Panel: A seated man dressed in a long robe raises his hands upward with palms facing out. He wears a large, circular object on his chest and holds a staff topped with volutes between his knees. Standing behind and above this figure is

another man, who grabs the seated figure's hair with one hand and presents a book in the other.

N6 Middle Shaft Panel: A seated man with long robes and hair, plays a three-reed pipe. His feet rest on the backs of two cats, who stand back to back with hind-legs intertwined. In the upper left corner, a third cat-like figure grabs it hind legs and bends forward to lick its underside.

N7 Bottom Shaft Panel: A seated figure, dressed in long robes, holds a rectangular object in the crook of his left arm. A large bird sits on the staff that the man forces into the face of a supine figure lying beneath him.

N8 Plinth: The panel depicts two animals inhabiting circular interlace within the rectangular plinth.

N9 Top Base Panel: Three large animals proceed in profile towards the left. The first two figures are winged griffins and the third is possibly a lion with its long tail curled over its back. The central griffin walks over what appears to be a human body.

N10 Bottom Base Panel: Three animals, perhaps horses or cattle, proceed towards the right. A fourth figure, either human or animal, stands on two legs at the far left.