

TÍRECHÁN'S MOTIVES IN COMPILING THE *COLLECTANEA*: AN ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATION¹

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The interpretation of Tírechán's text is not an easy task. Only one copy has survived: that found in the early ninth-century Book of Armagh, a manuscript which is roughly 150 years later than Tírechán's own day. It seems likely that the text has undergone an unknown degree of editing in the interim: it has been questioned, for example, whether the division of the work into two books is that of Tírechán.² The text may be unfinished; this, at any rate, has been the majority opinion amongst those who have studied it.³ Furthermore, as the modern title, *Collectanea*, indicates, the text is apparently a compilation of a number of earlier sources, and a scholar who wishes to identify Tírechán's own motives must first distinguish these from those of his predecessors, to whose work Tírechán was indebted.⁴ Finally, Tírechán's Latin, and in particular his syntax,

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Eighth Irish Conference of Medievalists in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, June 1994, and I would like to thank all those who commented on that occasion. I would also like to thank Rolf Baumgarten, Liam Breatnach and Colmán Etchingham for having read and commented on earlier drafts of the present version. Errors that remain are, of course, my own.

² The evidence is discussed by J. B. Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir of St Patrick', *English Historical Review* 17 (1902), 235–67, 261; L. Bieler (ed.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 10 (Dublin 1979), 39; F. Kelly in id., 244–5. There appears to be at least one mediator between the manuscript and Tírechán's original: see Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 55.

³ Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir', 268; J. Gwynn (ed.), *Liber Ardmachanus: the Book of Armagh* (Dublin 1913), lviii; J. F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: an introduction and guide, I: ecclesiastical* (New York 1929), 331; E. MacNeill, 'The earliest lives of St Patrick', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 58 (1928), 1–21, 18; id., 'Dates of texts in the Book of Armagh relating to St Patrick', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 58 (1928), 85–101, 94–5; T. F. O'Rahilly, *The two Patricks — a lecture on the history of Christianity in fifth century Ireland* (Dublin 1942), 28, 49; D. A. Binchy, 'Patrick and his biographers — ancient and modern', *Studia Hibernica* 2 (1962), 7–173, 64; R. Sharpe, 'Palaeographical considerations in the study of the Patrician documents in the Book of Armagh', *Scriptorium* 36 (1982), 3–28, 17; J.-M. Picard, 'Structural patterns in early Hiberno-Latin hagiography', *Peritia* 4 (1985), 67–82, 80.

⁴ The work is introduced by a lemma (*Tirechan episcopus haec scripsit*) written by a redactor in the third person. The term *Collectanea* was used by Ussher in the seventeenth century and was taken up by two subsequent editors of the work: C. R. Elrington and J. H. Todd (eds), *Ussher: the whole works* (17 vols, Dublin 1844–64), vol. 6, 370, 375; E. Hogan (ed.), 'Documenta de S. Patricio ex Libro Armachano', *Analecta Bollandiana* 1 (1882), 531–85, 2 (1883), 35–68, 213–38, 543, 35; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 39. The title *Breviarium*, which was used by MacNeill and others, included material which did not necessarily belong

often represents Irish rather than Latin norms; in James Carney's entertaining phrase, 'Tírechán, writing Latin, wrote and thought like an Irishman'.⁵

All of these difficulties — unquantifiable degree of corruption in single copy of text, variety of apparently ill-digested source material, and poor command of language — make interpreting Tírechán's motives somewhat akin to jumping from tussock to tussock across a bog; one is never quite certain how much weight each point will bear before disappearing entirely and leaving the unfortunate enquirer in mud up to the knee. This paper traces my own path across an unexplored corner of the quagmire; it is not and cannot be (given the nature of the evidence) a dogmatic assertion of Tírechán's aims.

1. TÍRECHÁN'S AIMS IN COMPILING THE *COLLECTANEA*: THE ESTABLISHED POSITION

Despite the importance of this text for our understanding of Patrick's community in the seventh century and, on a broader level, its role as a witness to the relationship between subordinate churches and their ecclesiastical overlords in the early Irish church,⁶ there have been few studies of Tírechán's *Collectanea* as a unit in its own right. Apart from an article by Ludwig Bieler and a brief introduction by the same author in his edition of Patrician texts from the Book of Armagh,⁷ little has been published on the topic since the days of J. B. Bury, John Gwynn, Eóin MacNeill and James Kenney in the early part of this century. It is, therefore, their conclusions which at present dominate our perspective.

In 1902 Bury identified Tírechán's *Collectanea* as 'virtually an enumeration of the ecclesiastical foundations of Patrick with a description of the circumstances in which each was founded'.⁸ In his view, Tírechán was a churchman writing a historical work rather than a hagiographer, and his book was intended to be of practical service to the cause of the claims of

to Tírechán's work; see Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir', 237–8; Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, lxiv–lxvi; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 215. For a summary history of the use of the two titles see Sharpe, 'Palaeographical considerations', 16 n. 45. For discussion of Tírechán's sources see Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir', 238–52; Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, xlv–xlvii, li–lii; P. Grosjean, 'Notes sur les documents anciens concernant S. Patrice', *Analecta Bollandiana* 42 (1944), 42–73, 61–5; Binchy, 'Biographers', 66–8; Bieler, 'Tírechán als Erzähler: Ein Beitrag zum literarischen Verständnis der Patrickslegende', *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch–Historische Klasse* 6 (1974), 20–1; id., *Patrician texts*, 39–41.

⁵ J. Carney, *The problem of St Patrick* (Dublin 1961), 136; Bieler, 'Tírechán als Erzähler', 5.

⁶ See R. Sharpe, 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland: towards a pastoral model', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral care before the parish* (Leicester 1972), 81–109, 86–95; C. Etchingham, 'The implications of *paruchia*', *Ériu* 44 (1993), 139–62, 147–50.

⁷ See n. 3 above, and Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 35–43.

⁸ 'Tírechán's memoir', 251–2.

Armagh. If completed, it would have exhibited the full extent of Patrick's *paruchia*.⁹ Gwynn, who was writing contemporaneously with Bury and was clearly in communication with him prior to publication,¹⁰ had very similar views. According to Gwynn, Tírechán's avowed aim was to set forth the dignity and rights of Armagh, and in order to outline the full extent of Patrick's *paruchia* it was necessary to collect the records of all Patrician foundations.¹¹ Some twenty years later, this belief that the text was an unfinished attempt to record every Patrician site provided the basis for MacNeill's interpretation. For MacNeill, Tírechán's *Collectanea* was the earliest piece of surviving evidence for an immense collaborative effort on behalf of Armagh.¹² Ireland was to be divided into areas in which individual collectors of local traditions were to draw up their material and forward it to the Patrician headquarters at Armagh, where a second—and unfortunately now lost—Book of Armagh was being compiled. Since Tírechán's initial effort was, in MacNeill's words, 'plainly defective',¹³ the abbreviated notes found in the *Notulae*, the collection of similar material found in the *Additamenta* and the ancestral text behind the *Vita Tripartita* were later put together as a second attempt at the same task by either Tírechán or his collaborators.

Elements of MacNeill's model are visible in the work of the scholars of his own generation and that immediately following, such as Kenney and Bieler.¹⁴ In more recent times, MacNeill's view that the majority of vernacular Patrician sources belonged ultimately to a single effort of compilation has been superseded by further studies.¹⁵ This has removed the basis on which his interpretation was built and consequently its influence has waned. (It did, however, give rise to an endearing picture of Tírechán as a seventh-century John O'Donovan, writing up his notes by candlelight in the evenings after a long day in the field, as presented by Liam de Paor.)¹⁶

⁹ *Ibid.*, 258–9.

¹⁰ See, for example, Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir', n. 14, n. 16, etc.

¹¹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, xlvi, lii, lix–lx.

¹² MacNeill, 'Earliest lives', 14–19; 'Date of texts', 90, 94–5; 'The origin of the Tripartite Life of Patrick', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 59 (1929), 1–15, 13–15; 'The Vita Tripartita of St Patrick', *Ériu* 11 (1930–2), 1–41, 9.

¹³ 'Date of texts', 92.

¹⁴ Kenney, *The sources*, 330; L. Bieler, *The life and legend of St Patrick: problems of modern scholarship* (Dublin 1949), 43–5.

¹⁵ For MacNeill's discussion of the linguistic evidence see 'Date of texts', 85–9; 'The origin', 1–2; 'The Vita Tripartita', 1–5. For later studies on this question see T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish history and mythology* (Dublin 1946), 409–10; K. Mulchrone, 'Die Abfassungszeit und Überlieferung der Vita Tripartita', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 16 (1927), 1–94, esp. 84–94; G. Mac Eoin, 'The dating of Middle Irish texts', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982), 109–38, 127–34; K. H. Jackson, 'The date of the Tripartite Life of St Patrick', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 41 (1986), 5–45, 6–15; F. Kelly in Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 242–8.

¹⁶ L. de Paor, 'The aggrandisement of Armagh', *Historical Studies* 8 (Dublin 1971), 95–110, 105.

In T. F. O'Rahilly's work of 1942 on the two Patricks, the older Bury/Gwynn view prevailed. In 1962, D. A. Binchy tacked on to this thesis the slight modification that the claim to the whole of Ireland was a new departure by Armagh and that it was the very novelty of the idea which prompted Tírechán's compilation.¹⁷ At the same time, Binchy would appear to have been the first twentieth-century scholar to propose that elements in the *Collectanea* may reflect a seventh-century political order. He suggested, for example, that the whole Tara incident was a legendary outcrop of the seventh-century Paschal controversy,¹⁸ he pointed out that Tírechán makes Tara by implication the centre of Patrick's work,¹⁹ and he put forward a proposition that all seventh-century Armagh propaganda was linked to the spread of the Uí Néill legends about the high kingship of Ireland.²⁰ Such propaganda, Richard Sharpe later argued, was based on the claim in the *Liber Angeli* that Patrick was to be honoured as first missionary of Ireland; he believes that Tírechán supported this claim by demonstrating the rich fruits of Patrick's missionary work as visible in the great number of churches which the saint had founded.²¹ Elsewhere Sharpe identifies the *Collectanea* as being concerned with the direct relationship between Armagh and its subordinate churches.²² For Charles Doherty, in contrast, Tírechán is describing field surveys of old missionary and diocesan churches, not necessarily Patrician, which were in decay or aligned to politically irrelevant communities in Tírechán's own day.²³

In broad outline, these are the most important contributions to the discussion of Tírechán's possible motivations and his purpose in compiling the *Collectanea*. Running through them and other, more general studies of the Patrician material is a tendency to categorize all texts produced by followers of the saint as Patrician or Armagh propaganda.²⁴ This approach would seem to imply a common purpose uniting all the Patrician writers, from the author of the *Liber Angeli* in the mid-seventh century down to the compilers of the *Vita Tripartita* at some time before

¹⁷ O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 49 n. 8; Binchy, 'Biographers', 60–1.

¹⁸ Binchy, 'Biographers', 67–8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 60. See, however, J. B. Bury, *The life of St Patrick and his place in history* (London 1905), 251, where he suggests that Tírechán viewed Meath as Patrick's original centre before the foundation of Armagh.

²⁰ 'Biographers', 61, 68, 170. Binchy does not discuss his reasons for this view in depth, but on this point see discussion of *rex* and related words below.

²¹ R. Sharpe, 'St Patrick and the see of Armagh', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 4 (Winter 1982), 33–59, 45.

²² 'Armagh and Rome in the seventh century', in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (eds), *Irland und Europa: Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter (Ireland and Europe: the early Church)* (Stuttgart 1984), 58–72, 68.

²³ C. Doherty, 'Some aspects of hagiography as a source for Irish economic history', *Peritia* 1 (1982), 300–28, 303–4.

²⁴ See, for example, Binchy, 'Biographers', 170–1; Sharpe, 'Palaeographical considerations', 15; K. Hughes, *The Church in early Irish society* (London 1966), 111–20; as well as the references to MacNeill, Kenney and Bieler cited in nn 12 and 14 above.

the mid-tenth century. This is true only in the broadest sense. Instead, under the umbrella of 'Patrician tradition', each author pursued different aims. From a number of possible examples of this process, I have chosen three instances where the same episode has been shaped to conform to different viewpoints.

2. THE DIVERSE NATURE OF PATRICIAN TRADITION

The first instance is the story of the misplaced cross beside a pagan grave, which Patrick, after speaking to the occupant, moves to its rightful position beside a Christian burial.

uirtus maior inde surrexerat, ut mortuus loqueretur et qui sub fide defunctus erat xpisti scieretur et iuxta illum almae crucis fieret meritum signo in uero termino posito²⁵

Miraculous power was thus magnified in that a dead man spoke and that he who had died in the faith of Christ was made known and that the due of the dear cross was brought about by the sign having been positioned on the proper boundary beside him.

Cum dixisset 'libera nos a malo', dixit illi auriga illius: 'Quid', auriga illius inquit, 'cur appellasti gentilem non bapuzatum uirum? Quia ingemesco uirum sine bapuzismo. Melior erat apud Deum illum benedicere uice bapuzismatis et effundere aquam bapuzismi super sepulcrum mortui' et non respondit illi. Puto enim ideo eum reliquit quia Deus eum saluare noluit²⁶

When he had said 'deliver us from evil', his charioteer said to him. 'How is it?' said his charioteer, 'why did you [merely] address the pagan, an un-baptised man? For I groan for a man without baptism. It would have been better in the eyes of God to bless him as in baptism and to pour the water of baptism over the dead man's grave'. And (Patrick) did not answer him. I think, therefore, that he left him because God did not wish to save him

As both Carney and Bieler have pointed out, Muirchú's version of this story (represented here by the first extract) is told as an example of Patrick's veneration for the holy cross.²⁷ The background to the incident

²⁵ Muirchú's *Vita Patricii* in Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 7vb 27–31; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 114:20–2. In this and subsequent quotations I follow Gwynn's text, but since Bieler's work is more widely available I give references to both. While indebted to Bieler's translation, I do not always adhere to it; in the present instance, Bieler's 'his miraculous power' seems unjustified and he omits 'Christ'. I am indebted to Liam Breatnach and Rolf Baumgarten for the translation of the phrase *almae crucis fieret meritum*.

²⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 14rb 33–14va 5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 156:6–11. Here I follow Bieler in omitting the line *redeamus ad historiam nostram*, which occurs after *non bapuzatum uirum* in the manuscript (14rb 36–7) and which would appear to be misplaced.

²⁷ Carney, *The problem*, 149; Bieler, 'Tírechán als Erzähler', 13–14.

is provided by the statement that Patrick stopped to say a prayer at every cross he came to, and the conclusion, as indicated above, is that the dead Christian was rewarded when the cross was moved to his grave. In Tírechán's version, in contrast, emphasis is laid on the fact that the pagan was not baptized after Patrick spoke to him. Taken in conjunction with Tírechán's statement that the graves involved were new (*sepulcra noua*)²⁸ and with Tírechán's general habit of praising or condemning the local families whom the saint meets, the *Collectanea* version of the story may be an implicit condemnation of the *nepotes maini* of *albus campus* in whose lands the graves were situated.²⁹

Similarly, in the second instance of diverging interpretations of the same motif, Patrick illustrates the enthusiasm of the newly converted with a comment on the generosity of Irish women: 'I have also tried to guard myself against . . . the religious women who used to give me small presents of their own accord and who threw some of their jewellery onto the altar'.³⁰ This remark appears to be the basis for the later story of Senmeda in the *Collectanea*, although in the latter it appears as testimony to the holiness of a member of the leading local family.

Et uenit per diserta filiorum Endi in [...]aian in quo [.....]tommanus turescus. Post multa tempora, uenit [.....] Senmeda filia Endi filii Br[.....] et accipit pallium de [...]u Patricii et dedit illi munilia sua et manuales et pediales et brachiola sua [.....]catur *aros* in scotica³¹

And he came through the waste lands of the sons of Énde into [...]aian where [was?] Tommanus Turescus. After a long time,

²⁸ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 14rb 20; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 154:35. I would like to thank Elizabeth O'Brien, who drew my attention to this phrase.

²⁹ Pace E. Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum, locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae: An index with identifications to the Gaelic names of places and tribes* (Dublin 1910), 675, and MacNeill, 'Vita Tripartita', 20, I do not believe that these were the Uí Maine of south Connacht. I suggest instead that they were a branch of the Fir Cherai, located in the area to the east of Castlebar in County Mayo. See M. A. O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae, I* (Dublin 1963), 173 (145 f 30), and W. Stokes (ed.), *Bethu Mochuae*, in *Lives of saints from the Book of Lismore*, Anecdota Oxoniensa, Medieval and Modern Series v (Oxford 1890), 141:4751–142:4757. *Albus campus* is the only occasion in the *Collectanea* where the qualifier precedes *campus*; I take it, therefore, that this is a direct translation of the Irish *Findmag* where Tírechán mentions a well: '*fons Findmaige qui dicitur Slan*' (Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 13vb 20–1; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 152:26). The church site associated with this well is named as 'Slanpatrick' in the thirteenth century and has been plausibly identified by Kenneth Nicholls with a church in the townland of Ballynew, in the parish of Aglish, Co. Mayo. See K. W. Nicholls, 'Tobar Finnmuighge — Slán Pádraig', *Dinnseanchas* 2 (1966–7), 97–8.

³⁰ *Nam 'etsi imperitus sum in omnibus', tamen conatus sum quippiam seruare me etiam et fratribus Christianis et uirginibus Christi et mulieribus religiosis quae mihi ultronea munuscula donabant et super altare iactabant ex ornamentis suis*, in R. B. Hanson (ed.), *St Patrick: Confession et Lettre à Coroticus* (Paris 1978), 122 (§49).

³¹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 13rb 21–8; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 150:13–17. Bieler gives *Lommanus* in place of *Tommanus* against the evidence of the manuscript.

Senmeda daughter of Énde son of Br... came and received a veil from the hand [?] of Patrick and she gave to him her jewellery of the kind intended for hands and feet and arms, which is called [?] *aros* in Irish³²

The third tale refers to the well-known contradiction in the two main accounts of the conversion of Loíguire, king of the Uí Néill. In Muirchú's tale Loíguire is converted to Christianity, while in Tírechán's work Loíguire refuses to accept the new faith on the orders of his father Níall.

Congregatis igitur senioribus et omni senatu suo dixit eis rex Loiguire: 'Melius est credere me quam mori', initoque consilio ex suorum praecepto credidit in illa die et conuertit ad Dominum Deum aeternum³³

The senior men, together with his entire council, having assembled, King Loíguire said to them: 'it is better for me to believe than to die' and having held counsel, at their direction, he believed on that day and converted to the Lord, the eternal God

Perrexitque ad ciuitatem Temro ad Loigairium filium Neill iterum, quia apud illum foedus pepigit ut non occideretur in regno illius, sed non potuit credere³⁴

And he proceeded again to the 'city' of Tara, to Loíguire son of Níall, because he had made a pact with him that he should not be killed in his kingdom but [Loíguire] was not able to believe

As is well known, Muirchú portrays Loíguire as a central figure in an epic account of Patrick's arrival in Ireland. He was an 'emperor of barbarians' who ruled in Tara with authority comparable to that of Nebuchadnezzar, emperor of the Babylonians.³⁵ In his text, Loíguire is of the *stirps regia huius pene insolae*, and as such he personifies the entire

³² The word *aros* is not found elsewhere — see Royal Irish Academy, *Dictionary of the Irish language (DIL)* (Dublin 1983), A407:31–2; J. Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien: A* (Paris 1959), 90. My translation of this passage depends on Bieler's suggested explanations of the missing portions of the text and I have indicated these with question marks.

³³ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 5vb 1–6; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 96:21–98:1.

³⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 32–5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:23–5. (Bieler gives the form 'Logairium' against the evidence of the manuscript, which has 'Loigairium'.)

³⁵ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 2rb 30–3, 3vb 31; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 74:14–16, 84:20. For a discussion of the distinct tradition embodied in Muirchú's account, see K. McCone, 'Dubthach maccu Lugair and a matter of life and death in the pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas Már*', *Peritia* 5 (1986), 1–35, 24–6; 'Dán agus tallann', *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* 16 (1986), 9–53, 27–32.

kingdom of the Uí Néill.³⁶ Once Loíguire had been converted, but only then, Patrick was free to set forth from Tara to baptize all peoples.³⁷ I will provide evidence below as to why Tírechán may have had an interest in portraying this particular Uí Néill figure as an obstinate pagan; for the moment my purpose is merely to underline the fact that Patrician tradition was a kaleidoscope which yielded a variety of different patterns. To purloin a phrase from a recent biblical commentary, ‘these texts were creating new scripture by constructive abuse of the old’.³⁸

3. TÍRECHÁN’S ATTITUDE TO ARMAGH

The consensus of twentieth-century scholarship on the importance of Armagh’s claims for understanding Tírechán’s work and the prevailing assumption that he was writing propaganda for that church are based on Tírechán’s own words:

Cor autem meum cogitat in me de Patricii dilectione quia uideo dissertores et archiclocos et milites Hiberniae quod odio habent paruchiam Patricii quia substraxerunt ab eo quod ipsius erat timentque quoniam si quaereret heres Patricii paruchiam illius potest pene totam insolam sibi reddere in paruchiam³⁹

My heart within me is anxious about the love of Patrick for I see that renegades and arch-robbers [?] and soldiers of Ireland have hatred for Patrick’s *paruchia* for they have taken from him what was his, and they are afraid since, if a successor of Patrick were to seek his *paruchia*, he would be able to restore almost the whole island to him as a *paruchia*

This is followed by the statements that an angel gave Patrick the island of Ireland as a *paruchia* and that no one can swear Patrick’s community. Both of these, as Binchy and Sharpe have noted, are claims by the

³⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 2rb 32–3; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 74:16. The full phrase is *Loiguire nomine filius nell, origo stirpis regiae huius pene insolae* ‘by name Loíguire son of Níall, progenitor of the royal lineage [which has control] of almost the whole island’. Bieler translates this literally, seeing Loíguire as the *origo*, but Thomas Charles-Edwards points out to me that there are two cases where there is absence of concord relating to personal names in the Book of Armagh (Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 84:4, 150:35) and suggests that this may be a third example. *Origo* would then refer to Níall, a suggestion which seems much more sensible in historical terms.

³⁷ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 5vb 13–18; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 98:5–8.

³⁸ R. Lane Fox, *The unauthorized version: truth and fiction in the Bible* (Harmondsworth 1991), 24.

³⁹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 11rb 25–32; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 138:9–14. I translate *cogitare* as ‘to be anxious’ on the authority of A. Souter, *A glossary of later Latin (to AD 600)* (Oxford 1949), 57; A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire Latin–Français des auteurs chrétiens* (Strasbourg 1954), 164a:25–32. In the light of the present debate on the nature of an Irish *paruchia*, I have chosen to leave it untranslated here; see Etchingam, ‘The implications’, *passim*.

Liber Angeli, a mid-seventh-century tract in favour of Armagh.⁴⁰ Allied to Tírechán's stated concern for Patrick's *paruchia*, this has been enough to convince commentators that the *Collectanea* was written for the same purpose.

In support of this view, one might note that Tírechán explicitly identifies Benignus both as Patrick's successor in Armagh and as the heir to Patrick's entire kingdom:

Dixit Patricius 'baptizate eum et eleuate eum in currum quia heres regni mei est'. Ipse est Benignus episcopus, successor Patricii in aelessia Machae⁴¹

Patrick said: 'Baptize him and lift him into the chariot for he is the heir to my kingdom'. This is Benignus the bishop, Patrick's successor in the church of Machae

On the other hand, the subsequent occasions on which Tírechán mentions Armagh do not support the idea that he is writing propaganda in favour of that site. The references are cursory, with no attempt to emphasize the role of Armagh as head of the Patrician federation. In the account of the patens made for Patrick by Assicus, for example, Armagh is merely one of three churches which received the patens and is described simply as 'the church of Patrick in Armagh'. No reference is made to the status of Armagh or to its importance within Ireland.⁴²

Armagh is also mentioned in relation to the career of Medb of the Cíarraige Áirne. Medb is said to have come with Patrick from Irlóchir, and he was later trained and ordained in Armagh. Tírechán also seems to identify him as a monk of Armagh who founded a church amongst the Cíarraige, although the text is corrupted at this point and difficult to interpret.

Post haec uenit cum Patricio ab Irlochir et legit in Ardd Machae et ordinatus est in eodem loco [.....]us fuit Patricio de genere m[.]hi epis. prespiter bonus et fundauit aelessiam in Imgoe Mair Cerrigi liberam mon[....]us in Ardd Machae⁴³

⁴⁰ Binchy, 'Biographers', 60, 64; Sharpe, 'Armagh and Rome', 61–3.

⁴¹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 9va 29–33; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 126:28–30. See also Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, xlvii.

⁴² *iii patinos quadratos uidi, id est patinum in aelessia patricii in Ardd Machae-et alterum in aelessia Alofind et tertium in aelessia magna Saeoli super altare Felarti, sancti episcopi* 'I have seen three square patens, that is the paten in the church of Patrick in Armagh, and a second in the church of Ail Find and a third in the great church of Séola on the altar of Felartus, the holy bishop', Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 11vb 6–10; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 140:15–8.

⁴³ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 13rb 10–16; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 150:5–9. Medb is the subject of *uenit* as indicated by the preceding sentence: *et fuit quidam spiritu sancto plenus ab australi Medbu nomine*. Bieler's interpolation of the phrase *ab australi medbu nomine*

After these things, he [Medbu] came with Patrick from Irlóchir and he studied in Armagh and he was ordained in that place. He was a . . . to Patrick from the race of M...hi the bishop [?], a good priest, and he founded a free church in Imgoe Már Cérrigi, a monk [?] in Armagh

A third allusion, which Bury, MacNeill and O'Rahilly all believed to be to Armagh, is equally abrupt.⁴⁴

Uenit uero sanctus per Doim in regiones Tuirtri ad Collunt Patricii et babtizauit filios Tuirtri. Relicta Machia, uenit in Maudornu et ordinauit Uictoricum Machinensem episcopum et aelessiam ibi magnam fundauit⁴⁵

The holy man came through Doim into the districts of Tuirtre to Collunt Patricii and he baptized the sons of Tuirtre. Since Machia was deserted, he came into Maudornai and he appointed Uictoricus as bishop of Machia and he founded a great church there

None of the above scholars have answered the objections of Gwynn, who pointed out that the normal form of Armagh was 'Machae' or 'Ardd Machae' and that 'Machia' was probably the site which gave rise to the adjective *machinensis*. Gwynn suggests instead that Tírechán is here describing the site of Domnach Maigen or Donaghmoyne, associated with Uictor in the *Vita Tripartita*.⁴⁶ If, however, Tírechán was indeed referring to the site of Armagh in this particular instance, he shows what is literally no more than a passing interest in the foundation.

Apart from these extracts from the body of the *Collectanea*, there is also the citation from an isolated paragraph in the Book of Armagh:

after *Irlóchir* is at variance with the evidence of the manuscript. Apparently influenced by the abbreviated account in the *Vita Tripartita*, Bieler assumed this to be a case of *cenn fo eite*, but there is no trace of the parallel slashes which indicate such in the Book of Armagh. See, however, K. Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick (1. Text and sources)* (Dublin 1939), 69:1247. Bieler also omits the contracted form *epis.* from his text.

⁴⁴ See Bury, 'Tírechán's memoir', 262; MacNeill, 'Earliest lives', 12; O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 64 n. 39. These scholars interpret *relicta Machia* as 'having left Armagh'.

⁴⁵ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 15va 29–34; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 162:17–20. I would like to thank Rolf Baumgarten for suggesting the translation of *relicta Machia* which is supplied here.

⁴⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, liv n. 2; Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 111:2137–8; see also comments by Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 232–3 (50). The suggestion that *Domnach Maigen* is the modern site of Donaghmoyne, Co. Monaghan, coincides with Reeves's identification of *crích Mugdorna* with the neighbouring area of Cremorne: see W. Reeves, *The life of Saint Columba, founder of Hy, written by Adamnan, ninth abbot of that monastery* (Dublin 1857), 81–2 n. d.

Caetiacus itaque et Sachellus ordinabant episcopos, prespiteros, diaconos, clericos sine consilio Patricii in Campo Aii et accussauit illos Patricius et mittens aepistolas illis exierunt ad poenitentiam ducti ad Ardd Mache ad Patricium et fecerunt poenitentiam monachorum .ii. pueri Patricii prumpti et dixit eis 'non magnaerunt aeclessiae uestrae',⁴⁷

Caetiacus and Sachellus then appointed bishops, priests, deacons, and clerics in Mag nAí without taking counsel of Patrick and Patrick accused them and when he sent them a letter, being moved to penance, they went to Patrick at Armagh, and they did the penance of monks, [as] two willing servants of Patrick. And he said to them, 'Your churches will not be great'

This extract is much the most specific in terms of the role of Armagh. Two figures, charged with ordination of the clergy in the area of Mag nAí (northern County Roscommon), were chastised by Patrick and subsequently travelled to Armagh to perform penance there under the saint's aegis. Armagh is here given explicit control over the actions of distant and powerful subordinates.

The problem arises in determining whether or not this particular incident belongs to the *Collectanea*. It is found in the Book of Armagh as an isolated paragraph, preceding the lemma *Tirechan episcopus haec scripsit* 'Tírechán the bishop wrote these things'. It is introduced by one of the two ornate initials which mark the divisions in the Patrician documentation written by Scribe A, as discussed by Sharpe.⁴⁸ The second such initial opens the account of Iserninus in Leinster at the top of folio 18ra. Between the two initials lie (to use the titles given by Bieler) this isolated paragraph, the *Dicta Patricii*, Tírechán's *Collectanea*, the *Notae Suppletoriae*, and the first two sections of the *Additamenta*, dealing with Meath and Connacht respectively.

Gwynn identified this isolated account as a misplaced part of the *Collectanea* on two grounds. Firstly, the ornamented initial with which it begins is more ornate than that introducing the *Collectanea* proper;⁴⁹ this point is negated by the fact that there are only two such initials in Scribe A's work and their distribution does not correspond with the individual units as identified by modern scholarship. Secondly, he pointed out that it was similar in 'style, manner and character' to the types of story found in Tírechán's work and that it, like the *Collectanea*, includes verbal forms written in the first person singular.⁵⁰ His argument appears to have been

⁴⁷ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 9ra 23–31; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 122:30–124:4.

⁴⁸ 'Palaeographical considerations', 8–14, 16.

⁴⁹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, xlii, xlii–xlv. He supports his arguments with reference to various placenames, the identification of many of which remains dubious. See discussion in C. J. Swift, 'The social and ecclesiastical background to the treatment of the Connachta in Tírechán's seventh-century *Collectanea*' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1993), 164–222.

⁵⁰ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, xlii.

accepted by Kenney, O’Rahilly, Carney and Doherty, all of whom state without discussion that this paragraph is part of the *Collectanea*.⁵¹ In his analysis of the Book of Armagh, Paul Grosjean lists the paragraph as a separate section but then suggests that it is a composite text of which half is Tírechán’s work, while the quotation above represents one of the sources upon which Tírechán drew.⁵²

For myself, I do not find Gwynn’s arguments convincing: the *Additamenta* and the stories referred to in the *Notulae* are also similar to material in the *Collectanea*, indicating that this type of foundation legend was current amongst early Patrician communities. Bieler assumes that Sachellus is the figure identified as *episcopus Bassilicae* elsewhere in the *Collectanea*,⁵³ but this is an inference based on the *Vita Tripartita* and (assuming that there is only one *Basilica* in Tírechán’s work) ignores Tírechán’s association of that site with foreign bishops whose cult had not survived.⁵⁴ Sachellus is mentioned in the two lists of ecclesiastical figures incorporated into Tírechán’s text, where he is given in second and third place respectively.⁵⁵ No details of his career are given and there is no information as to the location of his cult. A short text in the *Additamenta* associates Sachellus with the Cíarraige, but it is only in the *Vita Tripartita* that he is identified with the site of Baslicc.⁵⁶ This relative lack of material on Sachellus in the earlier texts contrasts markedly with the standpoint of the isolated paragraph, in which the native Irish genealogical background of Sachellus is given and in which it is stated that he trained in Rome.⁵⁷ Moreover, Bishop Cethiacus, who is mentioned in conjunction with

⁵¹ Kenney, *Sources*, 331; O’Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 52 n. 14; Carney, *The problem*, 4, 161; C. Doherty, ‘The basilica in early Ireland’, *Peritia* 3 (1984), 303–15, 304. David Dumville appears undecided; see D. Dumville, ‘Auxilius, Iserninus, Secundinus and Benignus’, in D. Dumville (ed.), *St Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge 1993), 89–105, 102. Gwynn’s son, Edward Gwynn, had reservations, stating merely that the paragraph ‘seems’ to belong to Tírechán; see E. Gwynn (ed.), *Book of Armagh: the Patrician documents* (Dublin 1937), iii.

⁵² P. Grosjean, ‘Analyse du livre d’Armagh’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 62 (1944), 33–41, 36 (II.3); ‘Notes sur les documents anciens’, 58 n. 2, 64.

⁵³ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 13ra 39; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 148:42.

⁵⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 12vb 13–18; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 146:18–21.

⁵⁵ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 12vb 33, 9vb 4; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 146:32, 128:5.

⁵⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 17ra 22–5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 170:37–9; Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 67:1212–13. For a discussion of the early history of Baslicc see E. MacNeill, *St Patrick*, ed. J. Ryan (Dublin 1964), 102; Doherty, ‘The basilica’, 308–10; and, for a contrasting view, Swift, ‘The social and ecclesiastical background’, 179–86.

⁵⁷ *fuit uir missericors apud illos Hercaith nomine de genere Nothi pater Feradachi. Creditur Deo Patricii et baptizauit illum Patricius et Feradachum filium eius et immolauit filium Patricio et exiuit cum Patricio ad legendum xxx annos et ordinauit filium in urbe Roma et dedit illi nomen nouum Sachellum* ‘There was a compassionate man amongst them, Hercaith by name, of the race of Nothi [and] father of Feradach. He believed in the God of Patrick and Patrick baptized him and his son Feradach and he dedicated his son to Patrick and he [Feradach] went with Patrick to study for thirty years and [Patrick] ordained him in the city of Rome and gave him a new name, Sachellus’. Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 9ra 12–19; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 122:22–7. (Bieler’s text omits *illi*, contrary to the evidence of the manuscript, and he neglects to translate *nouum*.)

Sachellus in the isolated paragraph, is cursed in that text but is praised in the *Collectanea*.⁵⁸

This distinction between the information in Tírechán's text and the material in the isolated 'Sachellus' paragraph is also reflected in the references to some of the most precious relics associated with Armagh. In the *Liber Angeli*, possession of the relics of Peter, Paul, Laurence and Stephen, together with a cloth stained with Christ's blood and the bodies of some of the first members of Patrick's household, is listed as one of the reasons for Armagh's primatial position within Ireland.

Nihilhominus uenerari debet honore summorum martyrum Petri et Pauli, Stefani, Laurendi et caeterorum⁵⁹

Furthermore, [Armagh] must be venerated in honour of the principal martyrs, Peter and Paul, Stephen, Laurence and the others

In the *Collectanea*, however, part of these same relics were given by Patrick to his fosterling, Bishop Olcanus of Dunseverick in County Antrim. No reference is made to their association with Armagh and the gift is not identified by Tírechán as a mark of the subordination of the recipient.⁶⁰

ordinauit ibi Olcanum sanctum episcopum quem nutriuit Patricius et dedit illi partem de reliquiis Petri et Pauli et aliorum et uelum quod custodiuit reliquias⁶¹

There he consecrated holy Olcán as bishop, whom Patrick had fostered, and he gave him a portion of the relics of Peter and Paul and others and a veil which protected the relics

This is not to say that the gift could not have originally carried such implications, merely that Tírechán provides us with no statement to that effect. (It seems likely, in fact, that the distribution of these treasures does reflect one method by which Armagh was linked to its subordinate churches. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has drawn attention to another Patrician church with relics of SS Peter and Paul, probably located at Drumlease,

⁵⁸ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 9ra 23–31, 10vb 7–17, 12va 30–40, 14va 34; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 122:30–124:4, 134:22–8, 146:1–8, 156:28.

⁵⁹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 21rb 12–14; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 186:32–3. Similar relics were deemed suitable as a gift from Pope Gregory to the ruler of Burgundy at the beginning of the seventh century and from Pope Vitalian to the king of Northumbria in the 660s: see Sharpe, 'Armagh and Rome', 70; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo the Great: mission and primatial authority', in D. Dumville (ed.), *St Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge 1993), 1–12, 11.

⁶⁰ Technical terms for ceremonial gifts which indicate a political relationship between the giver and the receiver are *rath* and *turchrecc*; see *DIL*, R16:37–63, T387:49–86; D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon kingship* (Oxford 1970), 31, 51; F. Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law* (Dublin 1988), 27, 145.

⁶¹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 15rb 36–9; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 160:32–4.

Co. Leitrim, which is mentioned in the *Calendar of Willibrord*.)⁶² The fact that Tírechán avoids making any claims in relation to the remains of Peter and Paul is hard to reconcile with an interpretation of the *Collectanea* as an account of ‘the direct relationship between Armagh and its subordinate churches’.⁶³ This omission is all the more striking when one considers the evidence of the isolated ‘Sachellus’ paragraph, which does appear to attach significance to the donation of similar relics.

ordinauit illum in urbe Roma et dedit illi nomen nouum Sachellum et scripsit illi librum psalmodum quem uidi et portauit ab illo partem de reliquis Petri et Pauli, Laurentii et Stefani, quae sunt in Machi⁶⁴

He [Patrick] ordained him in the city of Rome and he gave him a new name, Sachellus, and he wrote for him a book of the Psalms which I have seen and he [Sachellus] received from him a portion of the relics of Peter and Paul, Laurence and Stephen, which are in Armagh

Like Olcán in Tírechán’s description, Sachellus is said to have been a pupil of Patrick’s and to have received the relics as a gift from the saint. In contrast to the case of Olcán, however, the isolated paragraph goes on to state that Sachellus needed Patrick’s permission to ordain others and was liable to be summoned to Armagh to perform penance when he failed to consult the saint in appointing clergy. The tale of the gift is embedded in a longer account of Sachellus’s subordination to Armagh. No such information is given with respect to Olcán.

To sum up, Tírechán does not associate Baslicc with Sachellus but with Frankish bishops; he says nothing about a condemnation of either Sachellus or Cethiacus but praises the latter and places the former close to the top of his two lists of ecclesiastical figures; and he makes no explicit reference to relics of Peter and Paul at Baslicc.⁶⁵ The information in the isolated ‘Sachellus’ paragraph not only gives details which one does not find in the *Collectanea* but would also seem to contradict information in Tírechán’s text. These discrepancies lead one to conclude that the resemblances in ‘style, manner and character’ noted by Gwynn are not sufficient to imply common authorship of both texts. The unique nature of the reference in the ‘Sachellus’ paragraph, which gives Armagh the

⁶² See Doherty, ‘The basilica’, 311.

⁶³ See Sharpe as summarized above, p. 56.

⁶⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 9ra 18–23; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 122:26–9.

⁶⁵ The placename *Basilica* would suggest that the church had important relics in its possession, for in north-western Europe in the sixth and seventh centuries the word *basilica* is commonly used to describe churches with important relic cults. See A. Grabar, *Martyrium: recherche sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique, I: Architecture* (Paris 1946), 427–36; W. Arndt and B. Krusch (eds), *Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum, 1 (Hannover 1885), 57, 189, 288, 358, 484, 485, 486, 553, 562, 571, 745.

power and authority to enforce obedience and penance from Roscommon bishops, does not, therefore, appear to be relevant in discussing Tírechán's own attitude.

A sceptic might interject a caveat at this point — why should we expect the relationship between Armagh and its subordinate churches to be spelled out in the *Collectanea*? Could it not be, as many scholars have argued in relation to the relative lack of Patrician material from the area around Armagh, that Tírechán did not need to make this point since it was already accepted by his audience?⁶⁶ This argument arises out of the conviction that Tírechán must have been writing in praise of Armagh and represents an attempt to overcome the real difficulties inherent in this proposition. Tírechán's motivations have to be teased out from the indications which he has left us in his text. He explicitly laid out the claims of one particular church as uniquely important, and he drew parallels between this church and one other; he entitled these twin churches 'great churches of Patrick', as opposed to the simple 'church of Patrick' at Armagh, and he associated these great churches with the first Easter in Ireland in the case of one, and with the call pleading with the saint to come to Ireland in the case of the other. If Tírechán's aim was not to promote these two churches but rather the primatial see of Armagh, then, in my view, one would expect equally explicit and detailed claims on Armagh's behalf. Since the only significant statement which Tírechán incontrovertibly makes on this topic is that Benignus of Armagh was heir to Patrick's kingdom, I conclude that the primacy of Armagh over subordinate churches was not the most important element behind Tírechán's decision to draw up the *Collectanea*. Tírechán was worried about Patrick's *paruchia* and the attacks which it had suffered; it does not follow that his intention was to promote the leading centre within that *paruchia*. Instead, I would argue that the most important churches in Tírechán's political perspective were the two 'great churches of Patrick', and in particular the 'great church of Patrick' whose legal dues are detailed in his text. The specific purpose behind the compilation of the *Collectanea*, in short, does not appear to have been the promotion of Armagh *per se*, despite the fact that Tírechán recognized the ruler of that church as heir to Patrick's kingdom.

4. THE 'GREAT CHURCH OF PATRICK' ASSOCIATED WITH CONALL M. NÉILL

Of these two great churches of Patrick, the second, and for our purposes the less important of the two, was located in the wood of

⁶⁶ MacNeill, 'Earliest lives', 12, 17–19; 'Date of texts', 94–5, but see also 'The origin', 14–15; J. F. Kenney, 'St Patrick and the St Patrick legend', *Thought* 8 (1933), 1–34 and 212–29, 226–7; O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 64 n. 39; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 42; Sharpe, 'See of Armagh', 45.

Fochluth to the south-west of Killala Bay in County Mayo.⁶⁷ Its most important possessions were the body of a bishop in the graveyard, a cross associated with the name of Patrick, and the seven books of law donated by Patrick to the church. In Tírechán's description, this church appears as an episcopal settlement with apparent jurisdiction over a number of local churches.

The first 'great church of Patrick' is the location for the final celebrations of the first Easter in Ireland. After an encounter with Loíguire at *Fertae Fer Féic*, where a contest with Loíguire's druids takes place, and a second with Loíguire's brother Coirpre at Tailtiu, where Patrick's servants are whipped, Patrick travels to the home of a third brother, Conall, where he is received, so Tírechán informs us, with great joy. In a text which is difficult to translate precisely, Tírechán states:

Deinde autem uenit ad Conallum filium Neill ad domum illius quam fundauit in loco in quo est hodie aecessia Patricii magna et suscepit eum cum gaudio magno et babtizauit illum et firmauit solium eius in aeternum et dixit illi: 'Semen fratrum tuorum tuo semini seruiet in aeternum. Et tu missericordiam debes facere heredibus meis post me in saeculum et filii tui et filiorum tuorum filiis meis credulis legitimum sempiternum' pensabatque aecessiam Deo Patricii pedibus eius lx pedum et dixit Patricius: 'si diminuatur aecessia ista non erit longum regnum tibi et firmum'⁶⁸

Then, however, he came to Conall, son of Níall, to his house which he had established in the place where the Great Church of Patrick is today and he received him with great joy and he baptized him and confirmed his rule for eternity and he said to him: 'The seed of your brothers will serve your seed for eternity. Moreover you must be merciful after me to my heirs for ever and your sons and [the sons] of your sons as a perpetual due to my sons in the faith'. And he marked out a church of sixty feet for Patrick's God with his own

⁶⁷ The suggestion by MacNeill, recently reiterated by Doherty, that *Silua Fochluth* should be located near the modern village of Foghill to the north-west of Killala Bay is based on the modern Irish placename (*Fóchoill*) and on the location of this within an area known as Caill Conaill in Dubhaltach mac Fírbishigh's seventeenth-century genealogies. See MacNeill, 'The origin', 6; C. Doherty, 'The cult of Saint Patrick and the politics of Armagh in the seventh century', in J.-M. Picard (ed.), *Ireland and northern France, A.D. 600–850* (Dublin 1991), 53–94, 55; J. O'Donovan, *The genealogies, tribes and customs of Hy Fiachrach, commonly called O'Dowda's country* (Dublin 1844), 8–9. MacNeill's argument appears to be that this name commemorates the Conall son of Énde mentioned by Tírechán, whereas the genealogical tract states explicitly that the area belongs to the descendants of Énde's brother, Fergus. O'Rahilly's identification, based on the placenames Domnach Mór, Cros Phátraic and Forrach, which the *Vita Tripartita* and (by implication) Tírechán both associate with the wood, locates *Silua Fochluth* to the south-west of the bay and is based on much more secure foundations; see O'Rahilly, *Two Patricks*, 60–1 n. 35.

⁶⁸ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 13–25; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:9–17. (I follow Bieler in giving *quam* for *qui* in the first line.)

feet, and Patrick said 'if this church is reduced, your kingdom will be neither long-lived nor stable'

There is a problem in translating the Latin phrase *saeculum . . . legitimum sempiternum*, for in the structure of Tírechán's sentence it has no obvious meaning. My tentative translation 'as a perpetual due' draws on the evidence of the *Vita Tripartita*, which gives a close paraphrase of this speech in Irish.⁶⁹ The phrase *misericordiam facere*, which Bieler translates as 'to render alms', is most easily understood as 'to be merciful'; it is in this sense that it is used in the Latin Vulgate.⁷⁰ In the Latin penitentials from Ireland, *misericordia* is used to describe God's mercy, but an example of the word as applied to royalty is found in the eighth-century *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*.⁷¹

In this extract, therefore, Tírechán states that in his day a church belonging to the community of Patrick was located at the ancestral home of Conall, the son of Níall. He tells us that the saint ordered Conall to be merciful to Patrick's heirs, and moreover that the saint had identified this as an important duty which was to descend to Conall's progeny. If Patrick's church was attacked or diminished in any way, the kingdom of Conall would suffer. This is the only statement in the whole of the *Collectanea* where Patrick is said to have laid down explicit orders about the relationship between his 'sons' and a secular power. Tírechán credits him with performing this act during the period of the first Easter ceremonies ever celebrated in Ireland.⁷² I conclude that this relationship is of primary importance in identifying Tírechán's aims in compiling the *Collectanea*.

Tírechán's text makes it quite clear who Conall was. Not only is he given his patronymic (son of Níall) but three of his brothers are also identified in the *Collectanea*.⁷³ Of these, the most important is Loíguire son of Níall, in whose reign Patrick came to Ireland. Loíguire is identified with the royal Uí Néill ceremonial centre of Tara, where it is implied that

⁶⁹ *téchnaige co nderna trócairi domm órbaib im degaid 7 do meic 7 meic do macc corop dlighthidi suthain dom maccaib-sé creitmechaib* (in Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 46:747–9), 'It is proper that you should be merciful to my heirs after me and your sons and the sons of your sons, so that it be due in perpetuity to my sons in the faith'. My thanks are due to Colmán Etchingham, who helped me with the translation of this passage.

⁷⁰ For examples of *misericordiam facere* in the Vulgate see R. Weber (ed.), *Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem* (2 vols, Stuttgart 1969), Gn. 19:19, Idc. 8:35, Ps. 108:16.

⁷¹ L. Bieler (ed.), *The Irish penitentials*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 5 (Dublin 1963), 76:12–13, 80:16, 84:5, 110:7; H. Wasserschleben (ed.), *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (Leipzig 1885; repr. Aalen 1966), 82 (xxv:18).

⁷² For an interesting discussion of the significance of Easter in Patrician hagiography see S. Czarnowski, *Le culte des héros et ses conditions sociales: St Patrick, héros national de l'Irlande* (Paris 1919), 90–4, 141.

⁷³ Tírechán lists Conall's brothers as *Coirpriticus filius Neill*, *Loíguire filius Neill*, *Loíguire macc Neill* and (*filius*) *Fechach filii Neill*; Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 6–7, 10rb 33, 15va 34–5, 9rb 32–3, 11ra 22; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:3–4, 23, 162:21, 126:2, 136:17.

he lives in the royal house — *domus regia*⁷⁴ — and, as we shall see, he is implicitly credited with lordship over the Connachta. An important detail is that Loíguire is said to have refused to convert to Christianity and no heirs of his are mentioned. On the instructions of his father Níall, the founder of the Uí Néill dynasty, Loíguire was to be buried in an upright position in the heights of Tara, an inveterate pagan to the last.⁷⁵

In contrast to the important figure of Loíguire, Tírechán depicts both Coirpre and his nephew, the son of Fiachu, in negative terms. Both are said to have attacked members of Patrick's household, and in both cases the saint retaliates with a curse: 'There will not be a king of your seed'.⁷⁶ The importance of these statements lies in Tírechán's use of the word *rex* and related words. The incidence of *rex* is limited both in number and in application: on seven of the ten occasions on which this word appears in the *Collectanea* it refers to Loíguire, Coirpre or the son of Fíachu — in other words, to leaders of Uí Néill dynasties.⁷⁷

Two of the remaining three instances of *rex* refer to the figures of Fergus and Fothud, whom Tírechán identifies as the *reges* who granted the site of Ráith Chungi in Mag Sereth to St Assicus of Ail Find.⁷⁸ This foundation was identified by Reeves with the modern placename of Racoon in modern County Donegal.⁷⁹ Tírechán appears to locate Mag Sereth in the vicinity of *bernas filiorum Conill*, 'the mountain pass of the sons of Conall'. The later *Vita Tripartita* situates Ráith Chungi in *crích Conaill* or the land of Conall's descendants.⁸⁰ This location, added to Tírechán's almost exclusive use of *rex* to denote members of the Uí Néill, would suggest that Fergus and/or Fothud were members of the Cenél Conaill, descendants of Níall through his son Conall Gulban (not to be confused with the Conall son of Níall who gave his home to Patrick; the latter is known in Irish genealogical tradition as Conall Cremthainne or Conall Err Breg).⁸¹ In the genealogies of the Cenél Conaill, a likely candidate for Fergus can be found in the figure of Fergus Cennfota, son of Conall Gulban macc Néill, and consequently nephew to Loíguire.⁸²

⁷⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10va 5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:33. See also the comparable tale in Muirchú's *Vita Patricii*: Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 4vb 17–24; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 92:3–7.

⁷⁵ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 36–10v 2; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:25–30.

⁷⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 11–12, 11ra 23; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:6–7, 136:17–18.

⁷⁷ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10ra 19, 10ra 28, 12ra 13, 12rc 4 (Loíguire), 10rb 11–12 (Coirpre), 11ra 23 (filius Fechach); Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 130:21, 26, 142:10, 36, 132:7, 136:18.

⁷⁸ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 11vb 20, 15rb 11–12; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 140:23, 160:15–16.

⁷⁹ Reeves, *Life of Columba*, 38 n.e.

⁸⁰ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 15rb 15–16; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 160:18; Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 91:1730–1.

⁸¹ O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum*, 133 (139 b 49), 159 (143 bc 55), 165 (144 g 5), 425 (335 d 48).

⁸² O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum*, 163 (144 d 20).

Unlike the branches of the Uí Néill so far discussed, however, the Cenél Conaill of Donegal appear to stand outside Tírechán's immediate concerns. They are neither blessed, as in the case of Conall Cremthainne, nor acknowledged as supreme ruler, as in the case of Loíguire, nor condemned, as in the cases of Coirpre and Fiachu's descendants. Tírechán's view, in short, is focused not on the Uí Néill as an entity but on certain specific Uí Néill groups.

The tenth reference to a *rex* in the *Collectanea* is to the name of a well thought to be associated with supernatural powers and entitled *rex aquarum* or 'king of the waters'. There is also a single instance of the Irish equivalent, *rí*, describing a prehistoric king whose swineherd was a giant.⁸³

The suggestion that *rex* in Tírechán's text relates to a member of the Uí Néill, when used of historical figures, is supported by the distribution of derivatives in the *Collectanea*. The assembly of the southern Uí Néill at Tailtiu is identified as *agon regale* or royal games. (*Regale* is also used of the supernatural well referred to above.) Tara, which—whatever its origins—was a ceremonial centre under Uí Néill control in the second half of the seventh century, is the location for the *domus regia* or royal house. The only man in the entire *Collectanea* who is said to rule (*regnare*) is Loíguire mac Néill.⁸⁴ Most interesting of all, there are only four references to a *regnum* or kingdom, associated with Loíguire, Conall Cremthainne, Coirpre Niorth Fer and Benignus of Armagh respectively. Coirpre Niorth Fer is identified in the First Recension of the *Táin* with Tara, and in Leinster genealogies he is named as an ancestral ruler of the Laigin, from the period when they had controlled Tara.⁸⁵ Tírechán states that Coirpre Niorth Fer ruled a hundred years before Patrick and Loíguire, and that a giant, woken up by the saint, described himself as a swineherd who had lived in Coirpre's kingdom.⁸⁶ In other words, of the four historical characters whom Tírechán identifies with *regnum*, two were reputed to be kings of Tara and one of these, Coirpre Niorth Fer, was associated with a supernatural figure. Only Conall, whose home became Patrick's church and whose heirs owed mercy to Patrick's community for ever, and Benignus, heir to Patrick's kingdom, are said to have successors in Tírechán's *Collectanea*; only Conall and Benignus, therefore, appear to be archetypal rulers of important contemporary *regna* or kingdoms in Tírechán's description.

At this point it is worth summarizing the conclusions to date, for they

⁸³ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 13vb 34, 36, 14rb 12; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 152:34–5, 154:30.

⁸⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 6, 13vb 26–7, 10va 5, 9rb 35–6; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:3, 152:30, 132:33, 126:4.

⁸⁵ See C. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (Dublin 1976), 107:3506–9; O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum*, 22 (118b 6, 18); L. Gwynn (ed.), 'Do maccaib Conaire', *Ériu* 6 (1912), 147:16–17.

⁸⁶ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 14ra 23–b17; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 154:15–34.

differ radically from those found in the secondary literature at present available.⁸⁷ There seems to be little emphasis on the rights of Armagh as pre-eminent among the Patrician churches, although Tírechán does state that the heir to Patrick's kingdom is Benignus of Armagh. The most important secular family in the *Collectanea* is the Uí Néill. The king of the Uí Néill in Patrick's time was Loíguire son of Níall, whose father was said to have given him instructions concerning the proper response to the Christian message. Loíguire, however, is not credited with heirs, and the inference from Tírechán's text is that the kingdom of the Uí Néill passed to Conall and his descendants. Patrick is said to declare that Conall's kingdom will be served by the other families descended from Níall's sons. Two of these are singled out for disparagement: neither the heirs of Coirpre nor the heirs of the son of Fiachu will ever be kings. In Tírechán's wording, the lordship associated with the Uí Néill kingdom and the lordship associated with the community of Patrick appear as comparable institutions, for both are described by the word *regnum* or kingdom. The rulers of Conall's kingdom, however, owe a perpetual due to Patrick's kingdom: they must always be merciful to the saint's cult. The context in which Tírechán wrote 'My heart within me is anxious about the love of Patrick . . .'⁸⁸ is one, I contend, where the family of Conall Cremthainne, as inheritors of the kingdom of Ireland, are said to have a special responsibility towards the followers of St Patrick.

5. LOÍGUIRE'S CONTROL OVER CONNACHT AS PORTRAYED IN THE *COLLECTANEA*

In the *Collectanea* Loíguire, as king of the Uí Néill, is credited with jurisdiction over the Connachta, a federation of families west of the Shannon who controlled much of modern Connacht.⁸⁹ Tírechán indicates the nature of this Uí Néill jurisdiction in a number of different incidents.

The first of these is the arrival of the sons of Amolngaid at Tara, where a judgement on the inheritance of Amolngaid's patrimony is handed down by Loíguire and Patrick acting in concert:

⁸⁷ Some of the incidents discussed in this section are mentioned in MacNeill, 'Vita Tripartita', 10–13; F. J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (London 1973), 90–1; D. Dumville, 'St Patrick and fifth-century Irish chronology: the kings', in Dumville (ed.), *St Patrick*, 45–50, 49; but in none of these is the explanation the same as that given above. See, however, Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, lii, where he remarks that the gift of Conall's house represents a contemporary claim for protection by Armagh.

⁸⁸ See above, p. 60.

⁸⁹ The definition of the Connachta in this early period has been a matter of some dispute. See T. F. O'Rahilly, *History and mythology*, 173–81, 395–6; F. J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings*, 230–7; F. Kelly, 'Tiughraind Bhécain', *Ériu* 26 (1975), 66–98, 88; R. Ó hUiginn, 'Crúachu, Connachta and the Ulster cycle', *Emania* 5 (1988), 20; T. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh kinship* (Oxford 1993), 159–60, 162–4; Swift, 'The social and ecclesiastical background', 55–85.

Unierunt autem filii Amolngid .ui. ad iudicandum ante faciem Loiguir et Endeus contra eos unus et filius eius tener et Patricius ante illos et inuestigauerunt causam hereditatis illorum et iudicauit illis Loiguire et Patricius ut diuiderent inter se hereditatem in .uii. partes et dixit Endeus 'Filium meum et partem hereditatis meae ego immolo Deo Patricii et Patricio'⁹⁰

Six sons of Amolngaid came before Loíguire for judgement and Énde was alone against them and his young son and Patrick on their behalf [?] and they examined the case of their inheritance and Loíguire and Patrick passed judgement that they should divide their inheritance into seven parts and Énde said 'I give my son and a part of my inheritance to the God of Patrick and to Patrick'

In an Old Irish poem we find evidence that land-law and inheritance could be considered the particular concern of a king. 'If thou be a king', as Binchy's translation has it, 'thou shouldst know . . . valuation of lands, measurement by poles, augmentation of a penalty, larceny of tree-fruit, the great substance of land-law, marking out [fresh] boundaries, planting of stakes, the law as to points [of stakes], partition among co-heirs.'⁹¹ In her discussion of the Irish king as judge, Marilyn Gerriets supplements this poem with a canon quoted in the eighth-century *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* stating that one of the seven things which a king should judge was *hereditas* or inheritance. Similarly, there is a statement in *Audacht Moraind* that 'it is through the justice of the ruler that every heir plants his house-post in his fair inheritance'.⁹² All of these quotations are from seventh- or eighth-century sources, and they give a plausible context for Tírechán's portrayal of Loíguire as a person with authority to judge Amolngaid's inheritance — provided, and this is the important point, that Loíguire is identified as king over the sons of Amolngaid. Since Amolngaid's lands were located in the west of County Mayo, between the Moy and the Atlantic, Tírechán credits the Uí Néill kingdom with legal jurisdiction over the entire width of Ireland.⁹³

Tírechán's conclusion to the story of the sons of Amolngaid corroborates this interpretation. After Loíguire and Patrick had passed judgement on the entire patrimony, Énde immediately proceeded to donate part of his inheritance to Patrick and to Patrick's God. In one of the texts

⁹⁰ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10vb 17–27; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 134:29–34.

⁹¹ D. A. Binchy, 'An archaic legal poem', *Celtica* 9 (1971), 152–68, 156–7.

⁹² M. Gerriets, 'The king as judge in early Ireland', *Celtica* 20 (1988), 29–52, 48–9; Wasserscheleben, *Kanonensammlung*, 81 (xxv:15); F. Kelly (ed.), *Audacht Moraind* (Dublin 1976), 7 (§16).

⁹³ The normal identification of the Uí Amolngaid kingdom, or *campus domnon* as Tírechán calls it, is that found in Hogan, *Onomasticon*, 517, and MacNeill, 'Vita Tripartita', 20–1, where it is limited to the modern barony of Tirawley. This ignores two Old Irish references to Irrus Domnon or the modern barony of Erris between Tirawley and the Atlantic coast. See C. Swift, 'A square earthen church of clay in seventh-century Mayo', *Trowel* 4 (1993), 32–7, 32–3.

which make up the *Additamenta* there is an indication that any such gifts to the Church must be ratified by the king.⁹⁴ This fact supports the view that Tírechán was portraying the sons of Amolngaid as subjects of an Uí Néill king.

Following the division of the inheritance and Énde's donation to Patrick, there is a ceremony which is described as follows:

Foedus pepigerunt per manus Loiguirii filii Neill Patricius et filii Amolngid cum exercitu laicorum episcoporum sanctorum et inierunt iter facere ad montem egli⁹⁵

Patrick and the sons of Amolngaid with an army of lay people [and] holy bishops confirmed their agreement through the hands of Loíguire son of Níall, and they began to make the journey to *Mons Egli*⁹⁶

Where the word *foedus* or pact occurs elsewhere in the *Collectanea* it is translated in the *Vita Tripartita* by the Irish term *cairdes*, a word which can denote friendship, kinship or sexual love and which therefore suggests some form of close alliance.⁹⁷ *Cairdes* does not, however, seem to be the most suitable translation of the ceremony which took place *per manus Loiguire*, an episode in the *Collectanea* which is not reproduced in the *Vita Tripartita*. The phrase *per manus* is found in the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, where it is most plausibly rendered as 'with the assistance of', and this usage is found in other early medieval Latin texts.⁹⁸ On the other hand, given the large number of Hibernicisms found

⁹⁴ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 17rb 11–16; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 172:11–14. See E. MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland*, reissued by D. Ó Corráin with introduction and notes (Dublin 1981), 149–50.

⁹⁵ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10vb 29–33; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 134:35–8.

⁹⁶ *Mons Egli* would appear to be the modern Croaghpatrick. The name is given as *Cruachán Aigle* in the *Vita Tripartita* and in the *Annals of Ulster*: Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 71:1289, 75:1377–8; S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (eds), *The Annals of Ulster to AD 1131* (Dublin 1983), *sub anno* 1113. It is known as *Aigle* in an undated poem edited by K. Meyer, *Bruchstücke der älteren Lyrik Irlands* (Berlin 1919), 9 (12). It is called *Cruach Patricc* in J. O'Donovan (ed.), *Annala Ríoghachta Éireann — Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (7 vols, Dublin 1851), *sub anno* 1351, and it is depicted as *Croa Patrick*, a conical hill with a church on the summit, on Petty's baronial maps in *Hiberniae Delineatio* by Sir William Petty and *Geographical description of ye Kingdom of Ireland* by Sir William Petty and F. R. Lamb, reprinted with introduction by J. H. Andrews (Shannon 1969).

⁹⁷ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 10rb 32–5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 132:23–5, quoted above, p. 59. This is translated into Irish in the *Vita Tripartita* as *Dochoid Patraic iar sin do Temraig co Loegairi úair do gniset cairdes etorru connaro oircchi Patraic ina flaitheus* 'After that, Patrick went to Tara, to Loíguire, because they had made a compact between them that Patrick would not be killed in his lordship', Mulchrone, *Bethu Phátraic*, 48:798–9. For definition of *cairdes* see *DIL*, C46:9–68.

⁹⁸ Wasserscheben, *Kanonensammlung*, 135 (xxxvii:14); see Etchingham, 'The implications', 145. For usage of this expression in non-Irish sources see A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire Latin-Français*, 515b:13–19.

in Tírechán's text, the phrase may be a reflection of the ceremony behind the Irish sentence *gaib it láim* or 'take into your hand', a formula which is used in the legal tract *Berrad Airechta* to denote formal agreement to a contract.⁹⁹

There are two explanations which come to mind as possible interpretations of the ceremony *per manus*. On the one hand, Loíguire may, as Bieler's translation suggests, have been acting as a guarantor or *naidm*, the literal translation of which is 'act of binding or pledging' but which is also used to denote a particular type of surety.¹⁰⁰ The law tract *Berrad Airechta* describes the phenomenon of a *naidm* whose responsibilities derived from his position of authority.¹⁰¹ One such *naidm* was a lord acting for his client: this would suggest that Tírechán was, once again, portraying Loíguire as holding some form of authority over the sons of Amolngaid. The pact to which Tírechán refers would then be the donation of land by Énde to the church as ratified by his king, Loíguire.¹⁰²

An alternative possibility is that the ceremony *per manus Loiguirí* should be related not to Énde's donation of land but to the journey to *Mons Egli* which follows directly on from it. Old Irish has a number of words describing the protection which a person of high status could bestow on his inferiors. Two of these, *snádud* and *fóesam*, are used synonymously in the Old Irish hymn attributed to Colmán Moccu Cluasaig.¹⁰³ More precisely, *snádud* refers to a form of safe conduct offered to a stranger by one prepared to accompany him on his travels. *Fóesam*, on the other hand, is a guarantee of protection to a stranger, to enable him to travel safely on his own.¹⁰⁴

A passage in *Uraicecht Becc* and an associated Middle Irish commentary suggest that *fóesam* was measured in terms of time rather than distance covered. According to the commentary, the king of a single *túath*

⁹⁹ D. A. Binchy (ed.), *Corpus iuris Hibernici* (6 vols, Dublin 1978), 595:5, 13. For translation see R. Stacey, 'Berrad Airechta: an Old Irish tract on suretyship', in T. M. Charles-Edwards et al. (eds), *Lawyers and laymen: studies in the history of law presented to Professor Dafydd Jenkins on his seventy-fifth birthday* (Cardiff 1986), 210–33, 218 (§51b–c). See also K. Simms, *From kings to warlords — the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages* (Woodbridge 1987), 99–100; N. McLeod, *Early Irish contract law*, Sydney Series in Celtic Studies, 1 (Sydney, n.d.), 23–4, 142–3, 162–3.

¹⁰⁰ *DIL*, N9:25–55; Kelly, *A guide*, 167–73.

¹⁰¹ Binchy, *Corpus*, 592:34–6; Stacey, 'Berrad Airechta', 213 (§24). See also Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 219 (15.3), where he suggests an Irish equivalent for *láim* on the basis of *DIL*, L37:41–2.

¹⁰² This is the explanation put forward by R. Sharpe, 'Dispute settlement in medieval Ireland: a preliminary enquiry', in W. Davies and P. Fouracre (eds), *The settlement of disputes in early medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1986), 169–89, 175.

¹⁰³ W. Stokes and J. Strachan (eds), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: a collection of Old Irish glosses, scholia, prose and verse* (2 vols, Cambridge 1903; repr. Dublin 1987), vol. 2, 298–306.

¹⁰⁴ According to Binchy, *Corpus*, 716:31–2. I am indebted to Liam Breatnach for this information.

had the power to impose protection for a month, while the king of Ireland could provide protection for a year.

A foesma .i. mí do rig tuaithe 7 mortuaithe, tri coicthigdhis do rig tuath, raithe do rig coiced, bliadain do rig Erend¹⁰⁵

Their *fóesams*, that is a month for the king of a *túath* or great *túath*, three fortnights for the king of more than one *túath*, three months for the king of a province, a year for the king of Ireland

The relevance of this commentary to the earlier period is indicated by *Uraicecht Becc*, which states that the king of Munster was also entitled to grant a year's protection.¹⁰⁶ The journey made by Patrick and the sons of Amolngaid across Ireland is said to have taken a full year, from the first Easter at the 'great church of Patrick' in Meath to the second Easter at the 'great church of Patrick' west of the Moy. It seems possible, therefore, that Tírechán may have been referring to Loíguire's guarantee of protection for the saint and the sons of Amolngaid before their departure. This would provide a neat explanation for the journey of one year which follows directly on from the ceremony which took place *per manus Loiguirí*. Against this, however, the compact would appear to be between Patrick and the sons of Amolngaid, and Loíguire would seem to have been acting merely in an ancillary role.

In any event, whether the ceremony *per manus* represented the conferring of a king's protection or was merely portraying the king acting in the role of a *naidm* surety, the conclusion is surely the same: Loíguire was being described in the *Collectanea* as king of the Uí Néill with legal powers which extended over peoples living on the opposite side of Ireland from Tara.

The third occasion on which Tírechán indicates the authority of Loíguire over the Connachta is the well-known incident when Patrick converted Loíguire's daughters at Crúachu. Crúachu was the ceremonial district associated with the dwelling place of the kings of the Connachta in the saga literature.¹⁰⁷ In 1919 MacNeill suggested that the association of Loíguire's daughters with this site implied that the Uí Néill were kings of Crúachu at this period, but this was rejected by Carney, who pointed out that the girls were in fosterage at the time and that there was nothing implausible about the idea that the daughters of the king of Tara could be

¹⁰⁵ Binchy, *Corpus*, 2269:26–7. My thanks are due to Colmán Etchingham for showing me this passage.

¹⁰⁶ *Ollam uas rigaib ri Muman . . . turrthugud bliadna do* 'A master over kings is the king of Munster . . . A year's protection for him'. Binchy, *Corpus*, 2282:12–16; trans. in E. MacNeill, 'Ancient Irish law: the law of status or franchise', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 36C (1921–4), 261–316, 281 (§56).

¹⁰⁷ See J. Waddell, 'Rathcroghan — a royal site in Connacht', *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 1 (1983), 21–46; Ó hUiginn, 'Crúachu', 19–23.

fostered outside his own domain.¹⁰⁸ Following the conversion, the girls were then united to Christ as God's son; the words used are *coniungere* (to join) and *sponsus* (a promised man or bridegroom). The same words are found in the eighth-century *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* referring to marriage alliances.¹⁰⁹

The rationale behind this union, if not the reason for its location at Crúachu, is given explicit recognition by Tírechán. In the *Collectanea*, Patrick is said to have remarked to the two girls: 'As daughters of an earthly king, I wish to join [*coniungere*] you to the heavenly king'.¹¹⁰ In addition to reiterating the importance of Loíguire as the pre-eminent royal figure of the *Collectanea*, the phrase reinforces the point made in relation to the kingdom of Patrick which Benignus inherited: it is a second indication that secular and ecclesiastical political units are directly comparable and that both can be described as kingdoms ruled by a king.¹¹¹ According to the account, the union between the two dynastic groups, God and his son Christ with Loíguire and his daughters, did indeed take place, for Patrick is said to have told the girls that unless they were baptized, took the Eucharist and died, they would not see their bridegroom.

Et postulauerunt uidere faciem xpisti et dixit eis sanctus 'nissi mortem gustaueritis non potestis uidere faciem xpisti et nissi sacrificium accipietis' et responderunt 'da nobis sacrificium ut possimus filium nostrum sponsum uidere'.¹¹²

And they asked to see the face of Christ and the holy man said to them 'Unless you taste death and unless you receive the Eucharist, you cannot see the face of Christ' and they answered 'Give us the Eucharist so that we can see the son, our promised bridegroom'

This condition the girls promptly fulfilled. If the image of marital union

¹⁰⁸ E. MacNeill, *Phases of Irish history* (New York 1919), 191–2; 'The origin', 4; 'Vita Tripartita', 25; Carney, *The problem*, 129.

¹⁰⁹ Wasserschleben, *Kanonensammlung*, 185 (xlvi:2), 186 (xlvi:7), 187 (xlvi:11), 189 (xlvi:16), 190 (xlvi:19). For discussions on early Irish marriage practices see R. Thurneysen, 'Heirat', in R. Thurneysen (ed.), *Studies in early Irish law* (Dublin 1936), 109–28; D. Ó Corráin, 'Marriage in early Ireland', in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin 1985), 5–24; Kelly, *A guide*, 70–5; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh kinship* (Oxford 1993), 461–9. I would like to thank Thomas Charles-Edwards for discussion of this episode in the *Collectanea*.

¹¹⁰ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 12rc 1–4; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 142:35–6.

¹¹¹ The kingdom of Patrick was a common phrase in Patrician sources. See Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 3vb 28–34; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 86:10–14; 'Fíacc's Hymn' in Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus*, 2, 314:19–20, 315:28, 317:43; A. Orchard (ed.), *Audite omnes* (where Patrick is the greatest inhabitant of the kingdom of heaven), in Dumville, *St Patrick*, 166–73. For a general overview of this theme see W. Davies, 'Clerics as rulers: some implications of the terminology of ecclesiastical authority in early medieval Ireland', in N. Brooks (ed.), *Latin and the vernacular languages in early medieval Britain* (Leicester 1982), 81–97, esp. 89–93.

¹¹² Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 12rc 31–41; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 144:9–12.

was carried through the entire account, it may be that this consummation on the slopes of Crúachu was meant to parallel the *banais* or wedding ceremonies which normally took place at the home of the bride. In *Aislinge Óengusso*, for example, the father of the groom went to the ruler of the kingdom in which the bride was to be found, then spoke with the girl's father, and finally an alliance of *cairdes* type was agreed upon by the fathers of the young couple.¹¹³ In *Tochmarc Emire*, Forgall Manach went to Tara to betroth his daughter to Coirpre Nia Fer (in the ceremony known as *airnaidm*),¹¹⁴ but the king then visited Forgall for the *banais*.¹¹⁵ It is possible, therefore, that in locating the union of Loíguire's daughters with Christ within the ceremonial district of Crúachu, Tírechán is indicating that Loíguire was ruler of the area: at the very least, such an explanation parallels similar indications elsewhere in the *Collectanea*.

6. THE POLITICAL CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH THE *COLLECTANEA* WAS WRITTEN

I stress the significance of Tírechán's portrayal of Loíguire as king of the Uí Néill with regnal authority over the Connachta because this is an important element in determining Tírechán's viewpoint: after all, of the 1033 lines of prose text which go to make up the *Collectanea*, 680 or roughly two-thirds deal with material relating to lands west of the Shannon.¹¹⁶ At the time Tírechán was writing, in the second half of the seventh century, the annals indicate that the Uí Briúin under Ragallach m. Uatach and his descendants were establishing an independent power base in northern Galway and Roscommon.¹¹⁷ Similarly, there is evidence that the Uí Fiachrach Aidne in south Galway and, at a slightly later date, the Uí Fiachrach Muirisce in northern Mayo were making claims to an over-kinship of the Connachta.¹¹⁸ The Uí Néill and their supporters may have aspired to effective jurisdiction over the Connachta in the later

¹¹³ F. Shaw (ed.), *The Dream of Óengus — Aislinge Óenguso* (Dublin 1934), 56–63 (§§9–13).

¹¹⁴ On *airnaidm* see *DIL*, A231:75–232:8. Coirpre Nia Fer is the later form of the name Coirpre Nióth Fer discussed on p. 71 above.

¹¹⁵ K. Meyer, 'The oldest version of *Tochmarc Emire*', *Revue Celtique* 11 (1890), 424–57, 448:87–90.

¹¹⁶ The list of Patrick's clerics on folio 9v is omitted from this calculation. The 680 lines consist of that portion of the text from Patrick's first crossing of the Shannon to his blessing of the river Drowes, together with the description of the visit of Amolngaid's sons to Tara.

¹¹⁷ *Annals of Ulster*, sub annis 649, 654, 680, 703, 705; W. Stokes (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, reprinted from *Revue Celtique* (1895–6) (Felinfach 1993), sub anno 621 (recte 622); M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The guarantor list of Cáin Adomnáin, 697', *Peritia* 1 (1982), 178–215, 181 (§61). See discussion in Byrne, *Irish kings*, 246–50.

¹¹⁸ On the Uí Fiachrach Aidne see *Annals of Ulster*, sub annis 622, 649, 663, 666, 675, 696, 697; *Annals of Tigernach*, sub anno 655 (recte 656); W. Hennessey (ed.), *Chronicon Scotorum: A chronicle of Irish affairs* (London 1866), sub anno 664; Byrne, *Irish kings*, 239–43. On the Uí Fiachrach Muirisce see *Annals of Ulster*, sub annis 683, 707, 732, 735; Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor list', 181 (§63); Byrne, *Irish kings*, 237–9.

seventh century but there is little evidence that they were successful in the longer term.

According to the records which survive in the annals, there was one southern Uí Néill branch which appears to have attempted to implement its claims to jurisdiction over the Connachta. This was the family of Diarmait and Blathmac, descendants of Conall Cremthainne through his great-grandson, Áed Sláine. In 649 Diarmait attacked and defeated the king of the Uí Fiachrach Aidne at Carn Conaill, within the Uí Fiachrach kingdom.¹¹⁹ In 665, both Diarmait and his brother Blathmac died as joint kings of Tara. In 671 Blathmac's son Sechnusach, who had been chosen as king of Tara in his father's place, was murdered by the king of the Cenél Coirpri, descendants of that Coirpre whose family was condemned in Tírechán's text. In 683 Sechnusach's brother was killed in the battle of Corann, possibly in south Sligo, and a king of the Cenél Coirpri died in the same incident.¹²⁰

Iugulatio Sechnusaigh filii Blaimic regis Temoirie initio hiemis. Dub Duin rex generis Coirpri iugulauit illum

The murdering of Sechnusach, son of Blathmac, king of Tara at the beginning of winter. Dub Dúin, king of the kindred of Coirpre, murdered him

Bellum Coraind in quo ceciderunt Colgu filius Blaimic 7 Fergus m. Maele Duin rex generis Coirpri

The battle of Corann in which fell Colgu, son of Blathmac, and Fergus, son of Mael Dúin, king of the kindred of Coirpre

It is roughly this period to which the compilation of Tírechán's *Collectanea* has traditionally been dated. Within the text of the *Collectanea*, Tírechán identifies himself as a follower of Ultán, *episcopus Conchuburnensis*.¹²¹ This is normally assumed to have been the Ultán moccu Conchobair whose obit is recorded *sub anno* 657 in the Annals of Ulster, and also the *Ultán m.h. Conchobair i nArd Brecaín* whose name occurs in the late eighth-century *Martyrology of Tallaght* under 4 September.¹²² If this assumption is correct, it follows that Tírechán was probably writing the *Collectanea* in the generation after Ultán's death.

¹¹⁹ Hogan, *Onomasticon*, 159–60; *Cath Cairnd Chonaill* in R. I. Best and O. Bergin (eds), *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin 1929), 288–92, 289:9601–6.

¹²⁰ *Annals of Ulster, sub annis* 649, 665, 671, 683. Hogan, *Onomasticon*, 291, suggests that this battle took place in the barony of Corran in County Sligo, but this identification is far from certain.

¹²¹ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 11rb 22–5; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 138:7–90.

¹²² R. I. Best and H. J. Lawlor (eds), *The martyrology of Tallaght*, Henry Bradshaw Society 68 (London 1931), 68. For contrasting discussions of the date of this text see J. Hennig, 'Studies in the Latin texts of the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, of *Félire Óengusso* and of *Félire Húi Gormain*', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 69C (1970), 45–112; P. Ó Riain, 'The Tallaght martyrologies re-dated', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 20 (Winter 1990), 21–38.

A second chronological indicator was noted by Bury. In his discussion of the church at Tamnach, Tírechán mentioned the household of Clúain moccu Nóis (or Clonmacnoise), who ‘hold through force many of the places of Patrick after the recent plagues’.¹²³ Bury took it that these plagues were those recorded in the annals under the years 664 to 668, but MacNeill in subsequent articles pointed out that they could also be the plagues of 683, or even the plague of cattle of 701.¹²⁴ A post-701 date seems difficult to accept in the light of the identification of kings of Ireland with descendants of Conall Cremthainne in the *Collectanea* as noted in this article: the long sequence of kings of Ireland who were also descendants of Conall Cremthainne came to an end after the reign of Fínsnechta Fledach, who died in 695.¹²⁵ Furthermore, if we continue to hold to Ultán’s obit of 657, one is left with the conclusion that Tírechán survived his mentor for some 44 years before he began to compile the *Collectanea*. There is, admittedly, little concrete evidence with which to refute this suggestion, but it seems an implausible hypothesis.¹²⁶ A date sometime after the plagues of 664–8 requires no such longevity on Tírechán’s part and coincides with the period 671–83, when we can identify an Uí Néill family whose history appears to accord with the indications of Tírechán’s political perspective as it can be traced in the *Collectanea*. In both cases a king of Ireland descended from Conall Cremthainne, antagonism towards the Cenél Coirpre, and possible Uí Néill claims to Connachta territory appear to be involved.

7. CONCLUSIONS

As I have pointed out above, my interpretation of Tírechán’s aims in

¹²³ Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, 12ra 8–10; Bieler, *Patrician texts*, 142:6–7; Bury, ‘Tírechán’s memoir’, 236.

¹²⁴ MacNeill, ‘Earliest lives’, 12; ‘Date of texts’, 85.

¹²⁵ See Byrne, *Irish kings*, 275–84.

¹²⁶ The limited number of excavations of early medieval cemeteries within Ireland would suggest that the majority of the population died before the age of fifty. Of sixteen adult burials thought to date to the early medieval period at Boolies Little, one was an adult male of more than 45 years: D. Sweetman, ‘Souterrain and burials at Boolies Little, Co. Meath’, *Ríocht na Midhe* 7 (1982–3), 42–57. Of the fourteen adults buried in an early medieval cemetery at Millockstown whose age could be identified, two were forty or over, and of eighteen adults buried at Lough Gur, two were over fifty: C. Manning, ‘Archaeological excavation of a succession of enclosures at Millockstown, Co. Louth’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 86C (1986), 135–81, 171–9; E. Grogan and G. Eogan, ‘Lough Gur excavations by Seán P. Ó Ríordáin: further Neolithic and Beaker habitations on Knockadoon’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 87C (1987), 299–506, 335. Excavation of what is thought to be the graveyard of a female ecclesiastical house at Port nam Mairtír, Iona, produced approximately forty female burials whose average age was also forty: Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll: an inventory of the monuments: IV Iona* (Edinburgh 1982), 244. As opposed to this archaeological evidence, however, we know of one Patrician cleric whose career stretched over a minimum of 39 years: Ferdomnach, the *scriba* of Armagh, wrote the Book of Armagh in 807 and only died in 846; see Sharpe, ‘Palaeographical considerations’, 4.

compiling the *Collectanea* differs from those previously published. I do not accept the present consensus, based on the early work of Bury, Gwynn and MacNeill, which argues that Tírechán was writing with the specific intention of promoting Armagh. Tírechán undoubtedly acknowledged Armagh as the leading church of the Patrician community and its ruler as the heir to Patrick's kingdom but, although his heart was troubled at the thought of attacks on Patrick's *paruchia*, he does not emphasize Armagh's rights in his text. Instead, viewing the *Collectanea* as a whole, the two churches which are given the most attention are the two 'great churches of Patrick'.

The family which is given the most elevated status, as denoted by Tírechán's use of the word *rex* and related words, is that of the Uí Néill. According to Tírechán, the king of the Uí Néill at the time of Patrick's arrival, and Níall's direct heir, was Loíguire, who is credited with authority over the Connachta. Loíguire, however, refused to be baptized and the kingdom passed to his brother Conall and to Conall's descendants, to whom other families descended from Níall's sons paid homage. In Tírechán's description, Conall gave his ancestral home to Patrick on the occasion of the first Easter in Ireland, and this later became known as the 'great church of Patrick'. On the occasion of this gift, Patrick told Conall that he and his sons owed mercy to Patrick and to Patrick's successors for ever, and that if Patrick's church, whose dimensions had been measured out by Conall himself, were ever diminished, Conall's family would lose their kingdom. After giving this account, Tírechán explained that he was writing his text because soldiers and renegades and others were stealing from Patrick's original *paruchia*, which had originally been almost coextensive with the entire island of Ireland.

My alternative interpretation is based on these facts and runs as follows. Tírechán was writing the *Collectanea* as a loyal member of the Patrician *regnum* or kingdom which was headed by the heir of Patrick in Armagh. He was addressing it to a king of Tara who was also a descendant of Conall Cremthainne, and his aim was to claim favour from a dynasty that (so Tírechán informs us) had traditionally supported Patrick's church. He sought such aid because his own kingdom, that of Patrick, was under threat at the time and, in particular, was shrinking in territorial extent. Although he did not specify from where these attacks came, he did indicate that some of the attackers were soldiers, while others (whom he calls renegades) appear to have been ex-members of Patrick's kingdom. Tírechán also reported that St Patrick condemned the dynasties of the Cenél Coirpri and the Cenél Fiachach: either or both of these may have formed part of the anti-Patrician alliance which provoked Tírechán into compiling the *Collectanea*. (The animus which Tírechán occasionally displays against other ecclesiastical communities may also be relevant here, but that is too large a question to be dealt with in this paper and must be discussed on another occasion.)

Perhaps with the aim of making his request for aid more palatable, Tírechán recounted a number of stories which indicated to the king that his Uí Néill ancestors had held regnal authority over the Connachta. He also pointed out that Patrick's kingdom had a large number of associated settlements within Connachta lands, perhaps because this was where the attacks were occurring or perhaps because he wanted to offer the Uí Néill king the support of the Patrician clients in the land the king was trying to conquer. The validity of this interpretation, it seems to me, is strongly supported by the existence of an Uí Néill family who were descendants of Conall Cremthainne, kings of Tara, opponents of Coirpre's descendants, and involved in battles in the lands of the Connachta at the time when Tírechán was probably writing. Patrician propagandist Tírechán may have been, but I would argue that the contention that he wrote the *Collectanea* as an Armagh chronicler, with the specific aim of promoting that church, may be out-dated and deserves to be reassessed.