

# Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago, 450–1200

Contact, Myth and History

Caroline Brett, with Fiona Edmonds  
and Paul Russell





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How did Brittany get its name and its British-Celtic language in the centuries after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire? Beginning in the ninth century, scholars have proposed a succession of theories about Breton origins, influenced by the changing relationships between Brittany, its Continental neighbours, and the ‘Atlantic Archipelago’ during and after the Viking age and the Norman Conquest. However, due to limited records, the history of medieval Brittany remains a relatively neglected area of research.

In this new volume, the authors draw on specialised research in the history of language and literature, archaeology, and the cult of saints, to tease apart the layers of myth and historical record. Brittany retained a distinctive character with respect to the typical ‘medieval’ forces of kingship, lordship and ecclesiastical hierarchy. The early history of Brittany is richly fascinating, and this new investigation offers a fresh perspective on the region and early medieval Europe in general.

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

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This book is the principal output of research funded by the Leverhulme Trust through their Research Project Grant scheme between 2015 and 2019, based at the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, Cambridge, with Paul Russell as principal investigator, Fiona Edmonds as co-investigator and Caroline Brett as research associate. Most of the book has been authored by Caroline Brett. The [second part of the Introduction](#), dealing with the Breton language, is by Paul Russell; sections of [Chapters 1, 3 and 5](#), dealing with maritime connections, the politics of Carolingian Brittany and the Viking Age, are by Fiona Edmonds; and the entire book has benefited from the careful reading and advice of the co-authors.

The maps were devised by Caroline Brett and created by Fiona Edmonds using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri software, please visit [www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com). The basemap comprises Esri ‘World shaded relief’, [www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=9c5370d0b54f4de1b48a3792d7377ff2](http://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=9c5370d0b54f4de1b48a3792d7377ff2), December 2009 (accessed 27 March 2019). Rivers are from DIVA-GIS free spatial data ‘inland water’ based on the Digital Chart of the World: [www.diva-gis.org/data](http://www.diva-gis.org/data) (accessed 27 March 2019).

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As research associate, main author and initiator of the project, I would like to thank Paul Russell and Fiona Edmonds for their encouragement and help in deciding the shape of the project and steering it to completion. Special thanks are due to David Dumville, who is largely responsible for my becoming a historian of any sort, and of Brittany in particular; to the students in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic who have contributed and provoked ideas, especially James Miller, Sarah Francis and Elena Pace; and to my husband, Nick Galwey, who has carefully read the entire book and provided the perspective of a statistician who is also a literary stylist. Finally, I remember the Robert and Cirolo families in Douarnenez, through whose kindness and hospitality I first fell in love with Brittany, in the summer of 1975, a debt I hope to partly repay with this book.

# Abbreviations

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## Bibliographical Abbreviations

<i>AA SS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum quotque toto orbe coluntur</i> , ed. J. Bolland et al. (Antwerp and Brussels, 1643–present)
<i>AB</i>	<i>Annales de Bretagne</i>
<i>ABPO</i>	<i>Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest</i>
<i>AnBoll</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>BAV</i>	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
<i>BBCS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>BEC</i>	<i>Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes</i>
<i>BHL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis</i> , ed. Socii Bollandiani, 3 vols. (Brussels: Via dicta des Ursulines, 1898–1901)
<i>BL</i>	British Library
<i>BM</i>	Bibliothèque municipale
<i>BnF</i>	Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>BP</i>	Bibliothèque publique
<i>BSAF</i>	<i>Bulletin de la société archéologique du Finistère</i>
<i>ByS</i>	<i>Bonedd y Saint</i> , ed. P. C. Bartrum, <i>Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts</i> (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966), pp. 51–67
<i>CC CM</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</i>
<i>CC SL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
<i>CCH</i>	<i>Collectio Canonum Hibernensis</i> , ed. R. Flechner, <i>The Hibernensis</i> , 2 vols.

	(Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019)
CCM	<i>Cahiers de civilisation médiévale</i>
CL	<i>Cartulary of Landévennec</i> , ed. R.-F.-L. Le Men and E. Ernault, <i>Cartulaire de Landévennec</i> , in <i>Mélanges historiques: choix de documents</i> , vol. 5 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1886), pp. 533–600
CLA	E. A. Lowe, <i>Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century</i> , 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934–71)
CMCS	<i>Cambridge/Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies</i>
CQ	<i>Cartulary of Quimperlé</i> , ed. L. Maître and P. de Berthou, <i>Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé (Finistère)</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> edn (Rennes: Plihon et Hommay, 1904)
CR	<i>Cartulary of Redon</i> , ed. A. de Courson, <i>Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Redon en Bretagne</i> (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1863)
DCA	B. Tanguy, <i>Dictionnaire des noms de communes, trèves et paroisses des Côtes d'Armor</i> (Douarnenez: Le Chasse-Marée, 1992)
DF	B. Tanguy, <i>Dictionnaire des noms de communes, trèves et paroisses du Finistère</i> (Douarnenez: Le Chasse-Marée, 1990)
DUBALA	B. Merdrignac, <i>D'une Bretagne à l'autre. Les migrations bretonnes entre histoire et légendes</i> (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012)
EC	<i>Études Celtiques</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ELRF	<i>Excerpta de Libris Romanorum et Francorum</i> , ed. (as <i>Canones Wallici</i> ) L. Bieler, <i>The Irish Penitentials</i> (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975), pp. 136–59
EME	<i>Early Medieval Europe</i>
EWGT	P. C. Bartrum (ed.), <i>Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts</i> (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966)

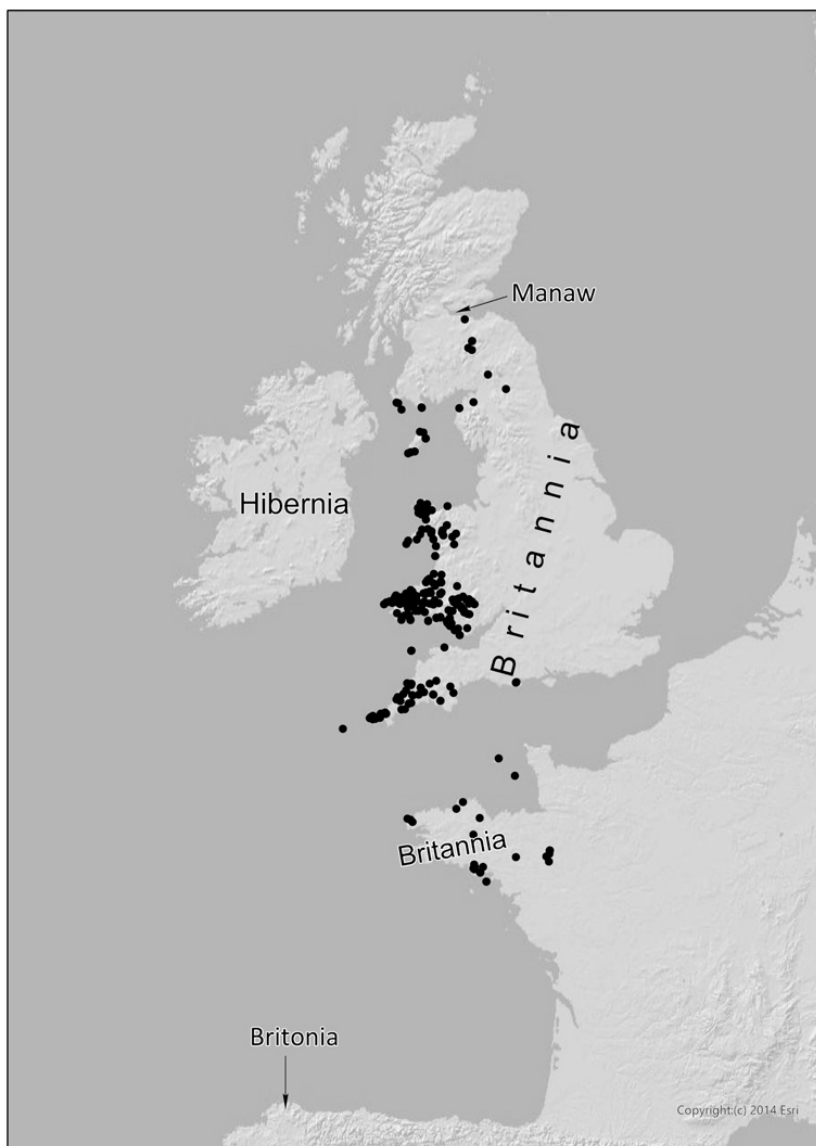
<i>HB</i>	<i>Historia Brittonum</i> , ed. E. Faral, <i>La légende arthurienne, études et documents</i> , 3 vols. (Paris: H. Champion, 1929), vol. III, pp. 1–62; transl. J. Morris, <i>Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals</i> (London: Phillimore, 1980)
<i>HRB</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i> , ed. and transl. M. D. Reeve and N. Wright, <i>Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum [Historia Regum Britanniae]</i> (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007)
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>JML</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval Latin</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LBS</i>	S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, <i>The Lives of the British Saints. The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and such Irish Saints as have Dedications in Britain</i> , 4 vols. (London: Clark for the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1907–13)
<i>LELM</i>	<i>Liber ex lege Moysi</i> , ed. S. Meeder, ‘The <i>Liber ex lege Moysi</i> : Notes and Text’, <i>JML</i> 19 (2009), 173–218
<i>LHD</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>Libri Historiarum Decem</i> , ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, <i>MGH SS RM I.1</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> edn (Hanover: Hahn, 1951); transl. L. Thorpe, <i>Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks</i> (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974)
<i>LL</i>	<i>Liber Landavensis</i> , ed. J. G. Evans and J. Rhys, <i>The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv Reproduced from the Gwysaney Manuscript</i> (Oxford: subscription only, 1893; repr. Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1979)
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
<i>MGH AA</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores antiquissimi</i>
<i>MGH Epp. Sel.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae selectae</i>

<i>MGH SS RG</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum rerum Germanicarum</i>
<i>MGH SS RG in us. schol. s. e.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i>
<i>MGH SS RM</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum</i>
<i>MSHAB</i>	<i>Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique de Bretagne</i>
<i>MWG</i>	B. Guy, <i>Medieval Welsh Genealogy: An Introduction and Textual Study</i> (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020)
<i>NMS</i>	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PHCC</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium</i>
<i>PL</i>	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae [latinae] cursus completus</i> , 221 vols. (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1844–64)
<i>PUR</i>	Presses universitaires de Rennes
<i>RC</i>	<i>Revue celtique</i>
<i>SB</i>	Stadsbibliotheek
<i>SC</i>	<i>Studia Celtica</i>
<i>THSC</i>	<i>Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion</i>
<i>UP</i>	University Press
<i>VM</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>Vita Merlini</i> , ed. and transl. B. Clarke, <i>Life of Merlin. Vita Merlini</i> (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973)
<i>VSΒ</i>	A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), <i>Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae</i> (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1944)
<i>WAB</i>	T. M. Charles-Edwards, <i>Wales and the Britons 350–1064</i> (Oxford University Press, 2013)
<i>WCD</i>	P. C. Bartrum, <i>A Welsh Classical Dictionary: People in History and Legend up to about A.D. 1000</i> (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1993)

### **Geographical Abbreviations**

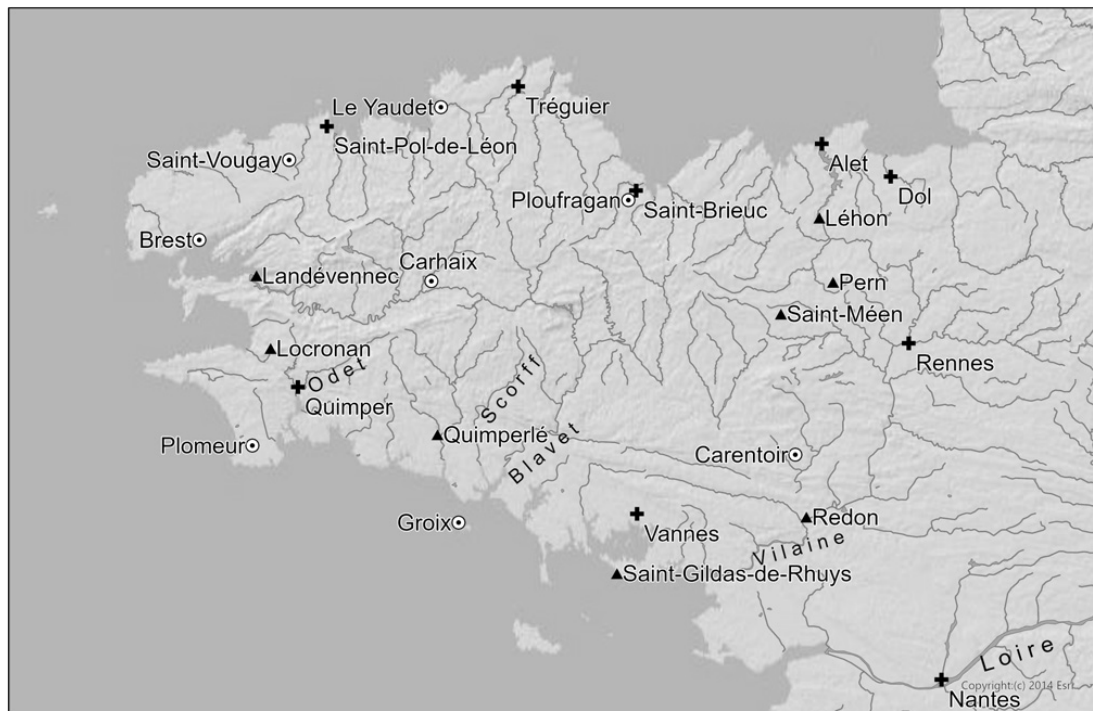
Brych.	Brycheiniog (Brecknockshire)
CA	Côtes-d'Armor
Caerf.	Caerfyrddin (Carmarthenshire)
Caern.	Caernarfon (Caernarvonshire)
Cer.	Ceredigion (Cardiganshire)
Dinb.	Dinbych (Denbighshire)
F	Finistère
Ffl.	Fflint (Flintshire)
IV	Ille-et-Vilaine
LA	Loire-Atlantique
M	Morbihan
Maesd.	Maesyfed (Radnorshire)
Meir.	Meirionnydd (Merioneth)
Môn	Môn (Anglesey)
Morg.	Morgannwg (Glamorgan)
Myn.	Mynwy (Monmouthshire)
Penf.	Penfro (Pembrokeshire)
Tfn.	Trefaldwyn (Montgomeryshire)





● Inscribed stones typical of the Brittonic world

Map 0.1 Brittany in Atlantic Europe (mid-sixth century)



- ✚ Diocesan centres
- ▲ Monasteries
- Other places

Map 0.2 General map of Brittany (places)

# Introduction

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## History

### *The Question*

In Brest, at the far end of Brittany, on winter mornings, people go to work in the pitch dark. They keep the same time as Paris and Berlin, but their city is further west than most of Britain, where the clocks are set an hour earlier. It is a concrete illustration of the uneasy way in which Brittany, a long, low, folded peninsula of granite and slate, about the same size as Wales, fits into the centralised, Continental power that is modern France.<sup>1</sup>

It is 592 km to Brest from Paris, France's capital; for Parisians the capital cities of Belgium, the Netherlands and England are considerably closer. To the modern urban French and British holidaymaker, Brittany, with its spectacular indented coastline and mild maritime climate, is an attractive destination, laced with colourful Celtic folklore and spirituality. Before the twentieth century, the stereotype was different. As Maryon McDonald remarks tartly, 'whatever France has seen, or wished to see, in its provinces, Brittany has been felt to have more of it'.<sup>2</sup> These perceived qualities include physical remoteness; a population more scattered and more predominantly rural than the average; and conservative social attitudes, including an often-caricatured Catholic piety, combined with a tendency to be in revolt, usually in favour of an older cause against a newer one. Bretons took the Catholic side in the Wars of Religion (1562–98), rebelled against central fiscal impositions in the *Révolte du papier timbré* in 1675, and fought for the monarchy

<sup>1</sup> Clear introductions to the physical geography of Brittany may be found in Galliou and Jones, *The Bretons*, 5–7; W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 29–35. The best general introduction to the history of Brittany in English is Galliou and Jones, *The Bretons* (prehistory to 1532); in French, Cornette, *Histoire*.

<sup>2</sup> McDonald, *We Are Not French!*, 4.

against the Republic in 1792–1800.<sup>3</sup> Some historians even trace this tendency as far back as the *Bacaudae*, western Gaulish rebels against the Roman state, in late antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

However, the difficulty with Brittany was not merely its perceived backwardness and resistance to centrally imposed ‘progress’: its difference went deeper. Linguistically, Brittany belongs less to France than to the western Insular world. Breton, a ‘P’-Celtic language, is closely related to Cornish and Welsh, and more distantly to ‘Q’-Celtic Irish, Scottish and Manx Gaelic, all these being relicts of the Celtic languages that in the pre-Roman Iron Age were spoken across Europe, until they were replaced by Latin and its descendants (including French) in the lands of the Western Roman Empire, and Germanic and Slavonic languages elsewhere. By the central Middle Ages Brittany’s ruling class was French-speaking, but in western Brittany Breton remained the majority first language into the twentieth century. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Paris government, convinced that inability to speak French was an obstacle to citizenship, attempted to suppress Breton; ironically, the language survived these efforts but is now threatened by the homogenising effects of the mass media and globalisation, even as official weight is thrown behind its preservation.

Breton as a first language may be under threat, but for a millennium and a half it has been the most inescapable evidence for the connection between Brittany and western Britain. For much of prehistory, the Breton peninsula was a cultural highway between mainland Europe and the Atlantic archipelago, but the establishment of an Insular Celtic language in the peninsula was the product of a particular historical moment.<sup>5</sup> The flux that accompanied the end of the Western Roman Empire between AD 400 and 600 gave rise to Brittany, in a process as obscure as it is tantalizing to the historian. In the middle of the fifth century the lights went down, so to speak, on a disintegrating north-western sector of the Empire. When they went up again – briefly – a century later, the westernmost part of what had been the province of Gaul had a new language, a new name and a new identity: *Britannia*, later *Britannia Minor*. Even as ‘English’ language and identity replaced Brittonic in Britain’s lowland zone, and in Gaul the Frankish monarchy set out on its path as the most effective of Rome’s heirs, a large area of Gaul had been relabelled as ‘Britain’: a designation it has kept ever since, even though politically it has usually (and since 1532 definitively)

<sup>3</sup> On these events, see Cornette, *Histoire*, I.469–520, 603–24, II.145–90; Collins, *Classes*, 259–70.

<sup>4</sup> Drinkwater, ‘The Bacaudae’, 215–6.

<sup>5</sup> Cunliffe, ‘Facing the Ocean’; M. Jones, ‘Brittany and Wales’.

been aligned with its French neighbours.<sup>6</sup> The migration from Britain that must have caused this change was not confined to Brittany. Groups of Britons, who have been termed ‘Britons of the dispersal’, were recognisable in various parts of Gaul in late Roman and post-Roman times; and a British colony in north-western Spain had a bishop of its own until the early eighth century.<sup>7</sup> These migrant groups, however, did not maintain their ‘Britishness’ in the long term: the Bretons did.

This book is about the medieval connection between Brittany and the islands of Britain and Ireland – how it may have been created, how it was kept in being and how it was explained between the fall of Rome and the zenith of the Middle Ages. The authors have not set out to write a comprehensive history of Brittany and the Bretons over this period, or a comparative history of politics and society in Brittany and in its ‘parent’ societies of western Britain. The materials for such a history are too uneven, and the basis for comparison too insecure. While some periods – especially the first three quarters of the ninth century – are well recorded in Brittany, in others it is impossible to trace even a basic framework of events. However, the cross-Channel connection is a recurring theme that links these disparate periods. By focusing on the connection itself, its successive renewals, and the resulting changes in Bretons’ understanding of their own past, some additional light may be shed on the societies that were thus connected.

The formation of Brittany holds particular interest because it blurs the grand narrative of the ‘end of the Roman empire’. The story of early medieval Europe is that of kingdoms, ruled by barbarian dynasties, which divided the Empire’s spoils. The successor-kingdoms took on the names and identities of incoming, mostly Germanic-speaking peoples: Franks, Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, Angles, Saxons and others.<sup>8</sup> The formation of these peoples, with their ability to subsume disparate elements, including their much more numerous hosts, the Roman provincials – a process labelled ethnogenesis – has been the object of intense study among a generation of historians.<sup>9</sup> But in Britain the inhabitants of

<sup>6</sup> For a brief account of the events surrounding the 1532 union of Brittany with France, see Galliou and Jones, *The Bretons*, 247–52.

<sup>7</sup> *WAB*, 57–9; Young, ‘The Bishops’, and references.

<sup>8</sup> For this process, see for instance Anton, ‘Antike Großländer’.

<sup>9</sup> The understanding that early medieval ethnic identity was flexible and constructed, not biologically or culturally inherited and immutable, is a lasting contribution of Reinhard Wenskus and subsequently the ‘Vienna school’ of post-Roman studies represented by Herwig Wolfram and Walter Pohl, although the early theory that a *Traditionskern* (a core of oral tradition preserved by leading families) was fundamental to such construction has been criticised. See, for example, Pohl, ‘Ethnicity’ and Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Distinction’.

a former Roman province, the *Brittones*, preserved their own name; and in Brittany this people made territorial gains, founding an extensive new ethnic and (eventually) political unit, something that elsewhere in Europe was achieved only by invading barbarian armies.<sup>10</sup> Is the idea of ethnogenesis applicable to the Britons?<sup>11</sup> They certainly underwent great changes in political organisation and in self-perception in the immediate post-Roman centuries – not least under the influence of their sixth-century historian, Gildas, the earliest post-Roman scholar to give a formerly Roman people a dedicated history of its own.<sup>12</sup> To an extent, this transformed and long-lasting sense of Britishness involved Britons being redefined as barbarians instead of Romans.<sup>13</sup> And in Brittany, ‘Britishness’ subsumed the Gallo-Roman host population. This was ethnogenesis of a kind. Were the Gallo-Roman inhabitants of Brittany persuaded to ‘become British’ by the success or prestige of a non-Roman, British identity, introduced by British immigrants?<sup>14</sup> Did the incoming Britons, like the Franks or the Goths, present themselves as a military elite with a noble past, able to provide the leadership in which Rome’s emperors had failed?<sup>15</sup> Or did they prevail by some other dynamic? We are left guessing, since there are no contemporary accounts of the formation of Brittany. Gildas did not mention it, although it must have been taking recognisable shape while he was writing of the ‘Ruin of Britain’. Not until the ninth century do we find historians trying to explain, in long retrospect, how the Bretons had got there. This example of the transformation of part of the Roman world by migrants who were themselves originally Roman remains obscure. We have no clear answers even to the most basic questions about the British migrants to Brittany: why, when, how, how many, or from what parts of Britain they came.<sup>16</sup>

The reaction of most historians who have dealt with early Brittany since the 1960s has been to normalise it as best they can by suggesting that the migration was an iteration of the long prehistory of communication along the Atlantic coasts of Europe from the Neolithic era onwards.<sup>17</sup> This

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Halsall, ‘Movers and Shakers’; Goffart, ‘The Barbarians in Late Antiquity’; Härke, ‘Archaeologists and Migrations’.

<sup>11</sup> This has been suggested by Woolf, ‘British Ethnogenesis’; the issue is examined in Hustwit, ‘The Britons’, esp. 27–30.

<sup>12</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, ed. and transl. Winterbottom, *Gildas*. On Gildas as historian see for example Dumville, ‘Post-Colonial Gildas’; McKee, ‘Gildas’; Turner, ‘Identity’; Thompson, ‘The History’; Hustwit, ‘The Britons’, 163–211.

<sup>13</sup> Woolf, ‘The Britons’; *WAB*, 231–41. <sup>14</sup> McDonald, *We Are Not French!*, 109.

<sup>15</sup> Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 488–97 and references.

<sup>16</sup> The consensus has tended to be that migrants came from the southern half of Britain and probably from the south-west peninsula and Wales, although Raude, *L’origine, and Kerneis, Les Celtiques*, have argued for a northern origin for all or some of them.

<sup>17</sup> In particular, Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 13–20; Bowen, *Saints, Seaways*, 35–8, 79.



point is certainly worth making but does not sufficiently highlight the exceptional nature of Breton migration in its historical context. Both under the Roman Empire, and again from the seventh century onwards, most of the visible trade and communication in western Europe was across the eastern English Channel and the North Sea and along the Rhine–Rhône axis, not along the Atlantic coast. The rise of the land-based Roman Empire had turned the bulk of Europe’s economic activity away from the Atlantic, and this pattern would persist until the end of the Middle Ages – and indeed until modern times, when the *dorsale européenne* identified by Roger Brunet in 1989, a belt of dense population and urbanism extending from Manchester to Milan, still coincides strikingly with the Rhineland frontier zone of the late Western Roman Empire and the Trier–Milan imperial axis created by Diocletian.<sup>18</sup> Only between the late fifth and seventh centuries did the Atlantic trade-routes temporarily regain importance.<sup>19</sup> The revitalised connection between Brittany and the Atlantic archipelago in the early Middle Ages took place on the blind side of the ‘main’ course of European events. It was made possible by a temporary and radical ‘de-centring’ of western Europe during a century or more of extreme political volatility.<sup>20</sup> It involved little archaeologically visible exchange, and is seen only in intangible aspects of culture like language, place-names and religious cults, yet in these respects the results were permanent.

It is partly in order to emphasise this process of ‘de-centring’ that we have chosen to refer to ‘the Atlantic Archipelago’ in our title, rather than ‘the British Isles’ or ‘the Insular world’.<sup>21</sup> The intention is to avoid thinking of these islands as necessarily either a unified culture-zone over against the Continent, or a stable system in which cultural and political initiatives diffused predictably from south-east to north-west, from the Continent to the British lowlands, then to the highland zone and Ireland.<sup>22</sup> In the centuries following the end of the Roman Empire, no such pattern was evident. When the Roman frontiers that had artificially divided the islands for centuries were breached, movements took place in any and all directions. The Irish Sea became a highway: incomers from Ireland wrought far-reaching changes in western Britain and the Irish were to be notable cultural protagonists both in Britain and on the

<sup>18</sup> Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 365; Faludi, ‘The “Blue Banana” Revisited’, 20–22 and references (accessed 29 May 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 13–17.

<sup>21</sup> As first suggested by J. G. A. Pocock, ‘British History’, 29.

<sup>22</sup> For the inadequacies of such a ‘core/periphery’ model see Lampitt, ‘Networking the March’, 8–13 (accessed 27 May 2020).

Continent until the ninth century at least. While the ‘Picts’ built kingdoms in the north on recycled Roman silver, eastern Britain was reconfigured by groups including invaders and migrants from across the North Sea.<sup>23</sup> Barely had these changes bedded down when another group of invaders, the Vikings, arrived from the further north. Seen from this direction, the multiplicity of islands in the archipelago took on more importance, the northern and western isles not vanishing into oceanic remoteness but acting as strategic stepping stones to the larger islands of the south.<sup>24</sup> The isles were, at least temporarily, a true archipelago, a polycentric waterworld. Into this context fits migration from Britain to Brittany and the long-standing contacts it established. We aim to understand the extent to which Brittany both did and did not belong to this world.

It has been tempting for historians to draw analogies between Brittany and those other western peninsulas, Wales and Cornwall, but in many ways its geopolitical situation was very different. A clue to how it was perceived is found in sources which describe it explicitly as a refuge.<sup>25</sup> The Insular Celtic peoples were caught in the political maelstrom of the post-Roman Atlantic Archipelago, while Brittany was slightly but crucially removed from it. Instead of almost continuous aggression from neighbouring kingdoms, Brittany endured only occasional interference and long periods of indifference from its Frankish neighbour.<sup>26</sup> This may partly explain why in some respects early medieval Brittany seems just as different from its ‘parent’ societies in Celtic Britain as from England or Francia. The lack of archaeological evidence for a ruling elite or a wealthy church-establishment, and the unusual weakness of structures of lordship seen in ninth-century land documents; comparative slowness in developing a sense of ethnic identity; all this suggests an absence of the pressures and conflicts that shaped what we think of as a typical early medieval society.<sup>27</sup>

However, the unique situation of Brittany, equidistant from two worlds, ended with its capture into the Continental orbit, by the Carolingian rulers’ creation and patronage of a succession of rulers of Brittany in the ninth century. The relationship was interrupted by the Viking Age, during which Brittany again became an extension of the Insular world, but this was an intense but brief crisis which ended in

<sup>23</sup> Hunter, ‘Beyond the Edge’, 38; Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, 40–43 and map 8.

<sup>24</sup> For an overview see Hadley, ‘Viking Raids’.

<sup>25</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.1–2, ed. De Smedt, 174–7; *HRB*, VI.92, XI.186, XI.190, XI.193–6, XI.203–4, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 114–5, 258–9, 262–9, 276–9.

<sup>26</sup> *WAB*, 72; Brett, ‘In the Margins’.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 23–31, 119; see [Chapter 1](#).

a quick adjustment to the new political norms of 'feudal' France.<sup>28</sup> The fragmentation of the Frankish kingdoms allowed Brittany to engage with its immediate neighbours (Normandy, Maine, Anjou) on (rather) more equal terms than before and thus, for the first time since the fall of Rome, to develop a visible secular elite culture, French rather than British. By contrast, in the Atlantic Archipelago the Viking Age saw some rapprochement between English and Britons, but its legacy was division: between England, politically consolidated and looking towards the Continent, and the Irish Sea zone, including Wales, occupied by unstable polities which faced north and west, where political power was supported by plunder and slave-raiding.<sup>29</sup> The Continent ultimately made its political move into England in the shape of the Norman Conquest, in which Bretons took part on the Norman side, bringing the wheel full circle by coming as colonists to the island from which their remote predecessors had set out. For the next century and a half the dynastic empires of the Norman and Plantagenet kings provided a setting in which the links between Bretons and Insular Britons could be renewed and re-mythologised, but this could not disguise the fact that the Bretons were now on the Continental side of the divide. In 1203 the decision of the Breton nobility to transfer their homage from King John of England to King Philip Augustus of France made this orientation explicit.

Yet despite its political separation from Britain, Brittany, though not 'in' the Atlantic Archipelago, was 'of' it in terms of language and written culture, aspects of religious practice, landscape and settlement, and much else. All this becomes evident in source-material dating from the ninth century onwards, when Brittany was already beginning the process of assimilation into the Carolingian, then French worlds. The period of Breton history that must have been the most Insular is the period about which least is known. Nevertheless, the British origin of the Bretons was continuously asserted in the Middle Ages, and must have seemed an inescapable fact. Was it told as a stereotyped historical myth founded on a single distant episode? Or was it rather the sign of an ongoing relationship that was the more interesting in that it was *not* reinforced by obvious political or economic imperatives – partaking instead of the nature of a 'network', a new area of interest for medievalists and social

<sup>28</sup> See [Chapter 5](#). The term 'feudal' is much disputed, but still serves as a convenient shorthand for features of French society in the central Middle Ages such as political decentralisation, the emergence of lordships based on castles, and the self-definition of a knightly class. For a summary of the 'feudalism' debate, see Innes, *State and Society*, 242.

<sup>29</sup> Etchingam, 'North Wales'; Frame, *The Political Development*, 7–19; R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire*; Gillingham, 'The Beginnings'.

scientists? As Jonathan Shepard writes, ‘the essence of networks involving humans is that they are voluntary’.<sup>30</sup>

### *Explanations*

Explanations of the Insular origin of Bretons have taken various forms from the ninth century onwards. These have always walked a tightrope between contradictory priorities: between normalising the Bretons in the eyes of their Christian European neighbours, and insisting on their separateness and cohesion as a people; between celebrating their Insular origins, and distancing them from the more disreputable historical connotations of ‘Britishness’. Even the earliest origin-stories represent rationalisations and, at best, highly partial selections from a complex reality. If modern historians have attempted to smooth over the oddities of the formation of Brittany, and to see it in terms of well-worn paradigms derived from elsewhere in Europe, this is arguably a tradition that goes back to the very earliest writers on Breton origins, in the ninth century, who were already intensely aware of how ‘civilised’ nations interpreted their national origins, and who may well have deliberately ‘forgotten’ untidier local stories in favour of ones with wider appeal.

Throughout Europe, from the early Middle Ages to the early modern period, the agency of a symbolic ancestor-figure was the preferred explanation for national origins. The Lives of a number of founding saints of Breton churches depicted their heroes, individually, as following divine callings to travel from Britain (mostly south Wales) to Brittany. The Welsh historian who compiled the text known as *Historia Brittonum* in 829 or 830 credited the settlement of Brittany to the British soldiers of the Roman emperor ‘Maximianus’, by which he seems to have meant Magnus Maximus, emperor of Britain, Gaul and Spain from 383 to 388, who became ‘a personified gateway to post-Roman legitimacy’ in medieval Welsh learned tradition.<sup>31</sup> In tenth-century Wales, a prophetic poem, *Armes Prydein*, was composed which introduced a mysterious *Cynan* as the ancestral representative of the Bretons, part of a British world that stretched, in the poet’s view, ‘from *Manaw* to *Llydaw*’ – from the isthmus of Scotland to Brittany.<sup>32</sup> Around the millennium, in Brittany itself, a figure called Riwal apparently from south-west Britain was credited with being the founder of Brittany and dated to the early sixth century; but the combination of Maximianus with *Cynan* (*Conan* in Breton and Latin)

<sup>30</sup> Shepard, ‘Networks’, 116. <sup>31</sup> *HB*, 27, ed. Faral, 20–1; Guy, ‘Constantine’, 384.

<sup>32</sup> Dumville, ‘Brittany’, 153; *WAB*, 3.

proved more attractive. It was elaborated by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his brilliantly successful *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain), published in 1137 or 1138.<sup>33</sup>

Geoffrey created a panoramic pre- and post-Roman British past, partly invented and partly based on Welsh sources. He claimed that in the fourth century, after the reign of the Emperor Constantine, Maximianus, a Roman senator, invaded Gaul with the help of a Briton, Conan Meriadocus, who established himself as ruler of a new British kingdom and became the ancestor of Arthur and other great kings. Geoffrey's flattering depiction of the Bretons as the heirs to the ancestral British character (uncannily similar to Norman chivalry), and the Welsh as deviants from it, was almost the reverse of the truth. Unsurprisingly, however, his version became canonical for the dukes and leading nobles of later medieval Brittany; it also resonated in vernacular tales and pseudo-history in Wales for the remainder of the Middle Ages, in which, even now, historians search for fragments of 'genuine' tradition. The mythology of Brittany as a refuge where the noblest traditions of the Britons could continue, and an idyllic, other-worldly setting for courtly literature, was developed, while in historic fact Brittany was increasingly integrated into the language, culture and society of northern France.<sup>34</sup>

By the late Middle Ages, after the traumatic conquest of Wales by the English in 1282–1283, there was no longer any living Insular British polity with which to link the Bretons, nor any particular commonalty of interest between the Bretons and the Welsh, now English subjects.<sup>35</sup> The continuing relevance – and contentiousness – of Geoffrey's pseudo-history was chiefly that its acceptance would give Bretons an older claim to rule on French soil than the French crown itself. For the late fourteenth-century author of the *Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc*, the first connected history to be written in and specifically on Brittany, the only contemporary Insular people to matter were the detested English: even so, he based his account of Breton origins on Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>36</sup> So did Pierre Le Baud in his *Histoire de Bretagne*, written in the late fifteenth century under the patronage of Duchess Anne of Brittany, and Alain Bouchard in the *Grandes Chroniques de Bretagne*, published in

<sup>33</sup> *HRB*, ed. and transl. Reeves and Wright; for concise introduction and bibliography, see Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*.

<sup>34</sup> Larrington, 'Brittany in Middle English'. <sup>35</sup> M. Jones, 'Brittany and Wales', 40–9.

<sup>36</sup> Paris BnF Lat. 6003 and 8899, partly published in Le Duc and Sterckx (eds.), *Chronicon Briocense*; for authorship, see M. Jones, 'Memory, Invention' (accessed 20 March 2018). For Breton 'national' historiography in the later Middle Ages, see Kerhervé, 'Aux origines'.

1514.<sup>37</sup> Controversy raged as the French monarchy tightened its grasp on Brittany: rival Breton and French jurists passionately upheld and as trenchantly attacked the ‘Conan Meriadoc’ story.<sup>38</sup> A new scholarly approach was offered by the Benedictine Congregation of St Maur: the Maurist Dom Guy-Alexis Lobineau (1707) was supported both by the French crown and the Estates of Brittany in writing his *Histoire de Bretagne*, but neither side was pleased when the author upheld the priority of Breton over Frankish settlement in France, while rejecting the historicity of Conan Meriadoc and his royal successors.<sup>39</sup>

With the advent of the ‘scientific history’ pioneered by the Maurists, it seemed that Geoffrey’s account of the origin of Brittany would be consigned to the realm of fiction. But in the same year that Lobineau published his *Histoire*, there appeared Edward Lhuyd’s *Archaeologia Britannica*, the first philological demonstration of the interrelatedness of the Celtic languages. A whole new scholarly underpinning was now available for the notion of Brittany’s Insular origins. Yet this resource was double-edged. The eighteenth-century discovery of the language-groups of Europe eventually fed ethnic nationalism and a belief in unchanging ‘racial’ essences.<sup>40</sup> The agent of nation-building was no longer thought of as the symbolic royal ancestor but the ‘race’ or ‘people’ with its enduring character. In the next century the Romantic movement fostered a mythology of the ‘Celts’, ‘poetic visionaries . . . in touch with the Otherworld and the world of Nature’, qualities that the nineteenth-century urban and secularised centres of Europe felt they had lost.<sup>41</sup> The patriotic Breton historian Arthur de la Borderie made the ‘clan-based’ Breton people the protagonist of his narrative.<sup>42</sup> Joseph Loth, the author of pioneering studies of early Breton glosses and place-names, responded to La Borderie’s work with the aim of introducing more ‘linguistic rigour’ into the study of British settlement in Brittany. But he, too, fell victim to

<sup>37</sup> Le Baud’s work is extant in two versions: the 1480 version in Paris, BnF Fr. 8266, ed. De la Lande de Calan, *Croniques et ystoires*, and a revision of 1505, London BL Harley 4371, ed. C. d’Hozier, *Histoire de Bretagne* (Paris, 1638). For discussion and references, see W. Davies, ‘Franks and Bretons’, 307–9 and note 24.

<sup>38</sup> D’Argentré, *Histoire de Bretagne*; Loth, *L’émigration*, vii–viii.

<sup>39</sup> Lobineau, *Histoire de Bretagne*, I.6–7; Quéniart, ‘Les mauristes’; W. Davies, ‘Franks and Bretons’, 317.

<sup>40</sup> Wood, *The Modern Origins*, 104–12 and references.

<sup>41</sup> Sims-Williams, ‘The Visionary Celt’, 71–6; Sims-Williams, ‘Celtomania’, 8, citing particularly Ernest Renan, in his *Poésie des races celtiques*, and Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, as the founders of this perception.

<sup>42</sup> La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, I.227, II.441–63. For the lasting influence of La Borderie on Breton historiography, see Guillotel, ‘Le poids historiographique’. Noël-Yves Tonnerre described his historical writing as ‘patriotic, romantic and sometimes intemperate’ (*patriotique, romantique et parfois passionnée*): Tonnerre, *Naissance de la Bretagne*, 76, note 2.



earlier preoccupations when he described early Breton society on the basis of the thirteenth-century Welsh laws and the ethnographic writings of Gerald of Wales (d. 1223).<sup>43</sup>

Loth's career illustrates how linguistic scholarship could be captured by the Romantic agenda. The early twentieth century saw a tussle over Breton history between Romantics and rationalists, such as the French historians Ferdinand Lot and Robert Latouche, who sought historical truth in a rigorous insistence on using nothing but contemporary and 'reliable' source-material. This resulted in them dismissing as worthless most of the sources dealing with the origin of Brittany. In doing so, they ultimately removed themselves from the field, followed by most mainstream historians of France and Britain.<sup>44</sup> If Brittany has so little usable source-material, many historians have inferred, what happened there must have been of marginal importance to European history in general. As a result, Brittany barely figures in the recent spate of historical writing which has revised our ideas about the transformation of the Roman world into early medieval Europe. At the other end of the period covered by this book, the growth of scholarly interest in the 'colonial' relationship of the twelfth-century Anglo-French world with its Celtic and Scandinavian peripheries tends to leave Brittany awkwardly to one side, unmentioned or barely mentioned either in groundbreaking works such as R. R. Davies's *The First English Empire*, John Gillingham's *The English in the Twelfth Century* and Robert Bartlett's *The Making of Europe*, or in textbooks like Donald Matthew's *Britain and the Continent 1000–1300*.<sup>45</sup> Sources and questions that have been particularly dear to the hearts of specialists on Brittany are discussed in more general histories without any awareness of their supposed Breton dimension.<sup>46</sup>

In effect, for much of the twentieth century, the Romantic agenda was left in possession of Brittany. Work on Breton origins was left to scholars of language and literature for whom Brittany was defined by its 'Celtic' character: this included participating in the 'Celtic' oral tradition, one which was thought to be especially pure, archaic and immutable.<sup>47</sup> On

<sup>43</sup> Loth, *L'émigration*, xxi, 103–31.

<sup>44</sup> Lot, *Mélanges*, 97 (on saints' lives); Latouche, *Mélanges*, 1–2; Fawtier, *La Vie de saint Samson*, 74–8. Compare the minimalist account of the settlement of Brittany in Lot, *La Gaule*, 408–10.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew, *Britain and the Continent*, 5, 7, 108, 133, 144, 187, and especially 128–9 where the author starts, but does not finish, the story of Arthur of Brittany (nephew of King John).

<sup>46</sup> For instance the episode of the British 'king' Riothamus on the Loire in the 460s by Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 276–7, or the testimony of Procopius on Frankish relations with the Insular world in the 550s, Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 176, and 'The Channel'.

<sup>47</sup> Sims-Williams, 'The Uses', 15–16.

this premise, late medieval literary sources could be rehabilitated as repositories of possibly factual information about the founding of Brittany. N. K. Chadwick, after years of work on the oral literatures of Europe, wrote in her study of early Brittany in the 1960s: 'We cannot fairly ignore Geoffrey of Monmouth, who had close contacts with both Breton and Welsh tradition . . . we have reason to believe that . . . Geoffrey was in possession of some oral traditions not otherwise recorded'.<sup>48</sup> Her approach was built upon by Léon Fleuriot, primarily a philologist of Old Breton, who argued that there was a factual basis to the information on Breton origins contained in *Historia Brittonum*, saints' Lives and the Welsh Triads and genealogies.<sup>49</sup> Since the 1980s, this tendency has been counterbalanced by a large amount of high-quality, specialised scholarship on various periods and aspects of Breton history, without which it would have been impossible to write this book.<sup>50</sup> However, well into the twenty-first century, a strand of Breton historiography has continued, as David Dumville puts it, 'flirting . . . with Galfridianism',<sup>51</sup> and attempting to reconstruct a unitary secular, aristocratic narrative of the foundation of Brittany from the 'confused . . . fragments' of hagiography and genealogy.<sup>52</sup>

There are two basic problems with this approach. One is overconfidence in the relevance of oral tradition to the reconstruction of historical events. The proven ability of orally trained specialists to transmit poetry,

<sup>48</sup> Chadwick and Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*; Chadwick, 'The Colonization of Brittany', 258–9.

<sup>49</sup> Fleuriot, 'Sur quatre textes'; Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 247–51, 269–86; Le Duc, 'L'Historia Britannica'; Le Duc, 'La date'.

<sup>50</sup> For the Carolingian period, see particularly Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*; W. Davies, *Small Worlds*; Smith, *Province and Empire*. For the Viking Age, see Price, 'Viking Brittany' and Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*. For the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see especially Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', Tonnerre, *Naissance*, Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, and Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*. For hagiography and saints' cults, see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, Merdrignac, *Les saints bretons*, the journal *Britannia Monastica*, and the writings of André-Yves Bourges, many available online at <http://hagiohistoriographiemedievale.blogspot.co.uk>. For studies of the cults of individual saints, see Olson (ed.), *St Samson*; Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult of St Petroc*; Tanguy and Daniel (eds.), *Sur les pas de Paul Aurélien*; and Dilasser (ed.), *Saint-Ronan*. The study of place-names has been greatly advanced by Bernard Tanguy in his dictionaries and various articles. Archaeological contributions have been made by Pierre-Roland Giot, Loïc Langouet, Philippe Guigon, Patrick Galliou, Annie Bardel and recently Françoise Le Boulanger and Isabelle Catteddu. For Breton Latin scholarship, manuscripts and glosses, see the various articles cited in the bibliography by François Kerlouégan, Neil Wright, David Dumville, Pierre-Yves Lambert, Louis Lemoine, Jean-Luc Deuffic and recently Dominique Barbet-Massin, Immo Warntjes and Jacopo Bisagni. More references will be given in the course of the book.

<sup>51</sup> That is, with a belief in the historicity of the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth: Dumville, '“Celtic” Visions', 125.

<sup>52</sup> DUBALA, esp. 71–2, 123–4.

genealogy and other genres of literature accurately in mnemonic forms has been confused with the ability and will to transmit, over several centuries, memories of events that would meet a modern historian's requirements of explanatory significance as well as factual accuracy. The other problem is the tendency to seek for 'oral tradition' in texts which are in reality literary in inspiration and in content. Early medieval societies (including those of Celtic Britain) were never purely oral: literate modes of thought were considered authoritative, so that orally cultivated memories of the past were liable to be influenced, if not supplanted, by learned, book-based theories, even when these were manifestly artificial.<sup>53</sup> Early medieval accounts of the origins of peoples owed more to biblical and classical models than they did to genuine oral traditions: this is true of *Historia Brittonum* and even more so of Geoffrey's *History*.<sup>54</sup> Finally, written as well as oral 'memory' was determined by contemporary meaningfulness rather than by literal fact.<sup>55</sup> When Chadwick, Fleuriot and their followers rationalise the story of 'Maximianus' as referring to a real deployment of federate British troops in late Roman Gaul, they almost certainly commit the double error of mistaking a scholarly reconstruction for an orally transmitted memory, and a symbolic account for a literal one. And of course a symbolic account of this kind, which encapsulates a whole historical process in a single figure or dynasty or event, whether factually 'true' or 'false' can never answer the kind of questions that a historian interested in such processes would like to ask.<sup>56</sup>

A way exists out of the impasse between uncritical acceptance of literary sources from the past as factually 'true', and their total rejection as 'false'. In the last generation, historians of early medieval England and France have moved to a more nuanced view of the production, copying and rewriting of histories and records as an ongoing process of creation and editing of social memory, of value for what it reveals about the thought-world of the writers rather than the past events they sought to record.<sup>57</sup> Patrick Geary's research on 'memory and oblivion' in medieval

<sup>53</sup> McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy*; Pryce (ed.), *Literacy*; Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 5. For the effects of 'feedback' of written history into Maori oral traditions see Henige, *The Chronology*, 95–103.

<sup>54</sup> Reynolds, 'Medieval *Origines Gentium*', 375; Plassmann, 'Das Wanderungsmotiv'.

<sup>55</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 46; Henige, *The Chronology*, 27; Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 3–6.

<sup>56</sup> Many of the same problems have been pointed out in relation to reconstructions of the 'ethnogenesis' of early medieval 'Germanic' migratory groups by historians of the 'Vienna School': see the essays collected in Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity*, encapsulated in James Fraser's remark ('From Ancient Scythia', 23) that such reconstructions depend on 'obsolete, often Romantic conceptions of the workings of folk-memory'.

<sup>57</sup> See for instance Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*; Bouchard, *Rewriting Saints*; Brooks, *Anglo-Saxon Myths*; Reimitz, *History*.

France, for instance, has yielded some surprising results: in the twelfth century noble families like the Welfs, whose forebears had been politically powerful in the ninth century, celebrated the exploits of invented ancestors in preference to researching the surviving records of real ones.<sup>58</sup> If this could happen in a region of relatively stable political power, over a long period for which contemporary records survive even today, how much more might it happen in a region of small-scale and fluid political power and poor record survival, like Brittany? To argue that early medieval authors had little room for independent invention because their work would be constantly checked by a tenacious and conservative social memory is to underestimate the ‘cuckoo in the nest’ capacity of newly discovered ‘authoritative’ sources, or inventions, with the power to legitimise or make sense of a contested or confused past.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Geoffrey’s *History* was demonstrably such a ‘cuckoo’, funnelling most subsequent versions of British and Breton history into its attractive gape. We should therefore be prepared to see in earlier versions of Breton history also a process of remaking by which newer, more compelling or authoritative versions of the past might at times supplant or subsume older, perhaps more partial or local ones, without of course succeeding in removing all inconsistencies.

The story of the origin of Brittany as it was built up over the centuries between the fall of Rome and the high Middle Ages has much to reveal about the nature of contact between Brittany and the Atlantic islands. Rather than one primordial episode of migration giving rise to a single shared tradition, we should think in terms of ongoing and/or repeatedly renewed contact, leading to a series of developments in the tradition. At times there is independent and physical evidence for such contact, for instance in manuscripts of the ninth and early tenth centuries which show Irish, Welsh and Breton-language scribes working side by side, or in the reception of Breton manuscripts and relics in tenth-century England. At other times the tradition has to be its own witness. In either case, it is worth attempting to separate the successive treatments of the Breton past and examine their relationship to events contemporary with their production. As Julia M. H. Smith writes, they ‘deserve to be handled ... as strategies to define and distinguish in the context of the moment in which they were penned’.<sup>60</sup> Such ‘history’ may fail to illuminate the events it supposedly records but sheds much light on the events of the period that produced it.

<sup>58</sup> Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 51.

<sup>59</sup> DUBALA, 24; Plassmann, *Origo Gentis*, 21.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, ‘Confronting Identities’, 176; compare also Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*, 208, on Normandy.

The bulk of this book is therefore devoted to a chronological presentation of the evidence for contact between Brittany and the Atlantic archipelago and of the ideas about the Breton past that can be shown to have been put forward by contemporaries during every phase. The first two chapters deal with Brittany in the context of the end of Roman Britain and Gaul and the rise of the Frankish kingdoms, and with the small amount of contemporary evidence available for that period, including archaeology. Subsequent chapters treat the Carolingian period (the ninth and early tenth centuries), the Viking Age and its aftermath (tenth and first half of the eleventh centuries), and the period from the Norman Conquest of 1066 to the end of the Plantagenet ascendancy in Brittany (1158–1203). These periods, especially the ninth century, are much better covered by contemporary records and modern scholarship than the migration period itself, and allow plausible contexts to be constructed for the production of historical ideas. Interspersed with the chronological chapters, separate chapters deal with particular classes of evidence for Brittany's Insular contacts which are easier to examine synchronically: the evidence of manuscripts and the evidence of saints' cults in the widest sense. The evidence of language itself, being a prism through which all the rest must be seen, will be dealt with in the second part of this Introduction.

It will be argued that the evolving nature of Brittany's external relations as well as its internal politics helped to determine the view taken of its history, in Brittany itself and elsewhere. The aim is not to 'disprove' the truth of these medieval ideas of Breton history – an impossible exercise in any case – but, by setting them as clearly as possible in their contemporary context, to make the evolution of the historiographical tradition more transparent and through it to glimpse the social and political realities that lay behind it.

We will find reason to think that in Brittany, phases of remaking of the past were associated with the ebb and flow of relationships between Bretons and the outside world. For the most part, such contact can be shown to have affected only a small, educated elite, but the study of language, names and saints' cults, in particular, offers the possibility of demonstrating contacts at broader social levels. That these existed, and formed a long-lasting undertow to the visible, high-level contacts, can hardly be doubted although their nature can rarely be documented in any detail. The mutual intelligibility of Welsh, Cornish and Breton until the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the continuing close relationship between Breton and Cornish until the demise of the latter, suggests that the kind of intimate contact which starts to emerge in the written record in the late medieval period must have extended far into

the past.<sup>61</sup> In the fifteenth century, ships from Brittany accounted for the majority of foreign traffic at many south-western ports, especially in Cornwall.<sup>62</sup> Sixteenth-century English tax records – the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1524–7 and 1545, and the Military Survey of 1522 – record Bretons, ‘subjects of the king of France’, as a substantial minority of the population in many Cornish parishes and in Exeter. Many were in humble occupations, including young men employed as servants, possibly saving up for marriage.<sup>63</sup> If this was a temporary phenomenon linked to the exceptional prosperity of south-west England in the early sixteenth century, the migrants’ preference for Cornwall nevertheless shows that ancient contacts could be re-activated, helped by the community of language. In an era of oars and sail, the maritime contacts between Brittany, south-west Britain and southern Wales retained some features of the pattern known from prehistoric times.<sup>64</sup> How many more such familiar contacts may underlie our medieval sources, in which even the movements of the clerical elite may be revealed only in obscure jottings in the margins of manuscripts?

A new class of evidence which has the potential to transform our understanding of movement between the Atlantic archipelago and Brittany is genetic data. Nadine Pellen’s research on the incidence of the inherited condition, cystic fibrosis, in Brittany has had some expected and some less expected results.<sup>65</sup> She focuses on three different genetic mutations associated with the disease: F508del, G551D and 1078delT. The first, globally the most common, has a high incidence throughout the coastal areas of the western half of Brittany; the second is particularly concentrated in Léon and the third in Cornouaille. This third, and rarest, mutation is otherwise found only in Wales, corroborating to a startling degree the hagiographical accounts of early medieval movements from Wales to Brittany. The other two, however, have concentrations on the south-eastern coast of Ireland, raising the possibility that migration between Ireland and Brittany, barely recorded historically, has been underestimated. As more genetic information becomes available, we may expect it not so much to provide answers to long-standing historical questions as to reframe those questions and pose altogether new ones.

What is the wider significance of studying Brittany and its Atlantic contacts? Even in a crowded higher education sector in which every scholar hopes to carve out a new and undiscovered field, most studies of early medieval Europe still ‘follow the money’, focusing on regions where

<sup>61</sup> Schrijver, ‘Old British’; Padel, ‘Oral and Literary Culture’, 96.

<sup>62</sup> Fleuriot, ‘Breton et cornique’, 707–8.

<sup>63</sup> Allan, ‘Breton Woodworkers’; [www.englishimmigrants.com](http://www.englishimmigrants.com) (accessed 29 March 2018).

<sup>64</sup> See [Chapter 1](#). <sup>65</sup> Pellen, ‘Origine’ and references.

political power and economic activity was concentrated, not merely for reasons of hindsight (because these regions usually became the centres of successful kingdoms, later the nation states of Europe) but also for the perfectly good reason that the surviving historical sources, too, are concentrated there. It is difficult, and can seem unrewarding, to focus deliberately on relatively poorly evidenced areas where the centripetal forces of church and state ran out of steam. And yet the evidence, handled with sensitivity, is sufficient to give us a glimpse of a different face of early medieval Europe – one that, if we see in Brittany, we may come to recognise in various guises in other ‘peripheral’ regions. In Brittany, relative poverty and political decentralisation did not preclude literacy or the flourishing of local communities and their traditions. Marginality, from the point of view of successful kingdoms and empires, did not mean isolation from cultural currents, and communication over long distances could take place outside power networks and without the obvious spurs of conquest or trade. Freed from the pressure on most early medieval rulers – and the concomitant pressure on their subjects – to recreate Roman rulership without Roman resources, Breton society worked on its own low-key terms. Migration to Brittany apparently allowed some of the British, a people labelled ‘losers’ in early medieval Europe, to become ‘winners’ in a limited way: a reminder of the complex and unforeseeable interplay of migration, the end of empire and the birth of nations, which it is as well to keep in mind at a time when these subjects are as contentious as they have ever been in the past.

## **The Breton Language: Historical Context and Origins**

### *The Linguistic Context*

As mentioned earlier, language is potentially the most objective and the most telling category of evidence for an early medieval migration from Celtic Britain to Brittany. At the same time it presents great difficulties of interpretation and has often been controversial. In the second part of this Introduction, the evolution of historical study of the Brittonic languages, the ways in which they have been used in historical argument in the past and the potential for their use in the future will be passed under review.

Language has always been an important element in Breton identity. In particular, the names of people and of places – anthroponymy and toponymy – have played a large part in defining who is and is not a Breton, and where the boundaries of ‘Breton-ness’ are to be drawn. In the late sixth century and again in the ninth, historical sources stated that the land



beyond the River Vilaine was controlled by the Bretons.<sup>66</sup> Toponymic data first analysed in detail by Joseph Loth between 1863 and 1907 bore out these statements. Loth used the evidence of a common class of Celtic place-names consisting of a proper name or noun with an adjectival ending, *\*-ācon*, Latinised to *-acum* in Roman Gaul.<sup>67</sup> In Romance-speaking northern France, such names evolved endings in *-é*, *-ay* or *-y*, whereas in eastern Brittany the ending was preserved as *-ac*; for instance, *\*Sabiniacum* would give *Sévigné* near Rennes, while in Côtes d'Armor the same name evolved to *Sévignac*.<sup>68</sup> Identifying the point where the two types of name met, Loth traced the famous *ligne Loth* (map I.1), an S-shaped line from Mont-Saint-Michel at the extreme north-east of Brittany to the head of the estuary of the Loire near Donges in the south, as the limit of large-scale Breton-speaking settlement.<sup>69</sup> (The second *ligne Loth*, further west between Saint-Brieuc and Vannes, indicates the limit of the Breton language in the thirteenth century.) The more easterly line coincides closely with the boundary between Breton and Frankish personal names in the ninth-century Redon charters, and the point where toponyms and dedications containing the names of local Breton saints confront regional or universal saints' cults.<sup>70</sup> Scholars have disagreed over the exact significance of the *-ac* place-names, but it is agreed that in the ninth century Breton-speakers predominated (although Romance-speaking enclaves probably survived) west of the *ligne Loth*.<sup>71</sup> The majority of place-names west of this line are Brittonic, and share a number of generic elements with place-names in Cornwall, Wales and northern Britain. Personal names found in documents from before the eleventh century are also overwhelmingly Brittonic and show some overlap with names from Wales and Cornwall.<sup>72</sup> An analysis of the elements

<sup>66</sup> LHD, X.9 (491–3); *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, I.7, ed. Brett, *The Monks of Redon*, 128–9.

<sup>67</sup> See Russell, 'The suffix *-āko-* in Continental Celtic', 139–54; for earlier bibliography relating to the whole of France (and it is important to discuss the Breton aspects of this in the context of what happened elsewhere in France), see pp. 139–40 and 142. Vallerie, 'Le suffixe *-ako-*', is a more recent study which ignores the scholarship on the dates of sound-changes in Brittonic (as set out by Jackson, *Language and History*, 694–9 and recently validated by Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions*, esp. 351–3).

<sup>68</sup> Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 106.

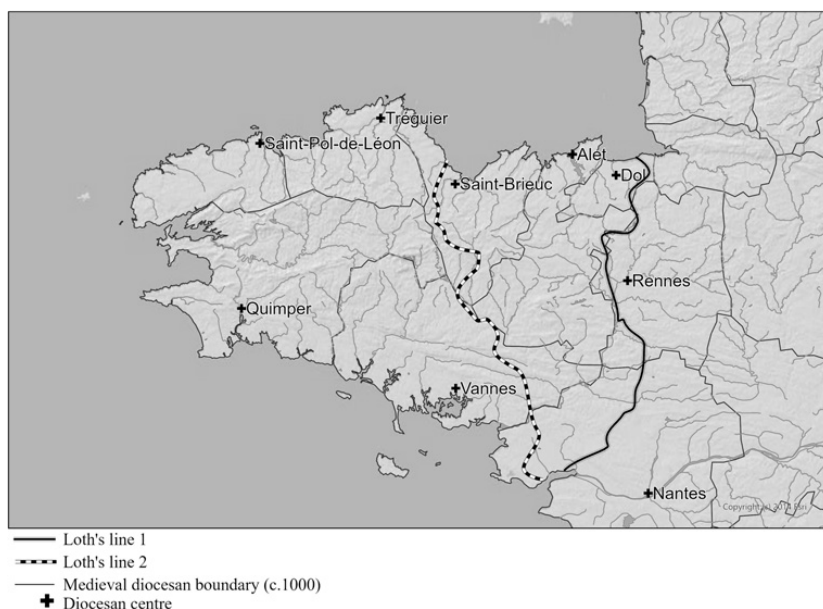
<sup>69</sup> Loth, 'Les langues romane et bretonne', 377; map and concise discussion in Jackson, *A Historical Phonology*, 22–3; see also Tanguy, 'La limite linguistique', 436.

<sup>70</sup> De Courson, *Cartulaire*, 90–4; Tanguy, 'La limite linguistique', 451; Lunven, 'Christianisation', 334–6.

<sup>71</sup> Jackson, *A Historical Phonology*, 21–5; Fleuriot, 'Recherches'.

<sup>72</sup> For ecclesiastical place-name elements see Chapter 6; for the secular place-name elements *\*trev* 'farmstead, estate, farming hamlet', *\*bod* 'dwelling', *\*līs* 'court' and *\*cair* 'fortified site, city', see Padel, 'Generic Place-Name Elements'; for personal names, Russell, 'Facing Different Ways'; Cane, 'Personal Names'.





Map I.1 Language zones in Brittany: the two *Lignes Loth*. The ecclesiastical boundaries are from L. Grigoli and B. Maione-Downing 2013, 'France: Diocese and Archdiocese Boundaries ca. 1000', DARMC Scholarly Data Series, Data Contribution Series # 2013-4. DARMC, Center for Geographic Analysis, Harvard University, Cambridge MA 02138 URL: <https://darmc.harvard.edu> (accessed 19 February 2020). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/NIAWTY>

used to form the earliest Breton personal names has even suggested that the emphasis on warrior characteristics, with parallels in early Welsh poetry, reveals a shared Brittonic literary culture and value-system – although this begs the question of the extent to which the semantic content of names continued to hold meaning at the time when they were given.<sup>73</sup>

Distinctive naming-habits were only the most noticeable aspect of the overall linguistic distinctiveness of the Bretons, which has held out the elusive hope of pinpointing their origins more closely in space and time. For much of the twentieth century the broad outlines of the history of the Breton language seemed relatively clearly understood: a Brittonic Celtic language most closely related to Cornish and slightly more distantly to

<sup>73</sup> German, 'Breton Patronyms', esp. 86–7; Russell, 'Facing Different Ways'.

Welsh, it was brought to the continent by migration (perhaps in several waves) in the fifth to seventh centuries; there was then, as now, some debate as to whether there were any Gaulish-speakers surviving to greet them; Breton then developed as a distinct language (with geographically distinct dialects) to the present day. This narrative is essentially that of Kenneth Jackson, set out in a series of seminal publications in the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>74</sup> Most discussions of medieval Breton history work with some version of this Jacksonian model, but recent work on language contact has emphasised the complexities of the evidence. What follows, then, offers a more modern, and more complicated, view of the broader linguistic context in which the Breton migrations took place.

As happens with all influential work, it took several generations of subsequent scholarship before serious questions began to be asked about Jackson's model. Initially some of the most probing interrogation came not from Celticists but from classicists and linguists working on language contact. The former were particularly interested in the type of Latin spoken in Roman Britain and the immediately succeeding period, while the latter, interested in bilingualism and multilingualism in the pre-modern period, found a ready testing-ground for their theories in the linguistic melting pot of post-Roman Britain where British, Latin and Old English came into contact, with varied outcomes depending on factors such as location, date and the social status of the speakers.<sup>75</sup> To a large extent, the Breton language remained an interested spectator on the sidelines of these debates; but our understanding of the linguistic history and geography of Britain in the fourth and fifth centuries is crucial in helping us think about the linguistic aspects of the migration of British-speakers to Brittany, which, in turn, underpin the broader arguments of the present study. This section, then, starts with Jackson and surveys the debate up to the present before turning to the surviving remains of the Breton language dating from before 1200, the end-date of this book; this cut-off point is important as it effectively restricts the discussion to Old Breton. Many of the striking and distinctive changes in Breton took place later, some at least under the influence of French, but can be set aside for the present discussion.

<sup>74</sup> Jackson, *Language and History*; *A Historical Phonology*.

<sup>75</sup> It may be helpful to clarify the terminology used here: 'British' is used to refer to the Celtic language spoken in Britain during and after the Roman occupation of Britain. The term 'Brittonic languages' is reserved as a group term for the later attested languages of Welsh, Cornish and Breton (together with the remains of Cumbric further north, though this will not trouble us here), while 'Brittonic' by itself (sometimes called 'Common Brittonic') refers to the reconstructed language which lies behind the extant Brittonic languages (note that the spelling 'Brythonic' is used by some scholars in place of 'Brittonic'). For further discussion, see Russell, 'Latin and British', 139.

Jackson's first major foray into Breton came in his monumental *Language and History in Early Britain*. The relative chronology of sound changes he established for the Brittonic languages has generally stood the test of time; notably, Sims-Williams's exhaustive analysis of the phonology of the early Insular inscriptions offers a validation of his findings.<sup>76</sup> Jackson's second important contribution came in the form of his *Historical Phonology of Breton*. This was largely based on Le Roux's work on Breton dialects which offered Jackson a complex and detailed body of data for Breton, the equivalent of which was at that time simply not available for Welsh and Cornish.<sup>77</sup> The upshot was that for several decades work on the Brittonic languages proceeded with a lop-sided framework in which a detailed understanding of Breton phonology was set alongside a less nuanced idea of a monolithic Welsh language; in more recent years, as dialect studies have progressed, a similar level of detail and nuance has gradually been emerging for Welsh and has begun to be applied retrospectively to the earlier stages of the language.<sup>78</sup> But it still remains uncertain at times whether we are comparing like with like. The poor survival of evidence for Cornish has precluded similar progress there.

One area where Jackson's work came in for significant criticism was his treatment of Latin loanwords into the Brittonic languages as a guide to the kind of Latin spoken in Roman and post-Roman Britain. His argument, that the phonology of the loanwords suggested borrowing from high-status Latin, was sharply criticised by Gratwick in the 1980s: this began a reassessment of the evidence that is still ongoing.<sup>79</sup> The evidence is complex and messy but some interesting results have emerged, though the picture very much depends on which model of bilingualism or

<sup>76</sup> For a tabular presentation of this chronology, see Jackson, *Language and History*, 690–9; Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions*, 351–3 (summary).

<sup>77</sup> Le Roux, *Atlas linguistique de la Basse Bretagne*.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, Schrijver, *Studies*; for work on Welsh dialects, see Thomas, *The Linguistic Geography of Wales*; Thomas, *The Welsh Dialect Survey*; and for a useful survey Thomas and Thomas, *Cymraeg, Cymrâg, Cymrêg . . .*. Work on the historical dimension is ongoing but useful starting points are Thomas, 'Middle Welsh Dialects'; Willis, 'Lexical Diffusion'.

<sup>79</sup> Gratwick, '*Latinitas britannica*'; for earlier discussion of Jackson's ideas in this area, see D. Ellis Evans, 'Language Contact'; Smith, 'Vulgar Latin in Roman Britain'. Much of this work was based on collections and discussions of loanwords from Latin in the medieval Celtic languages, such as Lewis, *Yr Elfen Ladin yn yr Iaith Gymraeg*; Haarmann, *Der lateinischen Lehnwortschatz im Kymrischen*; Haarmann, *Der lateinischen Lehnwortschatz im Bretonischen*; McManus, 'A Chronology of the Latin Loan-Words'; McManus, 'On Final Syllables'; cf. also the older collection in Loth, *Les mots latins*; for discussion, see Zimmer, 'Dating the Loanwords'; 'Latin and Welsh'. For responses to Gratwick see, for example, Charles-Edwards, Review of Gratwick '*Latinitas britannica*'; McManus, '*Linguarum diversitas*'; Russell, 'Recent Work in British Latin'; for a sensible recent overview, see Parsons, 'Sabrina In the Thorns', 114–15.

multilingualism is adopted.<sup>80</sup> It is tempting to think that a superstrate/substrate model of bilingualism seems best suited to the scenario of sophisticated, technically superior Romans bringing their language to Britain and linguistically substrate Britons borrowing numerous lexical items from it. To judge from the Latin loanwords in Brittonic languages, that certainly happened, but in accepting this model straightforwardly we are signing up to a very traditional view; even if such a model might make sense for the early centuries of Roman rule, it certainly makes far less sense for the later period. Schrijver, for example, has argued that in the late Roman period Latin became the substrate language in Britain as speakers moved west into the Highland Zone away from the Anglian and Saxon immigrants and started learning British, and this might be the stage for Latin influence in the form of interference with the morphological patterns of the Brittonic languages.<sup>81</sup> Much of the scholarship has revolved around the issue of contact between speakers of British and the Angles and Saxons, and to what extent we can identify British influence on English.<sup>82</sup> This question is of tangential interest for our purposes but cannot be ignored: one explanation for the relative lack of British loanwords in early English is that Latin was being spoken in southern and eastern Britain when English-speakers arrived, a view espoused by Schrijver though partly countered by Parsons.<sup>83</sup>

But why should this matter for historians of Brittany? Migrants from Britain arrived in Gaul speaking a Brittonic language, and we would like to identify where they came from: if the south-eastern parts of Britain were speaking Latin as a first language, then the migrants would presumably have come from further west. But if most of Britain was speaking British as

<sup>80</sup> Russell, 'Latin and British', 114.

<sup>81</sup> For critiques, see Parsons, 'Sabrina In the Thorns'; Russell, 'Latin and British'; Russell, 'An habes linguam Latinam?', 218–24; see also the essays in Laker and Russell, 'Languages of Early Britain'. The morphological aspect of this has been underplayed even though it is central to any argument about Latin as a substrate language in Britain: Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall', 86–7, where there is a section on 'Morphosyntax' which amounts to sixteen lines, notes several lines of enquiry, but pursues none of them. For one of his cited examples, the pluperfect, see Russell, 'Latin and British', 150–2; another case, compound prepositions (not mentioned by Schrijver), is considered at 147–50.

<sup>82</sup> The bibliography is substantial: see, for example, the essays collected in Filppula, Klemola, and Pitkärinen (eds), *The Celtic Roots of English* (especially Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall' and Tristram, 'Attrition of Inflections'); in Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto (eds), *English and Celtic in Contact*; in Filppula and Klemola (eds.), 'Special Issue on Re-evaluating the Celtic Hypothesis'; in Higham (ed.), *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (especially Schrijver, 'What Britons Spoke Around 400 AD', Tristram, 'Why Don't the English Speak Welsh?', and Woolf, 'Apartheid and Economics'); and the four volumes of essays edited by Tristram, *The Celtic Englishes*, and also Tristram (ed.), *The Celtic Languages in Contact*; and for a recent wide-ranging discussion, Schrijver, *Language Contact*.

<sup>83</sup> Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall'; Parsons, 'Sabrina in the Thorns'.

a first language, then it would be less easy to identify their origin. Now almost certainly matters were not as clear-cut as this; for example, it is likely that the migrants came from various places and social classes. The most plausible linguistic scenario in late Roman Britain is a state of more or less stable bilingualism but with varying levels of competences and contexts where Latin or British were spoken depending on location and also allowing for varying degrees of diglossia. But we need not envisage a tidy, simple gradient running from east to west. For example, the evidence of the early Insular inscriptions from Cornwall, Wales and southern Scotland has been used to argue (though not without debate) that Latin was still being spoken there in the sixth century, as the errors in the Latin are best explained as native-speaker errors rather than literate errors arising from writing a dead language.<sup>84</sup> One tantalising idea is that the migrants to Brittany also had Latin as their high-status language and this might explain why an emerging Breton literature seems to have been in Latin rather than Breton. This is an interesting thought but it is difficult to know what to do with it; we have no comparative evidence from Wales and Cornwall for the early period and, despite arguments that some of the early Welsh verse was composed very early indeed, substantial amounts of vernacular Welsh literature only becomes visible in manuscript form in the mid-thirteenth century.

A recent discussion of the Breton migrations by Ben Guy has grappled with the language question.<sup>85</sup> Basing his thinking on some of the recent work on bilingualism in late Roman Britain discussed earlier, he argues that the migrants from Britain were poorer, rural speakers of British, perhaps from the territory of the Durotriges (modern Dorset) which according to the archaeological record suffered rapid economic collapse in the sixth century. The survival of a Brittonic language in Brittany is partly attributed to 'the lingering presence of Gaulish-speakers in the region with whom a degree of linguistic intelligibility might have existed'.<sup>86</sup>

The narrative proposed here is nuanced and argued through in detail, but like any discussion of this period is prone to fill the substantial gaps in the evidence with inductive argument based on schematic models developed elsewhere. It is important that we acknowledge the political and linguistic complexity of late- and post-Roman Britain as the context of the migrations which brought British-speakers to Brittany, and that we avoid schematisation and binary generalisations (which some bilingual models tend to generate).<sup>87</sup> A brief inventory of the languages that we know to

<sup>84</sup> For the debate, see (in chronological order) Charles-Edwards, 'Language and Society', 715–20; Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin*, 616–20; *WAB*, 107–15.

<sup>85</sup> Guy, 'The Breton Migration'. <sup>86</sup> Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 121–7 and 144.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Brett, 'Soldiers, Saints, and States?', 53, on contradictory evidence as an indicator of complexity.

have been spoken in Roman Britain may help to make the point: speakers of native British Celtic (presumably regionally differentiated), and of Latin acquired by trading with the continent, were joined by Latin-speaking invaders from different parts of the empire (Spain, Gaul, Rhineland, Danube provinces, etc.) for many of whom Latin was at least a second language.<sup>88</sup> From the fifth century we see the arrival of significant numbers of Germanic-speakers. But we should not forget the other languages that the evidence suggests were spoken in Roman Britain: Greek, various Germanic languages (by Batavians and others), Pictish (Lossio Veda in London), Gaulish, Palmyrene (Barates at South Shields) and whatever language the ‘Tigris boatmen’ were speaking.<sup>89</sup> The linguistic complexity in Roman Britain was only part of a more general complexity: for example, binary oppositions of military–civil, urban–rural must rather have been stages on a continuum;<sup>90</sup> even the much discussed Highland–Lowland zones must have been very blurred in reality. And all these distinctions were in flux depending on place and time: changes in patterns of militarisation in, for example, Wroxeter, land-owning patterns in the *pagi* (for example, the Cotswolds might have been very different from the hills west of Wroxeter or high in the Peak District), changes of manpower in legionary and auxiliary encampments, in particular, the shift to more local recruitment, must all have had an impact on social and linguistic interaction. We should also acknowledge Britain’s unusual position as one of the few areas of the Western Empire where local language(s) survived the end of Roman rule, an incoming Germanic language prospered, but in the long term Latin did not except in specific registers (e.g. the Church).<sup>91</sup> We should be wary of trying to

<sup>88</sup> On the lower-level, non-lapidary Latin epigraphy from Roman Britain, see the texts collected in Tomlin, *Tabellae Sulis*; Tomlin, ‘Roman Manuscripts from Carlisle’; and the collections of texts from Vindolanda edited by Bowman and Thomas (and also by Tomlin for the later ones). For discussion of the language, see Adams, ‘British Latin’; ‘The Language of the Vindolanda Writing Tablets’; *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, 441–2, 45 5–6; *The Regional Diversification of Latin*, 577–622; *Social Variation and the Latin Language*, 442–4 (and s.v. Vindolanda in the Index); for some sample texts, see Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin*, 398–428. On Celtic loanwords in these texts, see Russell, ‘VILBIAM’, ‘Uocridem’; Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, 190–1, 439 (from Latin *su(m)ptum*); but *The Regional Diversification of Latin*, 597–8 (from Celtic with supporting references). For a text perhaps written in British, see Tomlin, ‘Was Ancient British Celtic Ever a Written Language?’; Mullen, ‘Evidence for Written Celtic’; Schrijver, ‘Early Celtic Diphthongization’, 57–60; Mullen, ‘New Thoughts on British Latin’.

<sup>89</sup> On Barates, see Mullen, ‘Introduction’, 1–5.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Mairs, ‘“Interpreting” at Vindolanda’.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Clackson ‘Language Maintenance’, 49; *WAB*, 107–15 (spoken Latin in western Britain); and for arguments for the continuity of Latin, Harvey, ‘Cambro-Romance?’



schematise, and that is even before we start thinking about the post-Roman period.

One of the weaknesses of the discussions of the linguistic situation, as noted earlier, has been a tendency to think in binary terms (Latin or British?), when more nuanced views of bilingualism and multilingualism are available.<sup>92</sup> Some of the evidence for convergence, for example, the development of a pluperfect tense by British on a Latin model suggests that thinking in terms of stable bilingualism and diglossia may provide more fruitful ways of interpreting what evidence there is.<sup>93</sup> The use of Latin and British may well have been diglossic, with speakers using British at home but Latin (perhaps several different types) in other contexts. We also have to be clear that from a linguistic perspective it makes little sense to maintain a binary distinction between town and country: towns may have been predominantly Latin speaking even as far west as Isca (Exeter) certainly for administrative purposes and probably for a century or so after the loss of direct Roman rule, but most of the populace would probably have been functionally bilingual. Similarly, on the primary arteries of communication there would have been a premium on speaking Latin but further away from the main roads British may well have been more common and used in a wider range of situations, though Latin may have proved useful on market day. On an east-west continuum there may have been a gradient in proportions speaking first-language Latin or British, but any smooth modelling would be disrupted by more heavily Romanised centres such as Cirencester, Bath and Exeter, and there would have been other variables in the mix which are invisible to us. All in all, while the temptation has been to think in terms of super-/substrate models as the norm with all the accompanying ingrained social assumptions, we should start the discussion from the assumption of a more or less stable bilingualism and see how that plays out.

Turning back to the question of the language of potential migrants from Britain to Brittany, Schrijver's proposal that the south-east of Britain was predominantly Latin-speaking has been challenged by Parsons who argues that the phonological evidence of place-names which survive into Old English suggests that British was still being spoken when the Angles and Saxons arrived and for some time after.<sup>94</sup> But Parsons also points out that none of this precludes British-Latin bilingualism (though it does preclude

<sup>92</sup> For a useful discussion, see Mullen, 'Introduction', 11–35, which is very rich in bibliography; for a brief survey of some of the possibilities, see Tristram, 'Why Don't the English Speak Welsh?', 195–203.

<sup>93</sup> On the pluperfect, see Russell, 'Latin and British', 150–2, revising the proposal of Mac Cana, 'Latin Influence on British'; cf. also Russell, '*An habes linguam Latinam?*', 222–3.

<sup>94</sup> Schrijver, 'The Rise and Fall'; Parsons, 'Sabrina in the Thorns'.

the total replacement of British). For our purposes, what we cannot know is the social gradience of those who spoke Latin and British: this means that we cannot assume that British-speakers crossing over to Gaul were the rural poor.<sup>95</sup>

Another question raised by the arrival of British-speakers in Brittany is why Breton survived (and thrived). Guy's answer that the residual presence of Gaulish-speakers made the linguistic environment more welcoming seems oddly dated.<sup>96</sup> He draws attention to the presence of a late antique Gaulish inscription at Plumergat in Morbihan as evidence that Gaulish might have been spoken perhaps as late as a century before the arrival of British speakers. But none of this is at all certain: the dating of the inscription should be regarded as extremely insecure. There is nothing anywhere in the region with which to compare the epigraphy. Lejeune tentatively attributed it to 'l'Antiquité tardive'; the most recent dating, third or fourth century, in effect turns his description into numbers but discards most of his doubts.<sup>97</sup> There is no other evidence for Gaulish spoken this late. Raising the spectre of Gaulish in this context is probably unhelpful.<sup>98</sup>

This is not, however, an idea which is easily laid to rest, as it seems deeply embedded in the psyche of some Breton historians. In a linguistic context the idea re-emerged in the work of Falc'hun in the mid-twentieth century in terms of 'le breton, forme moderne du gaulois'; while the influence of Brittonic-speaking migrants was still allowed, essentially it was claimed that Gaulish had survived the Roman and Germanic influxes in the form of Breton.<sup>99</sup> The linguistic basis of the claim was firmly dismissed by Jackson: it would 'seem to be more picturesque than precisely accurate'; and more specifically 'a detailed comparison of the phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary with Welsh and Cornish, and with what is known to Celticists about Gaulish, proves that Breton is neo-Brittonic through and through, and neither it nor any dialect of it can be descended from

<sup>95</sup> For early discussions, see Mann, 'Spoken Latin in Britain', and Hamp, 'Social Gradience'; Hamp's contribution was strongly criticised by Adams, *Regional Diversification of Latin*, 593–6.

<sup>96</sup> Brett, 'Soldiers, Saints, and States?', 51, and citations in note 172, especially the comments by Lambert, *La langue gauloise*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Lejeune, *Recueil*, 177–81 (L-15), at 179; note also his careful comment 'aussi ne se prête-t-il guère qu'à des supputations chronologiques fragiles' ('thus it hardly lends itself to any more than fragile chronological suppositions') (178); W. Davies et al., *The Inscriptions of Early Medieval Brittany*, 237–47 (M8), dating at 237.

<sup>98</sup> On the possibility of Romance-speaking enclaves, see Chêdeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 108–11. Distinct enclaves are known from elsewhere in Gaul, e.g. Saxons around Bayeux, the Loire and the Garonne, the Taifali who gave their name to Tiffauges, etc.: WAB, 60.

<sup>99</sup> Falc'hun, 'Le breton, forme moderne du gaulois'; Falc'hun, 'Celtique continental'.



Gaulish'.<sup>100</sup> Although Falc'hun's argument had roots in the nineteenth century, even as late as the 1960s it was grounded in a far thinner knowledge of Gaulish than we have now: so much more Gaulish has now come to light from different parts of Gaul and from different periods that, while it can be argued that there is a distant genetic connection between Gaulish and the Brittonic languages, Gaulish cannot be seen as an ancestor-language, but at best an aged distant cousin.<sup>101</sup> That the idea has persisted seems to be due more to an underlying agenda than a clear understanding of the linguistic arguments.<sup>102</sup>

That said, the question of why Breton survived may perhaps be better expressed as why a British language did not survive elsewhere on the southern side of the Channel. One possibility is that we are seeing the reflex of a southerly migration from Britain to Gaul with those east of the Cotentin peninsula becoming linguistically invisible because they were first-language Latin speakers who merged with Gallo-Latin speakers there. Further west, in a region that was perhaps relatively underpopulated and economically poor, western Britons who were more likely to be first-language British speakers simply continued to speak their own language. However, it is difficult to see how further progress can be made without discarding the complexity and nuance hinted at in the evidence; resorting to schematised models is no substitute.

### *Breton to 1200*

Whatever the context in which British reached Brittany, it survived and is clearly visible in the period to 1200. Jackson established in detail its affinities to Cornish and rather more distantly to Welsh, and the most recent discussions by Schrijver do nothing to overturn that basic framework.<sup>103</sup> Schrijver chose to discuss Old Breton alongside Old Cornish and Old

<sup>100</sup> Jackson, *Historical Phonology of Breton*, 32 (both quotations).

<sup>101</sup> For Gaulish inscriptions, see the collections in the volumes of *Recueil des inscriptions gauloises* (published as supplements to *Gallia*); more recent finds are published in the volumes of *Études celtiques*. For the debate about the relationship between Gaulish and the Brittonic languages, see, for example, Fleuriot, 'New Documents on Ancient Celtic'; Koch, "Gallo-Brittonic" vs. "Insular Celtic"; and for a contact-based argument, Schrijver, *Studies in British Celtic Historical Phonology*, 463–5. Earlier understanding was based on the more southern distribution of the finds of Gaulish inscriptions (many in Gallo-Greek script); more recently, inscriptions have emerged in the north, e.g. from Châteaubateau, Chartres, Rezé (a suburb of Nantes) and so on, but, while they often show developmentally later linguistic features, there is nothing in them which makes them look more like Breton.

<sup>102</sup> On the former, see Lambert, *La langue gauloise*, 18.

<sup>103</sup> Jackson, *Language and History*; Schrijver, 'Old British' (note that in this work the abbreviation 'OBr' signifies 'Old British', while 'OB' is 'Old Breton').

Welsh as in effect almost dialectal reflexes of the same original language: this very effectively highlights the significant similarities in the surviving languages resulting from their common origin. The substantive differences separating them do not begin to appear until the tenth and eleventh centuries and later. These striking similarities suggest ongoing contact across the Channel in the period between migration and the rise of significant variants some five centuries later. The point is made by historians (but not always sufficiently pressed) that the migrations were not a one-way process but part of a two-way traffic across the Channel which continued for centuries; this is the only way to account for the ongoing mutual intelligibility of the languages. As is clear from elsewhere in this volume, that contact took a number of forms, such as trade, movement of clerics, scribes (often with manuscripts in their satchels), and others, but all of it would have preserved the interconnectedness of the languages.

### *Sources*

One of the difficulties in thinking about the earliest remains of the Brittonic languages in Brittany is the patchy and fragmentary nature of the sources.<sup>104</sup> The early epigraphic record preserves personal names but in a Latin matrix.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, the cartularies preserve thousands of mostly Breton personal and place-names but very little continuous text in Breton.<sup>106</sup> Both of these sources are best discussed in the context of onomastics.<sup>107</sup> The primary sources for Old Breton, the language spoken up to *ca* 1100, are the substantial body of glosses (most very short with occasional sentences) preserved in Latin manuscripts up to the eleventh century. Subsequently, there is a gap in the record until about 1450 when the language resurfaces in the form called Middle Breton. It is worth noting that ‘Old Breton’ only emerged as a distinct object of study in the late nineteenth century through the work and energetic persuasion of Henry Bradshaw, who was the first to identify on palaeographical grounds

<sup>104</sup> An early collection of data is Loth, *Chrestomathie*.

<sup>105</sup> The evidence is collected in W. Davies et al., *The Inscriptions of Early Medieval Brittany*; for a brief discussion from an Insular perspective, see *WAB*, 169–73.

<sup>106</sup> Most editions of cartularies have an index of names; modern editions often have a section in the introduction where names are discussed. For Quimperlé, see Henry et al. (eds.), *Cartulaire* (1904 edition: *CQ*); for Redon, Guillotel et al., *Cartulaire* (1863 edition: *CR*), and Tanguy, ‘Les noms d’hommes’; and for Landévennec, Lebecq (ed.), *Cartulaire* (1886 edition: *CL*; 1888 edition: La Borderie [ed.], *Cartulaire*) and Lambert, ‘Les noms des personnes’. Editions of, or at least extracts from, other cartularies can be found in, for example, Geslin de Bourgogne and de Barthélemy, *Anciens évêchés de Bretagne* and Rosenzweig, *Cartulaire générale*. For an introduction to Breton cartularies, see Guillotel, ‘Cartulaires bretons médiévaux’.

<sup>107</sup> Russell, ‘Facing Different Ways’.

manuscripts containing Brittonic glosses which could only be ‘natives of Brittany’.<sup>108</sup> Until then, Old Breton was not formally distinguished from the other early Brittonic languages.

The Old Breton glosses offer a considerable corpus of material, but it is difficult to assess for a number of reasons. None of it is preserved in manuscripts in Brittany itself and many of the glossed manuscripts may never have been in Brittany; most seem to have been copied in monastic centres in Francia. It is therefore difficult to gauge the precise linguistic context of the glossing. Presumably the glosses were originally composed by Bretons but in many of the manuscripts which have come down to us the glosses are copied along with all the rest of the text; that is, they had been originally inserted into an earlier copy of the text. The upshot is that the date of the manuscript in which they are found can only act as a *terminus ante quem* for the date of the gloss.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the nature of glossing is not always conducive to natural language: the constraint of the interlinear or marginal space encourages brevity and abbreviation, and it has been demonstrated that some glosses were translated into or from other vernacular languages;<sup>110</sup> the bilingual nature of the exercise of glossing can involve code-switching between Old Breton and Latin even within single glosses, which suggests that we have to do with a learned exercise rather than anything reflecting the language as generally spoken. More generally, so much attention is devoted to the vernacular glossing, whether Old Breton, Old Welsh, or Old Irish, that it is easily forgotten (or at least under-reported) that in such manuscripts it is always in the minority: the great majority of glossing is in Latin and what vernacular glossing there is can often be understood as reacting to a Latin gloss. All of this should encourage caution that what we have is an accurate representation of the Breton language of this period. It should also be added that the rise of dialect distinctions seems to be a later phenomenon; they are not visible in Old Breton but seem to be emerging in Middle Breton;

<sup>108</sup> Lambert, ‘La situation linguistique de la Bretagne’; Russell, ‘Grilling in Calcutta’, 155 for the quotation (from a letter to Whitley Stokes); Russell, “‘Something of a More Congenial Nature’”.

<sup>109</sup> For the language of the glosses, see Fleuriot and Evans, *Dictionary of Old Breton* (originally published in 1964) and Fleuriot, *Le vieux breton*. For more recent discussion of specific glosses and newly discovered ones, the work of Lambert is indispensable: see, for example, ‘Gloses en vieux-breton: 1–5’; ‘Gloses en vieux-breton: 6–9’; ‘Les commentaires celtiques à Bède le vénérable, I’; ‘Les commentaires celtiques à Bède le vénérable, II’; ‘Les gloses du manuscrit BN Lat. 10290’; ‘Les gloses en vieux-breton aux écrits scientifiques de Bède’; ‘Les gloses grammaticales brittoniques’; ‘Rencontres culturelles entre Irlandais and Breton’; ‘La typologie des gloses en vieux-breton’; cf. also Bisagni, ‘Les gloses inédites’.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Lambert, ‘Old Irish *gláosnáthe*’; Bauer, ‘Parallel Old Irish and Old Breton Glosses’.

Vannetais seems to be the latest to emerge, although that may have to do with the nature of the evidence.<sup>111</sup>

That said, what should give us some degree of confidence is that the surviving remains are strikingly similar to the contemporary remains of Cornish and Welsh and the differences between them are usually systematic and explicable. At the level of phonology some developments are shared with Cornish but not with Welsh; for example, open \*/ɔ:/ (originally from /a:/ and /o:/) in accented syllables developed into a diphthong /au/ in Welsh (spelt *au* in Old Welsh, *aw* in Modern Welsh) and remained so ever after; for example, \*/ma:ros/ 'great' > \*/mɔ:r/ > *maur*; \*/pa:pos/ 'everyone' > \*/pɔ:b/ > *pawb*; but in Cornish and Breton, instead of a diphthong, /ɔ:/ gave /œ/ (as in French *peu*, German *schön*); for example, Breton *meur* 'great', *peub* 'everyone'.<sup>112</sup> In final syllables of polysyllabic words, the diphthong continued to be spelt *-au-* in Old Welsh (but in late Middle Welsh developed to *-o-*), but was spelt *-o-* in Cornish and Breton, for instance in adjectival suffixes, Old Cornish and Breton *-ol*, *-oc* (but in later Breton developed to *-el* and *-ec*), beside Old Welsh *-aul* and *-auc*, all from \*/a:lo/- and \*/a:ko/-, respectively. Some morphological features are shared by all three languages: for example, the plural ending *-ou* is widespread in all of them, suggesting that this ending had already been generalised from *u*-stem nouns as a plural marker in Common Brittonic.<sup>113</sup> The verbal paradigms are systematically identical, sharing the same formations for tenses and moods.<sup>114</sup> Some morphological differences, however, were beginning to emerge; for example, it is well known that early Celtic languages do not generally use a verb to express possession (i.e. 'have') but rather use the verb 'be' with a prepositional phrase, for example, Middle Welsh *naw cant oed gennyf inheu* 'I had nine hundred' (lit. 'nine hundred were with me'), Old Irish *scél lemm díuib* 'I have a story for you' (lit. 'a story with me for you').<sup>115</sup> There was also an earlier form of this syntagma involving 'be' with an infixed pronoun, for example, Middle Welsh *a'm bo* 'I may have' (lit. 'there may be to me'), Old Irish *nom-thá* 'I have' (an even earlier pattern with a suffixed pronoun is found in Old Irish *táthum*, etc.).<sup>116</sup> Now, while such an expression is relatively rare in Welsh and mainly restricted to early verse, this construction became lexicalised in

<sup>111</sup> Jackson, *A Historical Phonology*, 33–5.

<sup>112</sup> Schrijver, 'Old British', 15, 22; Jackson, *Language and History*, 287–301; Fleuriot, *Le vieux Breton*, 44–6.

<sup>113</sup> Schrijver, 'Old British', 43; Fleuriot, *Le vieux Breton*, 232–3.

<sup>114</sup> Schrijver, 'Old British', 56–72; Fleuriot, *Le vieux Breton*, 299–332.

<sup>115</sup> Schrijver, 'Middle and Early Modern Breton', 406–7; D. Simon Evans, *Grammar of Middle Welsh*, 190; Schumacher, 'Mittel- und Frühneukymrisch', 215.

<sup>116</sup> D. Simon Evans, *Grammar of Middle Welsh*, 57 (cf. Schumacher, 'Mittel- und Frühneukymrisch', 215); Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish*, 271, 476–7.

Cornish and Breton as a verb 'have', for example, *a'm eux* 'I have' (lit. 'there is to me'). Although such a form is not attested in Old Breton, it is widespread in Middle Breton and, given that it is found in Cornish (and vestigially in Welsh) it is certain that it was already in use in the earlier period. A related feature has to do with past participles: while all three languages used a passive participial suffix *-etic* (very often used to gloss Latin past participles), Cornish and Breton also used forms in *-ys* and *-et*, respectively, though these are rare in the early stages of the languages, for example, Old Breton *ganet* 'born', *loscheit* 'burnt'.<sup>117</sup> Such forms occur very occasionally in early Welsh with *-eit*: they seem to have been superseded by the longer form *-etic*, but they are the older form paralleling Old Irish *-the*.<sup>118</sup> In Middle Cornish and Breton (but not in Welsh) these participles became very common in periphrastic construction with the verbs 'be' and 'have' to express perfect and pluperfect tenses, but they were probably independent innovations in the two languages under the influence of Middle English and French, respectively; in Middle Breton the French influence can be seen in the usage of the verb 'be' (rather than 'have') to form perfects with verbs of motion, for example, *ez eo pignet* 'il est monté, he has climbed' (lit. 'he is climbed') and so on.<sup>119</sup>

A noteworthy feature of these examples is that in most cases Breton and Cornish share features which are not found, or at least are very rare and archaic, in Welsh. This of course fits with the agreed understanding of the relationship between the three best-attested Brittonic languages, but what is worth noting is that in many cases we are not dealing with features which were already fixed in the pre-migration stage in the development of the Brittonic languages but rather seem to reflect ongoing contact and communication between Brittany and Cornwall. There is nothing particularly surprising in that and other types of evidence for such contact is presented elsewhere in this volume; but it is worth pointing out that the linguistic evidence, too, suggests that such contact was long-term and thorough-going. Recent scholarship on the linguistic context of the Breton migration has increasingly emphasised the complexity of these developments and how little evidence we have to work with.

<sup>117</sup> Fleuriot, *Le vieux Breton*, 314; Schrijver, 'Old British', 67.

<sup>118</sup> D. Simon Evans, *Grammar of Middle Welsh*, 165–6; Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish*, 441–2.

<sup>119</sup> Schrijver, 'Middle and Early Modern Breton', 413.

# 1 Archaeology and the Origins of Brittany

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Brittany is rich in archaeological remains from prehistory.<sup>1</sup> At many junctures in the remote past, the peninsula has been a centre of cultural innovation or a corridor by which innovations have passed between the Mediterranean, inland Europe and the Atlantic. At the dawn of the Neolithic, it was the home of some of Europe's earliest and most spectacular megalithic funerary monuments, in particular the sequence of long mounds, passage graves and tumuli around Carnac built between 4700 and 3500 BC. At about the same period, thousands of dolerite axes made from the local stone at Plussulien, Côtes-d'Armor, were transported all over western France. In the third millennium BC, rich grave goods and votive deposits show the region benefiting from its central position along the riverine and ocean trade routes from the Mediterranean to Britain. In the later Bronze Age Brittany may have been relatively isolated, a possible sign of this being the manufacture of thousands of non-functional bronze axes with a high lead content, purely for ritual burial. But from *ca* 500 BC Brittany's external contacts revived, with signs that it developed a 'middleman' role in channelling materials such as tin and copper from southern Ireland and south-west Britain to the power centres of west-central Europe, and later to the Mediterranean. It may have been by way of Brittany that La Tène art spread to Britain in the fifth century BC – the region's elegantly decorated pottery making use of the sinuous motifs of central European metalwork in a new medium.<sup>2</sup> A dense settlement pattern reveals an elite able to assert itself with defended, banked and ditched enclosures and, on the coast, 'cliff castles'. Another distinctive artefact that survives in thousands from Iron Age Brittany is the *stela*, or shaped stone column. On the eve of Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul, we glimpse the political make-up of the peninsula. It comprised five territorial units, *civitates*, that each issued its own sophisticated coinage and had become

<sup>1</sup> For the information summarised in this paragraph, see Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 145–51, 207–9, 233–40, 250–5, 287–9, 322–9, 345–9, 386–97; Tanguy and Lagrée, *Atlas*, 8–42 (maps 1–17).

<sup>2</sup> Cunliffe and De Jersey, *Armorica and Britain*, 50–6 and 104; Cunliffe, 'Britain, the Veneti'.

rich from trading in Mediterranean wine with southern Britain; it was part of a larger maritime region called in Gaulish *Aremorica*, the land facing the sea.<sup>3</sup> 'Armorica' (French *Armorique*) is often used by modern writers as a synonym for Brittany, or as a convenient term for the peninsula in the prehistoric and Roman periods before it was settled by Britons. It must be borne in mind, however, that historically the name 'Armorica' referred to different extents of land at different times, usually including more territory than what later became 'Brittany'.<sup>4</sup>

There has long been an appreciation of the complexity, and sometimes intensity, of the peninsula's prehistoric contacts with Britain.<sup>5</sup> The exports and imports changed over time, and the preferred routes varied, yet the network of seaways had some constant features. These reflect the influence of coastlines, the prevailing winds, tides and seamanship – factors that remained significant in the early medieval period. In the early prehistoric period and at the end of the first millennium BC, seafarers used the mid-Channel crossings linking Christchurch and Poole Harbour with the bay of Saint-Brieuc (via the Channel Islands).<sup>6</sup> These routes were relatively reliable in terms of visibility and the chance of difficult conditions, although they could be more dangerous than the shorter Channel crossings to the east.<sup>7</sup> Even now, the Portsmouth to Saint-Malo crossing takes eight to eleven hours. A longer sea route was developed from Iberia to western Brittany, passing through the daunting waters around Ushant to Cornwall. This crossing involved at least ten to twenty hours out of sight of land, thus requiring deep-sea navigation skills.<sup>8</sup> Vessels will have varied in size and capability; by the Iron Age some had sails, such as the boats that Caesar admired amongst the Veneti of southern Brittany. To cross the Channel, these vessels would have had to perform with the prevailing south-westerly and westerly winds almost at a right angle.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the Roman interlude, then, seafarers had the aptitude and equipment to connect various parts of the Breton coast with southern Britain and the Irish Sea region. Prehistoric routes continued to be attractive to medieval seafarers, but political and economic conditions changed significantly under the Roman Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, II.34, VII.75, transl. Edwards, *Caesar*, 132–3, 488–9.

<sup>4</sup> Koch, *Celtic Culture*, s.v. *Armorica*.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Crawford, 'Western Seaways', map; Fox, *The Personality*, map B; Bowen, 'Britain and the British Seas', 19 (figure 3).

<sup>6</sup> Cunliffe and de Jersey, *Armorica and Britain*, 37–9, 47, 52–3.

<sup>7</sup> Well evoked by McGrail in 'De la Grande à la Petite Bretagne'; cf. McGrail, 'Cross-Channel Seamanship', 330 (table 3) for a comparison of the various cross-Channel routes.

<sup>8</sup> McGrail, 'Prehistoric Seafaring', 200–2, 208.

<sup>9</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, III.8–1, transl. Edwards, *Caesar*, 146–58; McGrail, 'Prehistoric Seafaring', 202–3.



During the early Roman period, Brittany's archaeological visibility was maintained: the trappings of Roman culture were introduced here as elsewhere in the empire.<sup>10</sup> Yet the fact that Europe's economic life was now entirely, and increasingly, harnessed to the political needs of a centralised empire was fatal to the peninsula's distinctive role as a zone of communication.<sup>11</sup> The main artery from the Mediterranean to Britain was now the Rhône–Rhine corridor, with the Atlantic coast reduced to marginality; under the later Empire the military demands of the Rhine frontier increasingly dominated the movement of goods between Britain and the Continent. Even at its most prosperous, Roman Armorica was relatively a backwater. When the expansion of the empire gave way to retrenchment after its political crisis in the 260s AD, the region's prosperity rapidly evaporated. From this point until the central Middle Ages, the material remains of life in Brittany become all but invisible.

With Patrick Galliou, one can only lament this lack of evidence as 'all the more unfortunate since in the midst of those dark years the old Roman order faded into oblivion and a new world was born'.<sup>12</sup> These were the centuries that saw the redefinition of the peninsula as 'Brittany', the introduction of a British Celtic language and the formation of a distinctive society and Christian culture. Similar transformations elsewhere in early medieval Europe have been reinterpreted in recent decades, thanks to the greater availability and better understanding of archaeological evidence. But with such a shortage of information, how is similar progress to be made in understanding Brittany?

### Brittany within Gaul

Understanding the antique/medieval transformation of Brittany is embedded in a larger problem, that of understanding the end of Roman imperial power in Gaul as a whole. The reaction of a student who is reasonably familiar with Roman Britain, and approaches the study of Roman Gaul for the first time, is likely to be astonishment at how little has been written about it, compared to the intense scrutiny that Roman Britain has received from Anglophone scholars.<sup>13</sup> Gaul, a much larger

<sup>10</sup> Galliou, *L'Armorique romaine*, 55–200.

<sup>11</sup> Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 398–9; Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, 146.

<sup>12</sup> Galliou and Jones, *The Bretons*, 127.

<sup>13</sup> The 'end of Roman Britain', in particular, has been a seedbed of controversy and new theories. At least ten monographs on this topic alone have appeared since the 1980s: Thompson, *St Germanus*; Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*; M. E. Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*; Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom*; Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants*; Dark, *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire*; Faulkner, *The Decline and Fall*; Laycock, *Britannia*; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*; and Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain*; not to



and more varied area than Britain and with a longer Roman history, tends to be treated either in broad-brush terms as part of the Western Empire as a whole or on a regional level; certain themes and regions are much more thoroughly covered than others.<sup>14</sup> A largely descriptive approach to the very visible culture of the ‘high’ imperial period gives way, in the later Roman period, to two major themes: the rise of Christianity, with associated developments in social forms and *mentalités*; and the history of the frontier, with the supposed development, in its hinterland, of a ‘barbarised’ or ‘militarised’ society.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Gibbon’s famous duality, ‘the triumph of barbarism and religion’, is alive and well as a lens through which to see late antique Gaul.<sup>16</sup> It is hard to shake off the approach that spends the entire long fourth century ‘waiting for the barbarians’, examining only phenomena that explain, or tend towards, the dramatic collapse of the fifth century. This approach also entails a regional bias. The source material is concentrated, on the one hand, on the Rhine frontier and its hinterland in north-east Gaul and, on the other, on Gaul south of the Loire, which remained connected to the Mediterranean, where villa and town life survived longer and we possess written sources, such as the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, that illuminate the interactions of Roman and barbarian. This leads to analyses in which a broad contrast between northern and southern Gaul is outlined, but in which the north-west, including Brittany but also the Pays de la Loire and western Normandy, is rarely discussed. As will be seen, this brings difficulties both in characterising the transformation of Brittany and in assessing to what extent it shared in broader regional developments.<sup>17</sup>

The current understanding of the history of the Armorican peninsula under Rome may be summed up as follows (Map 1.1). From Caesar’s

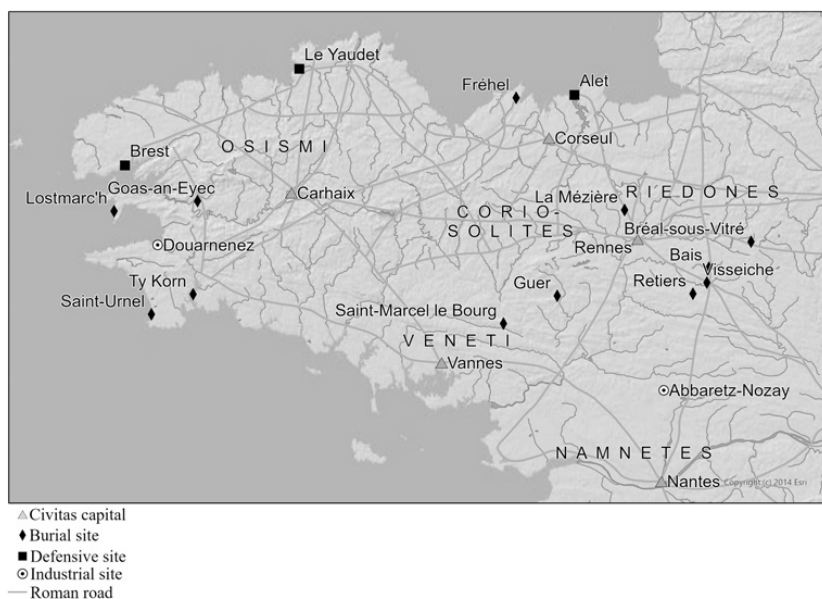
mention books dealing with particular aspects of the Roman–medieval transition, like Speed, *Towns in the Dark*.

<sup>14</sup> The standard work on Roman Gaul in English is Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul* (1983, reissued unchanged in 2014), which does not treat the later Roman period. Several recent books treat the conquest period and the question of ‘Romanisation’: Woolf, *Becoming Roman*; Derks, *Gods, Temples and Ritual Practices*; Ouzoulias and Tranoy, *Comment les Gaules devinrent romaines*; Lamoine, *Le pouvoir local*. In French, the standard work, Ferdière, *Les Gaules*, offers no fresh point of view on the end of Roman Gaul within the wider Empire. Regional studies include Wightman, *Roman Trier*; Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organisation* (on the Metz region); Van Ossel, *Établissements ruraux* (on northern Gaul); Gandini, *Des campagnes gauloises* (on the Bourges region).

<sup>15</sup> For Christianity, see Van Dam, *Leadership and Community*; Mathisen and Shanzer, *Society and Culture*. For the late Roman army and frontier, see for instance Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*. The two approaches are combined in Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*.

<sup>16</sup> Gibbon, *The History*, ed. Bury, VII.308–9.

<sup>17</sup> This tends to be obscured in surveys: Theuvs, ‘Grave Goods, Ethnicity’, adverts to the problem.



Map 1.1 Roman Brittany. The Roman road network is from M. McCormick et al. 2013, 'Roman Road Network (version 2008)', DARMC Scholarly Data Series, Data Contribution Series #2013–5. DARMC, Center for Geographic Analysis, Harvard University, Cambridge MA 02138 URL: <https://darmc.harvard.edu>, accessed 19 February 2020. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/NIAWTY>

conquest in 58–50 BC until the late fourth century AD, the peninsula is mentioned in no written sources, but judging by its archaeology it seems to have differed little from the rest of Gaul in its absorption of Roman culture and its participation in the imperial economy. Some decades after the conquest, once the empire had been stabilised under Augustus, the five *civitates* in what would later become Brittany – the Riedones, Coriosolites, Osismi, Veneti and Namnetes – like the rest of conquered Gaul, were incorporated into the provincial administration and provided with capital cities and a road network. A classic Roman built environment was created in the *civitas*-capitals and in a number of smaller towns or *vici*, and Roman religion and burial customs were taken up there, even if they did not penetrate deeply into rural areas. In the countryside a large number of villas attested to the intensification of agriculture and growing prosperity. There was some economic specialisation seen, for instance, in the fish-processing facilities at Douarnenez and elsewhere, and mining

operations including extraction of tin at Abbaretz-Nozay.<sup>18</sup> However, the imperial instability of the third century and the first substantial Germanic invasions of Gaul in the 260s dealt the region a blow from which it never recovered. After *ca* 280, town life was severely retrenched, with defensive walls being built around the *civitas*-capitals of Rennes, Nantes and Vannes, while those further west – Corseul and Carhaix (*Vorgium*) – may have had their administrative functions transferred to the newly built coastal forts of Alet and Brest.<sup>19</sup> Occupation continued on some villa sites, but it was no longer the lifestyle of the cultured landowner: open hearths, craft activities and rubbish tips intruded into the living quarters, while aqueducts and baths fell into disuse.<sup>20</sup> A limited urban revival took place in the fourth century, when coins and imported pottery show that Brittany remained economically connected to the rest of the north-western provinces to a modest degree, but the latest Roman coins found on occupation sites anywhere in Brittany are from the first decade of the fifth century.<sup>21</sup> While the Western Roman Empire disintegrated during the fifth century, archaeological evidence in Brittany is reduced to a few burial sites, mainly in the east, and a handful of settlement sites at an extremely basic level.

The dramatic decline of Roman material culture in the Armorican peninsula – and in most of northern Gaul – has tended to be attributed to a range of causes: the political turmoil of the middle years of the third century, with their rapid succession of military coups; the resulting ‘barbarian’ incursions into Gaul across the Rhine frontier; the ongoing menace of ‘Saxon’ and ‘Frankish’ pirates on the Channel and Atlantic coasts; social unrest in Gaul linked to high taxation and rural poverty; and the implantation of ‘barbarian’ populations on imperial territory – in the case of Brittany, it has been suggested that these were the ‘non-Romanised Britons’ who gave the region its Brittonic language.<sup>22</sup> However, the real impact of all these factors, as well as sometimes their very existence, is difficult to assess.<sup>23</sup> Why should villas have been abandoned, and cities in the far west of Gaul have shrunk and been forced to put up massive defences because of incursions across the Rhine hundreds of miles away? The peak in coin-hoards, that used to be adduced in support of a generalised invasion panic in Gaul in the 260s–270s, has been reinterpreted as being linked to the debasement of the

<sup>18</sup> Galliou, *L’Armorique romaine*, 171–86, 190; Tanguy and Lagrée, *Atlas*, 48–9, map 20.

<sup>19</sup> Galliou, *L’Armorique romaine*, 334–41; Tanguy, ‘Des cités et diocèses’; but the hypothesis is regarded as unlikely by Maligorne, ‘Carhaix et Corseul’; Bourguès, ‘Corseul’; Monteil, ‘Les agglomérations’, 20.

<sup>20</sup> Galliou, *L’Armorique romaine*, 328–31. <sup>21</sup> Le Gall Tanguy, ‘Morphogénèse’.

<sup>22</sup> Galliou, ‘The Defence of Armorica’, 409–10.

<sup>23</sup> For a summary of the question of ‘depopulation’ and ‘decline’ in the Late Western Empire, see Chavarria and Lewit, ‘Archaeological Research’, 26, note 55.

coinage and the demonetisation of the coins of the 'Gallic Emperors' who ruled from 260 to 274; the coins, mainly of low value, were 'dumped' rather than hidden.<sup>24</sup> The written sources for piracy and seaborne raids in the fourth century are scattered and imprecise, including a high proportion of panegyrics. They cannot necessarily be connected with archaeological evidence for the destruction and/or abandonment of Roman buildings.<sup>25</sup> The locations, motives and impact of recorded social revolts are likewise well-nigh irrecoverable.<sup>26</sup> The reoccupation of Roman buildings in ways that negated or ignored their original functions – what used to be called 'squatter' occupation – is a very widespread phenomenon in northern Gaul in the fourth century, and elsewhere in the Western Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries; it is no longer assumed to be associated with 'barbarian' settlement or even with the flight or drastic impoverishment of landowners, but rather with a switch in the favoured modes of display by the elite, from a leisured secular civilian lifestyle to either military trappings or the Christian Church.<sup>27</sup> Recently, it has been suggested that climatic factors (a change to cooler, drier growing seasons, reducing crop yields across Europe) may have contributed to all these political and economic changes.<sup>28</sup> However, it is problematic to claim, and still more so to explain, a 'catastrophic' breakdown in the Roman order in northern Gaul from the late third century onwards; and within this already enigmatic picture, it still needs to be shown whether, and to what extent, the future Brittany was exceptional.

As stated earlier, northern Gaul tends to be treated as a single region within the late Empire, but it contained great disparities and is unevenly studied. Scholarly attention has been focused on *Gallia Belgica* and particularly on the frontier regions. When the evidence for the better-studied parts of northern Gaul (basically, an arc running east from Normandy to the Rhineland) is generalised, it can be claimed that the salient feature was the 'militarisation' of society – that the fourth-century economy was geared to the support of a higher density of defence works and intensified military production. The regional decline in villas from the later third century onwards has been shown to have been partly offset by the appearance of new rural settlements, less substantial and less formally organised, with wooden instead of stone buildings, but clearly still agriculturally

<sup>24</sup> Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West*, 32–40; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 115–7.

<sup>25</sup> Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 120. For a summary of the primary evidence, see Cotterill, 'Saxon Raiding', 229–31.

<sup>26</sup> For discussion of the so-called Bacaudic revolts and difficulties in their interpretation, see Drinkwater, 'The Bacaudae'; Minor, 'Bacaudae: A Reconsideration'.

<sup>27</sup> Lewit, 'Vanishing Villas'.

<sup>28</sup> Büntgen et al., '2500 Years', at <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2011/01/12/science.1197175> (accessed 21 February 2018).

productive and in touch with the outside world: indeed, an increased number of grain storage and drying facilities suggests intensified production.<sup>29</sup> It is possible to talk of a 'medium-term cycle with increasing numbers of rural settlements from the late Iron Age into the earlier Roman period and then a settling back through the later Roman period, rather than a precipitous decline in the third century'.<sup>30</sup> In much of northern Gaul, moreover, the reduction in settlement remains is to some extent balanced by the greater visibility of burials: the furnished burial rite, with weapons, brooches, buckles and other grave goods, provides evidence of social organisation and a degree of wealth, although the interpretation of these burials is controversial. They were long supposed to be those of 'Germanic' federate troops established within the empire for internal defence, but several scholars have pointed out the Roman associations both of the burial rite and of the items buried, and have reinterpreted the burials as symptoms of social insecurity and competition on the part of local elites or as representing founder-status in a new (but not necessarily exogenous) kind of landholding.<sup>31</sup>

A large intermediate area of Gaul, including Brittany but also the modern region of the Pays de la Loire, is even harder to characterise. Here, villa buildings did not continue in use as they did south of the Loire, nor is there the evidence of a militarily mobilised economy that occurs further north and east. Furnished burials of the fourth and fifth centuries are much rarer. There seems to be little available study of late Roman burial customs in the Loire region where furnished burials did not come into vogue: one example is the excavated mid-third- to early fourth-century cemetery at Angers where an unassuming range of Roman burial styles, without grave goods, was continued – straight-to-ground burial, burial in wooden coffins, cists and *tegulae* (tile surrounds).<sup>32</sup> However, some evidence suggests that Brittany should be associated with north-eastern Gaul rather than the Pays de la Loire. Important evidence comes from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a list of military commanders and their units throughout the Roman Empire, the main western section of which can be dated between 399 and 408.<sup>33</sup> Here we find that the coastal towns of the Armorican peninsula were elements in a larger defended coastal zone, the *Tractus Armoricanus et Nervicanus*, reaching from the mouth of the

<sup>29</sup> Van Ossel, *Établissements ruraux*, 144.   <sup>30</sup> Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West*, 277.

<sup>31</sup> Halsall, 'The Origins of the *Reihengräberzivilisation*', 205–6; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 173, note 139; Theuvs, 'Grave Goods, Ethnicity'; for a review of the controversy, see James, *Europe's Barbarians*, 212.

<sup>32</sup> Brodeur et al., 'Redécouverte'.

<sup>33</sup> Mann, 'What Was the *Notitia Dignitatum* For?', 8; Mann, 'The *Notitia Dignitatum*'. See the discussion by Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 136–7.

Somme to the mouth of the Loire (or, according to one of the two descriptions, as far south as the Gironde).<sup>34</sup> Perhaps in keeping with this militarised status, the furnished burial makes a tentative appearance in Brittany in the late fourth and fifth centuries. At Guer, Morbihan, two burials which may have been part of a larger graveyard yielded an axe, spearheads and a knife, glassware, a 'chip-carved' Roman official buckle and a Fowler C2 type penannular brooch, metalwork typical of the north-eastern Gaulish cemeteries of the second half of the fourth century.<sup>35</sup> At Ty Korn, Gouesnach, in the far west of Finistère, thirteen graves (also possibly belonging to a larger cemetery) offer a similar late fourth-century assemblage including glassware, local and Argonne pottery, a belt-buckle and a C2 brooch.<sup>36</sup> Three graves excavated at Carhaix in 2012 appear similar.<sup>37</sup> At Saint-Marcel le Bourg, near Vannes, a slightly later cemetery of forty-five burials was excavated in 2006: some of the graves contained pottery and glass, and one in particular, dating from the second quarter or the middle of the fifth century, included an axe-blade, a spear-point, a knife and official or military regalia with belt-buckles in the 'Quoit Brooch Style' associated with early fifth-century south-east Britain, and an early fifth-century bow brooch (*fibule en arbalète*) similar to examples found in 'Germanic' women's graves in Normandy – or occasionally in male graves in imitation of official Roman 'crossbow' brooches: an interesting mixture of status markers.<sup>38</sup> A Quoit Brooch Style buckle was also found with glassware in a single burial at Goas-an-Eyec, near Pont-de-Buis, Finistère, in 1911.<sup>39</sup> The accidental discoveries of the Ty Korn and Saint-Marcel cemeteries – the first late antique cemeteries to be excavated to modern scientific standards in Brittany – place the region's late Roman history in a new light. More such finds are likely, and might change the picture entirely.<sup>40</sup> Such burials seem to constitute, at the least, a 'fringe' participation in whatever social development gave rise to the much higher numbers of furnished graves in Normandy, Picardy and further east, although the scale as seen so far is modest.<sup>41</sup> The excavators continue

<sup>34</sup> *Notitia Dignitatum, partes Occidentis XXXVII*, ed. Seeck, 204–6.

<sup>35</sup> Petit, 'Sépultures du Bas-Empire'; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 159–61.

<sup>36</sup> Colleter, 'Le cimetière de Ty Korn'; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 155–8.

<sup>37</sup> Casadebaig et al., 'Contribution à l'étude', 49–52.

<sup>38</sup> Le Boulanger et al., 'La nécropole tardo-antique'; Le Boulanger et al., 'De la ferme antique à la nécropole', 227, 238–42; Swift, 'Re-evaluating the Quoit Brooch Style', 42–3.

<sup>39</sup> Abgrall, 'Sépulture romaine découverte à Pont-de-Buis'; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 153–4.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, five graves belonging to a late antique cemetery were investigated in a sampling excavation near Carhaix in 2012: Casadebaig et al., 'Contribution à l'étude', 49–52.

<sup>41</sup> For references, see Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 173, note 139.

to view the burials as ‘Germanic’ and ‘military’ in character, associating them with the presence of Germanic federates (such as the Frankish *laeti* placed at Rennes in the *Notitia Dignitatum*) or of other incoming soldiers stationed in the countryside. Alternatively, they may simply represent leading local families asserting their position by means of whatever symbols were most available and effective. Yet on present evidence it seems that most burials in Brittany – including those in the larger early medieval cemeteries in the west, those of Saint-Urnel-en-Plomeur and Lostmarc’h en Crozon, Finistère – seem to have continued in Roman traditions, bodies being buried very simply with few or no grave goods or sarcophagi.<sup>42</sup> In this, Brittany is quite typical of late Roman Gaul outside the north-east.

The northern Gaulish, informal type of rural settlement with rectilinear, wooden, post-supported buildings, extends as far as the borders of Brittany but no further, with examples dating from the fifth century found in the Rennes area, at Montours, Janzé and Visseiche.<sup>43</sup> In a more southerly, Loire Valley distribution, the elaborately built and decorative fourth-century town walls of Rennes, Nantes and Vannes have points in common with those of Angers and Le Mans: all these cities were to have a role as Christian centres, taking part in conciliar activity, in the fifth century and beyond.<sup>44</sup> The Loire Valley as a whole played a notable part in late antique socio-religious developments in Gaul. The careers of St Martin, bishop of Tours (371–97) and his friends and disciples Liborius of Le Mans and Maurilius of Angers, began a well-studied movement of urban church-building, monastic enthusiasm and episcopal leadership in the region.<sup>45</sup> Here was a new, officially recognised channel for aristocratic co-operation and local leadership, but to what extent it was able to compensate for the region’s apparent economic stagnation and social unrest is far from clear. To all appearances, the specifically Christian late antique urban renaissance penetrated no further west than Vannes.

The reduction in archaeological evidence becomes more extreme as one moves further west. No examples of new, non-villa rural sites of the fourth or fifth centuries have been found in Brittany west of Rennes, and many pre-existing rural sites seem to have been abandoned: Loïc Langouet calculated that in the *civitas* of the Coriosolites in central northern Brittany, 75 per cent of the rural sites active in the earlier Roman period show no activity datable after the end of the third century.<sup>46</sup> Given the reduced range of datable artefacts in the fourth

<sup>42</sup> Galliou, *Les tombes*, 114, 119; Guigon, *Les sépultures*, 43, 47.

<sup>43</sup> Peytremann, *Archéologie de l’habitat rural*, I, 211–23.

<sup>44</sup> Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West*; Bourgès, ‘Corseul’, 13–17.

<sup>45</sup> Stancliffe, *St Martin*. <sup>46</sup> Langouet, *Les Coriosolites*, 216.



century and after, a 75 per cent figure for abandonment is certainly artificially high.<sup>47</sup> Recent work has queried the generalised picture of villa abandonment and 'squatter' occupation in the fourth century: some luxurious villas (mainly on the coast) were given new and ambitious architectural features, or at least continued in high-status use for the first half of the fourth century.<sup>48</sup> In the westernmost *civitas*-capital, Carhaix (*Vorgium*), too, recent rescue excavation shows an important house continuing to be occupied in 'high Roman' style until the mid-fourth century.<sup>49</sup> At Carhaix and in the burials at Ty Korn, a considerable amount of locally manufactured, wheel-thrown pottery of the fourth century, of reasonable quality although plain in style, has been found. If it were possible to identify and catalogue these pottery types, this might provide a more sensitive dating indicator that could be used to illuminate fourth-century settlement and activity more generally.<sup>50</sup> In general, work in progress is tending to undermine the idea of a definitive late third-century crisis in western Gaul and to point to a gentler decline some decades later. However, the decline did eventually come.

Patrick Galliou has argued that fourth-century Brittany was still part of the 'normal' late Roman world to the extent of being part of its established trading networks: this is demonstrated by the fact that a range of urban and rural sites have yielded fourth-century imported pottery including Argonne ware, *céramique à l'éponge* from southern Gaul, and Black Burnished ware from Dorset.<sup>51</sup> (But while fourth-century southern Gaulish ceramics *à l'éponge* are found throughout Brittany, the southern Gaulish *sigillées paléochrétiennes* that took over from this type in the fifth century are not found further west than Morbihan.<sup>52</sup>) Galliou attributes the fortifications of the 'Saxon Shore' and its continental counterpart the *Tractus Armoricanus et Nervicanus* to the need to safeguard such coastal trade. The evidence for military investment in fourth-century Brittany – the remodelling of the road network, the construction of city walls, the building or rebuilding of coastal forts and the provision of garrisons recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum* – reveals a level of central imperial commitment that seems to argue the peninsula was still of value to the Roman government.<sup>53</sup> Yet the main value may have been political and

<sup>47</sup> As commented by Astill and Davies, *A Breton Landscape*, 85–9.

<sup>48</sup> Maligorne, *Architecture romaine*, 86, 186–7. Maligorne points out that only a small proportion of villas have been fully excavated, and that there is much less recent information on villas in the *civitates* of the *Diablintes* and *Andecavi* to the east than there is for Brittany, making comparison difficult.

<sup>49</sup> Le Cloirec, *Carhaix antique*. <sup>50</sup> Labaune-Jean et al., 'Nouveautés', 152–6.

<sup>51</sup> Galliou et al., 'La diffusion'; Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 128–30 and references.

<sup>52</sup> Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 128.

<sup>53</sup> Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 71–7; *DUBALA*, 47.



broadly strategic, rather than economic. Was the trade there to supply the forts, as much as the forts to safeguard the trade?

It might be suggested that the history of Brittany from the Roman conquest onwards was that of a 'sidelined' region, cut off from its ancestral sources of prosperity by the political priorities of the empire to which it now belonged. During the early imperial period, this was not apparent, because the general growth in the economic output of the Western Empire floated the peninsula upwards as well. However, under the late Empire, prosperity largely became dependent on closeness to the imperial court or to its major areas of expenditure, the land frontiers, and Brittany was a long way from both.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, its elite under Rome had priorities that might easily override their regional ones. If native to Brittany, their greatest ambition will have been to make a mark on the all-Gaulish or imperial stage; if from outside, then Brittany will have been only one item in their portfolios. It seems likely that much of the investment and spending that went on there – the industrial enterprises like mining and fish-processing, and the most lavish villas – was the work of incomers or people with widely spread interests. (The late second- or early third-century inscription discovered at the Douarnenez fish factory, stating that the statue to the god Neptune Hippius was raised by C. Varenus Varus – a name that seems to hail from the far south of Gaul – and the local 'club' (*conventus*) of Roman citizens, makes the point nicely.)<sup>55</sup> If political factors or other changes made it marginally more attractive to operate elsewhere in the empire, then they would do so, depriving the area of the leadership on which it had come to rely. Wendy Davies and Greville Astill have suggested that the disuse of villas after the third century may indicate that villa-owners relocated, perhaps outside the province.<sup>56</sup> Subsequently, under the late Empire as reorganised by Diocletian and his successors, the state became the main buyer of goods and initiator of exchange. Brittany's specialist products were apparently no longer required, and its people could not independently reactivate their former exchange networks, especially with Britain, since British trade and production was being directed elsewhere, as will be seen in the [next section](#). If those local leaders who remained attempted to set their own priorities, they risked being seen as rebels.

The building of forts and city walls and the stationing of garrisons in Brittany may have had a two-fold purpose on the part of the imperial government: to quell incipient rebellion if necessary, and also to head it

<sup>54</sup> Halsall, 'The Barbarian Invasions', 41–3.

<sup>55</sup> Galliou, *L'Armorique Romaine*, 184–5; Sanquer, 'Une nouvelle lecture'.

<sup>56</sup> Astill and Davies, *A Breton Landscape*, 86, 89.

off by the assurance of a minimum of imperial favour and expenditure, in that a measure of tax revenue was being injected into the region. John Drinkwater suggested that the fourth-century 'barbarian threat' beyond the Rhine was a Roman artefact, stage-managed to justify spending on the imperial army, which was primarily needed to deal with internal threats; might the late-antique building programme in Brittany have had equally political, as opposed to strategic purposes?<sup>57</sup> The remaining local bureaucrats and the army were the only reliable market left for primary producers who, under the early Empire, had catered to entrepreneurs and major regional landowners. When first Britain and then northern Gaul as a whole passed beyond imperial control in the course of the fifth century, even this market was put into jeopardy.

In the late fourth century the region 'Armorica' (including, although not confined to, the future Brittany) makes its first appearance in written sources since Caesar's time.<sup>58</sup> Repeated revolts in *Armorica* are mentioned from the early to the mid-fifth century. Whether these revolts represented, at different times, social risings by overtaxed peasants, attempted coups by sections of the army, or assertions of autonomy by local leaders who filled a power vacuum when Roman imperial authority could not make itself felt in their region, they fit into a background of increasing fragmentation of power in northern Gaul: groups of Saxons, Franks, renegade Roman generals and (in the 460s) a British army tussled for control and aligned themselves variously with rival imperial candidates, their army commanders and their barbarian allies.<sup>59</sup> Fifth-century sources mesh awkwardly with those of the mid-sixth century and later and a coherent narrative cannot be created without a great deal of guesswork. However, by *ca* 550 it becomes evident that the Frankish kingdom of Clovis and his successors, the Merovingians, had been left as the last and only power standing in most of Gaul. The Loire valley and the eastern *civitates* of the Armorican peninsula, the Namnetes and Riedones and at first the Veneti, fell within this power bloc and their archaeology reflects this fact. Nantes, Rennes and Vannes housed Merovingian mints.<sup>60</sup> Elaborate burial took a new lease of life: the distinctive sixth- to seventh-century practice of burial in limestone sarcophagi flourished in the Loire

<sup>57</sup> Drinkwater, 'The Germanic Threat'; Halsall, 'Two Worlds Become One', 522–5.

<sup>58</sup> *Notitia Dignitatum, partes Occidentis* XXXVII, ed. Seeck, 204–6; Eutropius, *Breviarium*, VIII.xxi, ed. Droysen, 162; Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo*, ed. Doblhofer, II.114; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, VII, l. 369, ed. Anderson, *Sidonius*, I.150–1.

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, 'Peasant Revolts'; Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 136–7; Le Gall Tanguy, 'La formation des espaces diocésains', 22–5; Van Dam, *Leadership and Community*; Drinkwater, 'The Bacaudae'; Halsall, 'The Origins of the *Reihengraberzivilisation*', 205–6.

<sup>60</sup> Lafaurie and Pilet-Lemière, *Monnaies*; Pilet-Lemière, 'Ateliers'; Leroy, *Les monnayages*.

Valley region, and on the fringes of Brittany, the excavated cemeteries of Bais, Visseiche, Bréal-sous-Vitré, Rétiers and La Mézière, with their sarcophagus and cist burials and (in the case of the first three) their early association of cemetery with church, show the same sort of development as sites deeper into the Merovingian kingdoms.<sup>61</sup> Western Brittany, however, was by this time settled by Britons: according to Gregory of Tours's account, British leaders (*Brittani*) captured Vannes in 578 and their power reached as far east as the River Vilaine.<sup>62</sup> What, if anything, can archaeological evidence suggest about the nature of this British takeover?

### Late Roman Gaul and Britain

That Brittany received migrants from Britain we know – but there is no clear answer to the question of which parts of Britain provided the majority of the migrants, or exactly when. It might be hoped that archaeology would illuminate such questions. But as E. G. Bowen bluntly pointed out half a century ago, ‘of this extensive movement there remains no archaeological evidence whatsoever’, and he entered an early caveat against the assumption that ethnic and political identity are necessarily associated with material culture.<sup>63</sup> Since he wrote, the absence of archaeological evidence for Breton origins has come to stand out even more starkly against the greatly increased (though uneven) amount of archaeological evidence available for the period in general. Why might this be?

In late third- and fourth-century northern Gaul, the archaeological picture is one of stagnation partly offset by militarisation. The Roman provinces of Britain present a strong contrast.<sup>64</sup> It was in the fourth century that Britain's ‘villa economy’ reached its peak of wealth and showiness in what is known as the civil zone, especially in the west of that area.<sup>65</sup> The pottery industry expanded and diversified. One of the production

<sup>61</sup> Prigent and Bernard, ‘Les nécropoles’; Prigent, ‘Pratiques funéraires’; Guigon, *Les sépultures*, 19–25; Le Boulanger, *Bréal-sous-Vitré*; Guigon, *Les sépultures*; Guigon and Bardel, ‘Les nécropoles’; Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*; Lunven, ‘Christianisation’; Meuret, ‘Welita, la nécropole’.

<sup>62</sup> *LHD*, V.26 (232–3); transl. Thorpe, 290–1.

<sup>63</sup> Bowen, *Saints, Seaways and Settlements*, 161. For a general introduction to the problems of such a ‘culture-historical’ approach, see Shennan, ‘Introduction’. On occasion, material culture could be deployed to forge group identities. See, for example, Curta, ‘Medieval Archaeology’, 539. See also Halsall, ‘Archaeology and Migration’, <https://600transformer.blogspot.com/2011/05/archaeology-and-migration-rethinking.html> (accessed 25 March 2020).

<sup>64</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 155.

<sup>65</sup> For the distinction between the civil and military zones of Roman Britain, see, for example, Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 129–30, 528.

centres was on the coast of Dorset: its distinctive 'Black Burnished Ware' was transported to the north and south coasts of Brittany as well as to Normandy, much of south-west Britain, and the northern British frontier.<sup>66</sup> Towns changed in character, with an emphasis on private dwellings and the gathering and production of state supplies replacing the public buildings of earlier centuries, but if *civitas*-capitals declined somewhat, small towns grew.<sup>67</sup> Britain was well connected with the new fourth-century imperial capital at Trier, and some of its agricultural produce went to feed the Rhine frontier army.<sup>68</sup> In the military zone, that is, most of the north and west of Roman Britain, there was also the economic stimulus of catering to a substantial military force stationed on the island. Military infrastructure was focused on the long-term bases of Chester and Caerleon and on Hadrian's Wall, an actively defended frontier if on a smaller scale than the Rhine *limes*. In Britain, the army several times enabled generals to make bids for imperial power – some successful, some not. Brittany, and the west of Gaul in general, was less important strategically, economically and politically, and can never have known even a fraction of the military spending that Roman Britain enjoyed.

It is interesting to consider to what extent the post-Roman trajectories of western Britain and Brittany were determined by their different fortunes under the late Empire. If their archaeology fails to show common characteristics, and their politics follow different courses, perhaps this is to be expected given that Britain's 'end of empire experience' was arguably a rapid collapse, followed by a long period of political faction and conflict on multiple fronts; while that of western Gaul was a long, slow, obscure decline, during which it remained on the fringes of the main arenas of warfare.<sup>69</sup>

The theory that the British identity of Brittany was based on the establishment there of military forces of British origin before AD 400 has become, as Bernard Merdrignac remarked, 'the standard view of the region's history' (*la vulgate de l'historiographie régionale*).<sup>70</sup> The archaeological evidence adduced

<sup>66</sup> Allen and Fulford, 'The Distribution'.

<sup>67</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 88–94, summarises recent work on the economy and town life in later Roman Britain.

<sup>68</sup> Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 33.

<sup>69</sup> A succession of historians, most recently Gerrard, *The Ruin*, have argued against the 'catastrophist' interpretation of the end of Roman Britain, pointing out that reliance on coins and pottery types for dating creates an artificially sharp 'cut-off point' for Roman material culture, and that the visibility of this culture has led to historians over-estimating its importance to the economy as a whole. Even allowing for these caveats, however, the fifth-century 'economic adjustment', as Gerrard prefers to call it (*The Ruin*, 117), was swift and extreme: Wickham, *Framing*, 306–9.

<sup>70</sup> DUBALA, 45. However, see Brett, 'Soldiers, Saints and States?'; Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 107–8; Gallioui and Simon, *Le castellum*, 162–9; Gallioui, 'The Late Roman Military Migration'.

in support of early British military immigration included the presence of weapons and non-local metalwork and pottery. None of the material, however, is both unequivocally British and of the sort to have been brought by migrants rather than to have arrived by trade. The discovery of Dorset Black Burnished pottery together with military equipment in the excavation of the coastal fort at Le Yaudet (Finistère) is significant for the 'military migration' theory, yet the fact that Le Yaudet was a military base and received supplies from southern Britain in the fourth century is far from proving that it was manned by significant numbers of British, let alone British-speaking, troops.<sup>71</sup>

The fact that there is no clear material evidence certainly does not of itself *disprove* the presence of soldiers from Britain. Both in Britain and in northern Gaul, military personnel during the late Empire are difficult to trace archaeologically, although they must have been omnipresent. In the absence of fortifications and purpose-built barracks, even large bodies of troops such as must have been present at the capital, Trier, are invisible.<sup>72</sup> In Brittany, likewise, the garrisons listed by the *Notitia Dignitatum* at Nantes, Rennes, Vannes, Alet and probably Brest, although their existence is scarcely in doubt, have left no archaeological evidence that has been discovered to date. How much more invisible would be irregulars from Britain billeted among the general population, particularly if they did not usually use weapon burial?

The other side of the question is the probability of an occupying force in Brittany being recruited entirely or mainly from the less Romanised, British-speaking population of Britain – from Wales and

<sup>71</sup> Much seems to turn on a single bronze item with allegedly British military connections from the excavation of Le Yaudet. While Black Burnished pottery can be shown to have been distributed along trade routes, the use of a distinctively British type of military gear not otherwise normally found on the Continent would point more directly at immigration. The excavators of the site have described the Late Roman metalwork finds in slightly different terms in successive publications. In 'Le Yaudet-en-Ploulec'h', 253, Galliou and Cunliffe mention 'a bronze harness mount dated after 360 and very probably manufactured in the south of the British Isles (Wessex)' (*une phalère de bronze, datée d'après 360 et très probablement façonnée dans le Sud des Îles Britanniques [Wessex]*). It is this article that is cited in DUBALA, 47–9. However, the full excavation report published in 2004–2007 (Cunliffe and Galliou, *Les fouilles du Yaudet*, III.33–6) itemises the Late Roman metalwork as follows: 1.40, a cruciform brooch from the second half of the fourth century, its nearest comparandum found at Augst on the Rhine frontier; 1.41, a buckle component (*ardillon de boucle*), too small to categorise closely; 1.42, a curved bronze band from a buckle, probably Hawkes and Dunning type IIIA, its closest comparandum found at Richborough but of a type that is widespread on the Continent and has Continental origins (Hawkes and Dunning 'Soldiers and Settlers' 10); and 1.43, a harness-mount (*phalère*) of a 'fairly common' type (*relativement commune*) of the third century and after, found over much of the western empire. The association of the Le Yaudet metalwork with Britain may have been premature.

<sup>72</sup> Esmonde Cleary, *The Ending of Roman Britain*, 50–64.

the far south-west, as has been argued – during the fourth century.<sup>73</sup> What would be the context for such recruitment? Northern Wales had remained under military control throughout the Roman period, without civil local-government institutions, and neither it nor the south-west show many traces of classically Roman material culture.<sup>74</sup> It has sometimes been argued that these remote regions remained effectively under native British rule.<sup>75</sup> However, there seems little reason to believe that they served as a source of military manpower to be deployed to other parts of the empire. In frontier regions which did thus serve as recruiting-grounds, there is archaeological evidence for soldiers returning as well as leaving, bringing prestigious Roman artefacts with them. Where local leaders retained independent power, the imperial authorities ensured their good will with gifts and subsidies, as well as controlling them with strategic fortifications.<sup>76</sup> No evidence of this kind has been found in Wales and south-west Britain: Roman artefacts at ‘native’ Welsh sites consist of modest quantities of civilian goods like domestic pottery.<sup>77</sup> The Britons had no martial reputation in the wider empire; the idea of western Britons as turbulent frontier tribesmen (*tribus frontalières*, in Soazick Kerneis’s words) comes from a later period.<sup>78</sup> The Roman military presence in Wales had been much reduced since the conquest period and by the fourth century the remaining garrisons were used to protect the region from seaborne raiders from Ireland, rather than to police the local inhabitants.<sup>79</sup> Finally, north Wales and the south-west were sparsely inhabited. It may be doubted whether even active recruitment in these areas would have supplied enough manpower to form the majority of an effective defence force for Brittany: Brittany’s three westernmost *civitates* alone have about the same area as the whole of modern Wales and are larger than the four south-western counties of England combined. No recent specialised research on the archaeology of Roman western Britain takes any account of a possible drain of manpower to late Roman Brittany, or what social or material conditions might be associated with it. A re-examination of the question from this angle would be desirable.

<sup>73</sup> Galliou, ‘The Defence of Armorica’, p. 411; Giot, Guigon and Merdrignac, *The British Settlement of Brittany*, 97–107.

<sup>74</sup> Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 402–27; Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 411; Thomas, ‘The Character and Origins’; Quinell, ‘Cornwall’, 30.

<sup>75</sup> Woolf, ‘British Ethnogenesis’. <sup>76</sup> Halsall, ‘Two Worlds Become One’, 525–6.

<sup>77</sup> Mason et al. (eds.), *The Graeanog Ridge*, 142–6.

<sup>78</sup> Kerneis, ‘Le soin des âmes’, 14; for further detail see Kerneis, *Les Celtiques*.

<sup>79</sup> Arnold and Davies, *Roman and Early Medieval Wales*, 3–27, 33–4, 103; White, *Britannia Prima*, 60–1.

### The Material Culture of Post-Roman Britain and Brittany

If the archaeology of fourth-century Britain and Brittany provides no clear-cut evidence of population movement from one to the other, what of the period after Roman rule in Britain ended, the fifth and sixth centuries? Discussions of the Insular links of Brittany during this formative period have generally avoided making much use of archaeological evidence. This was understandable until the 1970s, when post-Roman Insular Britons were mostly archaeologically unidentifiable, and it was thought that they had suffered massacre, expulsion or assimilation to incoming Anglian and Saxon groups. However, now that there is a growing and comparatively well understood body of evidence for the material culture of some post-Roman Britons, particularly in the western highland zone, it becomes necessary to compare it with what we know of Brittany. Part of the accepted view of sixth-century Brittany as expounded by Francophone scholars is one of high-level political co-operation with Britain, within identifiable dynasties with Welsh, Cornish and Breton branches. It is legitimate to ask whether archaeology can shed any light on such putative contacts.<sup>80</sup>

In Britain, there is an apparent hiatus between the early fifth century and the 470s when developments in material culture cannot be detected among the Britons. This is the 'twilight' period when Roman coins and pottery no longer provide reliable dating for archaeological sites, when Roman material culture may have been used residually, but was no longer being 'refreshed', and innovations (such as sunken-featured buildings [*Grubenhäuser*] and furnished burials containing pottery, weapons and jewellery) have been read as the work of Germanic immigrants. Exceptional as a new and dateable artefact type during this period is metalwork decorated in the 'Quoit Brooch Style'. Brooches, belt plaques and similar objects in this style, which combines late Roman and Germanic decorative motifs, have been found, mainly in graves, in south-east England, western Normandy and Brittany: several new finds have come from the early to mid-fifth-century cemetery at Saint-Marcel, Morbihan.<sup>81</sup> Attempts have been made to link the style to political groupings in Britain, or to Germanic mercenaries, but these are inconclusive. The style is probably continental in origin, and shows communication between north-western Gaul and southern Britain persisting

<sup>80</sup> Chédeville, 'Francs et Bretons'; Giot, Guigon and Merdrignac *The British Settlement of Brittany*, 124–6, 144–6; Bourgès, 'Commor'; DUBALA, 168–73, 217–23. For brief accounts of the archaeology of post-Roman Celtic Britain see in particular WAB, 221–6, and Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 120–6.

<sup>81</sup> Le Boulanger et al., 'De la ferme antique', esp. 240–2; Swift, 'Re-evaluating the Quoit Brooch Style', 7–9, 41–4.



through the political chaos of the fifth century. This can be connected with the movement of individuals and small groups of migrants that occurred throughout the Roman period and after but has no particular implications for the formation of Brittany.<sup>82</sup>

From about 450, archaeologically distinctive phenomena began to emerge in still-British areas. Iron Age hill forts were being reoccupied and refortified in the south-west and in South Wales, showing signs of metalworking and other craft activities: South Cadbury (Dorset), Cadbury-Congresbury (Somerset) and Dinas Powys (Morgannwg) are the best known examples. The Somerset and Dorset examples may hint at a political rupture between the Romano-British *civitas* of the *Durotriges* and the (now Saxon-ruled?) territories to the north.<sup>83</sup> From about 475 to 550, a number of sites in the south-west and in Wales (as well as in the Irish Sea zone more generally) show quantities of imported East Mediterranean and North African pottery (Phocaeen Red Slipware and African Red Slipware, and amphorae – food storage containers – from the East Mediterranean).<sup>84</sup> This reveals renewed (or perhaps continued) contact between western Britain and the Eastern Roman Empire, in the form of directed trade in which Cornish tin may have been the main commodity exchanged.<sup>85</sup> It overlaps with a longer-lasting sequence of imports of continental pottery ('D' and 'E' ware) and glassware, harder to date because the styles are less distinctive, continuing approximately until the end of the seventh century.<sup>86</sup> Concurrently, the British-controlled parts of Britain were developing local artefacts in which Iron-Age Celtic stylistic motifs were rediscovered, in contrast to the 'Germanic' Salin I style being developed in the south-east. The most distinctive artefact types are the 'hanging bowls' of *ca* 550–650, and the penannular brooches, Fowler Type G, which are thought to have originated around the Severn estuary in the late fourth or fifth century and spread, with local variations, to many parts of Celtic Britain and Ireland.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Swift, 'Re-evaluating the Quoit Brooch Style', 39–45; Petts, 'Christianity'. For political interpretations, see Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 260–7; White, *Britannia Prima*, 154, 197.

<sup>83</sup> It has also been suggested that the Wansdyke earthwork, which runs from west to east for some 150 km across northern Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, was constructed at about this time, but the most recent study suggests that it originated later, perhaps in the eighth century. Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 124 and references; Reynolds and Langlands, 'Social Identities'.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*.

<sup>85</sup> Recent discoveries suggest that the Mediterranean trade routes may have continued in use from the late Roman period: Reed et al., 'Excavation at Bantham', 115.

<sup>86</sup> Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*; *WAB*, 221–6.

<sup>87</sup> *WAB*, 225–6 and references; Youngs, 'Anglo-Saxon, Irish and British'; Bowles, *Rebuilding the Britons*, 148–9; Adams, 'Hanging Basins'.



The fifth and early sixth centuries, despite or perhaps because of political turmoil, seem to have seen the progress of Christianity to become the only visibly practised religion in western Britain. However, funerary practices, which are the most widespread material evidence of religious or ritual behaviour, did not change very much in western Britain at this time. A large-scale shift from cremation to oriented inhumation burial had already taken place in Britain, in common with the other western provinces of the empire, in the third and fourth centuries. In many places in western Britain this involved a revival of an Iron Age custom that may never have completely died out in its heartland from north Dorset to South Wales: that of burial in graves sided with stone slabs, otherwise known as cists.<sup>88</sup> Many excavated cemeteries overlap the Roman and post-Roman periods, and contain a mixture of cist burials and burials dug straight into the ground, with a sprinkling of other types, over the entire period of a cemetery's use. For instance, the cemetery at Cannington, Somerset, was in use between the fourth century and the eighth or ninth, and contained east-to-west oriented, plain dug, rock-lined and cist burials; at Caerwent, where two cemeteries were in use between the late Roman period and the eighth century, one contained cist burials, the other did not.<sup>89</sup> In Cornwall, however, cist burial was revived only in the post-Roman period after what seems to have been a long period of disuse; the same may have been true of Devon, although the county has a dearth of burial evidence of the Roman and post-Roman periods.<sup>90</sup> Burial rites *did* change dramatically in most of the lowland zone of Britain from Hampshire to Yorkshire; however, from the fifth to the seventh centuries, this zone contains highly visible furnished burials, in which the dead were buried fully clothed (or cremated) with suites of jewellery, weapons and sometimes other grave goods. These burials have usually been connected to Anglian and Saxon ethnic identity and used to identify the areas settled by these groups, but they also correlate closely to the distribution of Roman villas in Britain, and Guy Halsall has argued that they represent a response to social crisis on the part of 'Anglo-Saxons' and 'Britons' alike throughout what had been the prosperous grain-producing parts of

<sup>88</sup> Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain*, 65; map of cist cemeteries in fifth- and sixth-century western Britain in Dark, *Britain*, 160 (fig. 45).

<sup>89</sup> O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain*, 31–4.

<sup>90</sup> O'Brien, *Post-Roman Britain*, 30–2. In Philpott's gazetteer of Roman burials, the only sites listed for Devon are two cemeteries at Exeter, one of which contains cist burials. A Roman burial ground was discovered in 2015 at Ipplepen near Newton Abbot, Devon, but the excavation results have not yet been published. [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/featurednews/title\\_434464\\_en.html](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/featurednews/title_434464_en.html) (accessed 14 June 2016); <http://ipplepen.exeter.ac.uk/> (accessed 25 March 2020). Post-Roman burials have been discovered at Kenn, near Exeter: Weddell, 'The Excavation'.

Britain, analogous to the appearance of furnished 'weapon burials' in fourth-century northern Gaul.<sup>91</sup>

In the far west and south-west, particularly in north-west and south-west Wales and in Cornwall, there was a new fashion in the late fifth and sixth centuries for erecting monuments – usually undressed, roughly pillar-shaped stones – bearing the name of a commemorated person or people in the Latin alphabet and sometimes in the Irish Ogam script, and occasionally some additional information such as a Christian phrase or epitaph, or the deceased's age, status or occupation.<sup>92</sup> This development may indicate the rise of a new elite and a reorganisation of landownership, perhaps connected to the endowment of the Church: this may also perhaps be indicated, in Cornwall, by gradual changes in the settlement pattern in the sixth and seventh centuries, as the most visible settlement type of the Roman period – the fortified farmstead, or 'round' – was replaced by the unfortified *tref*.<sup>93</sup>

This summary of the main developments in post-Roman southern British material culture has been brief and perhaps excessively simplified: but even a simple presentation is enough to show a considerable contrast with the archaeological information available in Brittany at the same time. In Brittany we find no distinctively Celtic, post-Roman decorative metalwork: no hanging bowls, no penannular brooches, nor, indeed, any precious metalwork objects from between *ca* 400 and 800, except for a handful of minimally decorated silver and bronze bracelets and rings.<sup>94</sup> There are a few signs of post-Roman occupation of earlier fortified sites, such as Kastel Kerandroat, Le Yaudet and Comblessac.<sup>95</sup> However, in no case is there evidence of any elite activity – luxury imports, metalworking, glassworking – that would point to the places in question being foci of secular leadership of the sort that are found in most parts of Celtic Britain in the 'Dark Ages'. It is perhaps less surprising that there are no precious finds, when there seem to be no central places in which to find them.

From this lack of high-status settlement evidence, one might simply conclude that Brittany remained more similar to the rest of Merovingian Gaul than to Britain. In the rest of northern Gaul, too, there is a lack of archaeological evidence for elite settlement during this period. However, unlike in Brittany, there is alternative evidence of aristocratic wealth:

<sup>91</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 228–34, and *Barbarian Migrations*, 364–6.

<sup>92</sup> Tedeschi, *Congeries Lapidum*; Okasha, *Corpus*; WAB, 116–73; Edwards, 'Early Medieval Inscribed Stones'; Handley, 'The Early Medieval Inscriptions'; Thomas, *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?*

<sup>93</sup> Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*, 71–9. <sup>94</sup> Guigon, 'Les bijoux'.

<sup>95</sup> Le Yaudet: Cunliffe and Galliou, *Les fouilles du Yaudet*. Other sites: Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 167; Guigon, 'The Archaeology'.

notably grave-goods, but also the continued widespread distribution of high-quality pottery.<sup>96</sup> As regards pottery, post-Roman Brittany did not apparently participate either in continental or in insular distribution networks. The Mediterranean and continental pottery imports that are a diagnostic feature of elite centres in Cornwall, Devon and Wales are extremely rare in Brittany. Two sherds of a Bii (LR1) amphora have been found at a putative monastic site on the Île Lavret and one at Le Yaudet.<sup>97</sup> To all appearances the Mediterranean trade that targeted western Britain passed Brittany by, but for these two northern coastal sites that may have obtained their examples through personal contacts or by accident. It is perhaps more astonishing that 'E ware', which has been thought to originate in the Charente region of southern France, some 200 km south of Brittany, is so rare there when it occurs on many sites in western Britain and Ireland. Charles Thomas catalogued three examples from Brittany: one from Les Cléons, Loire-Atlantique; one from Plaudren, Morbihan; and one from a sand-dune site at Guissény, Finistère, to which Ewan Campbell adds a sherd from Le Yaudet.<sup>98</sup> In no case is there evidence for more than a single pot, making it impossible to assume that the pottery was being imported in any quantity. No other pottery except rough local wares can be seen in Brittany between the fifth and the ninth centuries. If pottery that was being made for export in the coastal region practically next door to Brittany failed to penetrate there, it seems to suggest that Brittany was not seen as a market for goods or as a target for gifts or diplomacy. There are hints that tin- and zinc-producing areas were active in sixth-century Brittany, as in Cornwall, but there are no archaeologically visible effects on the wider economy of Brittany.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, sixth- and seventh-century East Roman and Merovingian coins have been discovered as single finds in coastal and riverine locations in the west of Brittany, but in insufficient numbers to imply any specific trade, diplomatic or ritual activity.<sup>100</sup>

An unknown quantity affecting this whole analysis is the availability of seaborne transport. While the *longue durée* of Atlantic contact hints at

<sup>96</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, 181–2, 476–7, 504–8, 794–803 and references.

<sup>97</sup> Cunliffe and Galliou, *Les fouilles du Yaudet*, vol. 3, 38. For alternative classification systems of amphorae, see Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 19.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas, 'A Provisional List'; Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 48; Campbell, 'La céramique E', *apud* Cunliffe and Galliou, *Les fouilles du Yaudet*, vol. 3, 87–8.

<sup>99</sup> A carbon date of AD 460  $\pm$  120 at the lead/zinc deposit at Plélauff, Côtes-d'Armor; sixth-century coins from Carthage, Vannes and Nantes at the tin deposit of Nozay, Loire-Atlantique. Galliou and Simon, *Le castellum*, 182, note 302.

<sup>100</sup> Galliou, 'Notices d'archéologie', 175–8; Pilet-Lemière, 'Ateliers'; Leroy, *Les monnayages*; Metcalf, 'Monetary Circulation', 362–3.

similarities between prehistoric and early medieval travel, the political and economic background was ever-changing, and this will have affected the availability and desirability of transport.<sup>101</sup> It is probable that at first the Roman military and merchant transport system was used, as it often was by fifth-century ‘migrating peoples’.<sup>102</sup> Breton rulers of the sixth century had some sea power at their disposal, and historians have suggested that they had taken over whatever was left of the Roman military fleet of Britain – the *classis Britannica* of the *Notitia Dignitatum*.<sup>103</sup> Humbler British migrants might have travelled on vessels taking Dorset Black Burnished pottery to north-east Brittany, a trade which may have continued through the fifth century; in the sixth, Ben Guy has speculated that ships bringing wares to western Britain from the Mediterranean may have taken paying passengers to Brittany on the return journey, but this is a hypothesis that cannot easily be tested.<sup>104</sup> There is no evidence that Breton rulers after the sixth century used ships for military purposes. Marine archaeology has yielded no vessels from early medieval Brittany, although inferences can be drawn from earlier shipwrecks and those found in surrounding waters. The combined evidence of excavated wrecks, textual allusions and surviving artworks suggests that there would have been two shipbuilding traditions available. One was the carvel-built ‘Romano-Celtic’ craft made of wooden planks nailed together, perhaps with leather sails, descendants of the kind of ships Caesar described as belonging to the Veneti in the first century BC, an example of which may be seen in the second-century wreck at St Peter Port, Guernsey; the other was the older, light Atlantic ‘curragh’ made from animal skins stretched over a wicker frame, of the sort described in the Voyage of St Brendan and Adomnán’s Life of St Columba and still used in the Aran Islands in the early twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> Turning to hagiography (which provides nearly all the source-material), most references to ships and voyages are vague and stylised.<sup>106</sup> Jean-Christophe Cassard sees an *empaysannement* (‘peasantification’) of the Bretons, a turning away from the sea and the coastline, particularly from the tenth century to the twelfth.<sup>107</sup> Even in the twelfth century, when the Angevin empire of Henry II (1154–89), stretching from Ireland to

<sup>101</sup> Wooding, *Communication and Commerce*, esp. 1–5.

<sup>102</sup> Halsall, ‘Two Worlds Become One’.

<sup>103</sup> *LHD*, X.9 (492); transl. Thorpe, 557; Bourguès, ‘Commor’; *DUBALA*, 222–6.

<sup>104</sup> Guy, ‘The Breton Migration’, 128–30.

<sup>105</sup> Rule, ‘The Romano-Celtic Ship’; McGrail, ‘Boats and Boatmanship’; L’Hour, ‘Un site sous-marin’; Cassard, *Les Bretons et la mer*, 37–44. For further variation, see Wooding, *Communication and Commerce*, 9–14.

<sup>106</sup> The evidence is collected by Cassard, ‘Les navigations bretonnes’.

<sup>107</sup> Cassard, *Les Bretons et la mer*, 73–130.

Aquitaine, was geographically centred on Brittany, there is little evidence that Henry exploited the peninsula's maritime potential: strategically, he was mainly concerned with its long land borders with his other Continental possessions.<sup>108</sup> Brittany's paucity of goods for long-distance trade must have inhibited communication by sea, and made the time and risks involved in any crossing less worthwhile. The Loire estuary stands out in this context because of salt production in the vicinity, which attracted Irish, English and Frankish traders.<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, Cassard's evidence is mainly for clerical attitudes as expressed in hagiography. More indirect evidence – for instance that of texts and manuscripts – shows that Brittany never fell entirely out of contact with the Insular world. The paucity of visible trade and military sea power does not necessarily mean that the Bretons turned away from the sea: it may simply mean that they travelled chiefly in pursuit of archaeologically invisible goods, such as social advancement, education, employment and religious benefits.<sup>110</sup>

### Early Medieval Christian Archaeology

A substantial and growing subset of the archaeological record in early medieval Celtic Britain relates to the growth of Christianity. In this field as in others, the differences between Brittany and the other Celtic-speaking regions are greater than the similarities, and have become more noticeable as the Insular record has been more thoroughly studied.

In the 1970s, almost as little archaeological material relating to early medieval Christianity was available for the British Celtic regions as for Brittany. Gildas Bernier's 1982 monograph *Les chrétientés bretonnes continentales* barely adduced any archaeological evidence, but neither did Siân Victory's *The Celtic Church in Wales*, published in 1977. Since then the Insular Celtic churches have been the subject of intensive study.<sup>111</sup> Philippe Guigon has proposed abandoning the designation of the early medieval Breton Church as 'Celtic', since the material evidence it left was much more directly comparable to the Church elsewhere in Merovingian

<sup>108</sup> Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, 35.

<sup>109</sup> Loveluck and O'Sullivan, 'Travel, Transport and Communication', 23–5. For the economic background, see W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 51–5, noting also the Loire vineyards, which may have produced wine for export.

<sup>110</sup> See Chapter 6, and WAB, 94, suggesting that elite young lay people as well as clergy may have travelled between the British-speaking regions to be fostered and educated.

<sup>111</sup> The survey by Petts, *The Early Medieval Church*, in contrast to Victory's book, is based almost entirely on archaeological evidence. Signposts in the progress on the archaeology of the churches of Celtic Britain have included Thomas, *Early Christian Archaeology*; Edwards and Lane, *The Early Church*; Edwards (ed.), *The Archaeology*.

and Carolingian Gaul than to the Insular churches.<sup>112</sup> However, this conclusion does not seem to apply positively to any parts of Brittany except the eastern borderlands. With regard to Brittany west of the Vilaine, the most noticeable feature of the evidence deployed in the article is its scarcity, compared both to that available for the Gaulish Church in general, and that examined for the Insular churches in other papers in the same volume. Unless more archaeological evidence is discovered, Brittonic-speaking Brittany stands out more for the unique elusiveness of its early Christian material culture than for either 'Insular' or 'Continental' characteristics. Nevertheless, some comparisons and contrasts can be attempted between Brittany and neighbouring regions.

An important strand in early Christian archaeology is the study of burials, and the way that burial places and places of Christian worship coalesced in the course of the early medieval centuries. In France as in the Breton borderlands, this association was present from the Merovingian period onwards; in Wales it gradually developed from the seventh to ninth centuries onwards – although in both regions, as also in England and Ireland, there was a great variety of burial-places and churchyard burial does not seem to have become obligatory until the central Middle Ages.<sup>113</sup> These conclusions are based on abundant data in France, England, Ireland, and in Wales, where 'there are now over a hundred locations where cemeteries of extended inhumations can be identified during the period *c* AD 400–1200', although some of these may need to be re-dated to the late Roman period.<sup>114</sup> By contrast, in Brittany west of the Vilaine, only four cemeteries dating from a comparable period (between the end of Roman power and the beginning of the eleventh-century Gregorian reform) have undergone modern excavation: the dune sites at Saint-Urnel-en-Plomeur (F), apparently in use from the fifth to the tenth centuries, and Pléherel, or Fréhel, near Saint-Malo (CA); and the monastic burial grounds of Landévennec (F) and Île Lavret (CA).<sup>115</sup> For a number of others, including the apparently large dune cemetery at

<sup>112</sup> Guigon, 'The Archaeology'.

<sup>113</sup> There is an increasing literature on early medieval burial which may stimulate further research in Brittany specifically: see Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'. For Gaul, see Treffort, 'Du *cimiterium christianorum*'; for England and Wales, Lucy and Reynolds, *Burial*, and Edwards, 'Christianising the Landscape'; for Ireland, O'Brien, 'From Burial', and work cited therein; O'Brien, *Mapping Death*.

<sup>114</sup> Longley, 'Early Medieval Burial', 125; Pollock, *The Evolution and Role*, 97. There is no full listing of early medieval burials in Cornwall, but the data are summarised by Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*, 139–40, drawing on Petts, 'Burial, Religion and Identity'.

<sup>115</sup> Guigon, *Les sépultures*, 47, 38–9, 44–6, 38; Giot and Monnier, 'Le cimetière'. More dune burials discovered at Crozon and Esquibien (F) and at Quiberon (M) suggest that some burial grounds continued in use from antiquity to the central Middle Ages: Guigon, *Les sépultures*, 43, 44, 80.

Lostmarc'h, Crozon, the only available information is reports of discoveries made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.<sup>116</sup> Part of the problem is the difficulty of discovering sites given the poor survival of skeletal remains in the acid soils of Brittany combined with the prevalence there of burial in plain-dug graves, lacking both the grave goods of early English and Frankish burials and the stone cists that make some burials in Celtic Britain conspicuous. Even so, many potentially promising sites, such as medieval parish graveyards with possibly early above-ground features, are uninvestigated.<sup>117</sup> More data are gradually becoming available: recent excavation at Leslouc'h, Plouédern (F) has revealed two small quadrangular and three circular ditched enclosures of the seventh to eighth centuries, which the excavators suggest may have had a funerary use, with comparanda both in the Merovingian cemeteries of western Gaul and in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>118</sup> As yet, however, it is impossible to generalise about early medieval burial in Brittany, for instance to say whether burials of the early Middle Ages often re-used prehistoric monuments (as in the Insular world in general), or to identify features such as 'special graves' and mortuary chapels or *eglwys-y-bedd*, which marked the progress of the Christianisation of burial in Wales.<sup>119</sup> It does not seem that burial practice in Brittany was influenced by Insular western British practice. Cist burials can be found in post-Roman Brittany but only in the extreme east of the peninsula, under the influence of a separate cist-using tradition in northern Gaul; they were not used in western Brittany, which might be thought the most likely to have been influenced by the cist-users of south-west Britain.

Some comments can be made about the dune cemetery at Saint-Urnel, with the proviso that they cannot necessarily be generalised. This cemetery has been excavated several times, most recently in a thorough programme led by Pierre-Roland Giot in 1973–5.<sup>120</sup> The cemetery, containing some thousands of burials at successive levels in a wind-blown dune, was in use for several centuries. The sand provided an unusually favourable environment for the preservation of human remains, but the absence of grave goods, or even traces of clothing, coffins or shrouds, made dating almost impossible until radiocarbon dating

<sup>116</sup> Guigon, *Les sépultures*, 43.

<sup>117</sup> For discussion of a few of these, see Guigon, 'The Archaeology', 187.

<sup>118</sup> Blanchet (ed.), *Plouédern (Finistère) – Leslouc'h*, 267–8, <http://ns2014576.ovh.net/files/original/aec4ec734a504fe4c1b67fae4185ea44.pdf> (accessed 05 January 2018); Catteddu and Le Gall, 'The Archaeology', forthcoming.

<sup>119</sup> Edwards, 'Celtic Saints', 230–6; Longley, 'Early Medieval Burial', 115–6. For the reuse of prehistoric monumental sites for burials as an early medieval phenomenon in many parts of Britain and Ireland, see Edwards, 'Christianising the Landscape', 185–9, 201.

<sup>120</sup> Giot and Monnier, 'Le cimetière': dating-evidence at 167–8.



became available. This revealed, to archaeologists' surprise, that the cemetery was early medieval rather than prehistoric. The first burials may have dated from as early as AD 320 and the latest from around the year 1000. The only signs of ceremony were the careful disposition and alignment of the bodies and the presence of 'surrounds' of stones, or occasionally whalebone, on the surface of the graves. The conservatism of burial practice at this site throughout late antiquity and the early Middle Ages is remarkable. Giot held in 1977 that the characteristics of the skeletons were more closely comparable to those in contemporary burials from south-west Britain than those from Iron Age or Roman Brittany, and that 'the only serious interpretation' was that this was a population of British immigrants.<sup>121</sup> In subsequent publications he was more cautious.<sup>122</sup> A reinterpretation of the evidence using newer techniques such as carbon isotope analysis might be of interest. But whatever the origins of the Bretons of Saint-Urnel, their social profile fits well with what has been noted about the material culture of early medieval Brittany in general. The burials do not indicate any kind of social hierarchy in death, yet the skeletal data show that the people were healthy and well-fed by medieval standards with few signs of medical or violent trauma.

The field study of parish churches in Celtic Britain has yielded a considerable amount of information about their early medieval origins. In Wales and Cornwall, numerous churchyard enclosures can be identified as early, with the corollary that existing churches, built much later, are still on their early medieval sites. Some churchyards are reused Iron Age enclosures, mainly circular earthworks but occasionally promontory forts; others, circular, rectangular or concentric, were apparently created in the early medieval period to mark the limits of burial grounds or sanctuary space.<sup>123</sup> The possibility that similar features existed in Brittany remains to be followed up. Ninth-century hagiography and charters give the approximate locations of many early churches, yet little research seems to be available on the question of whether the existing churches remain on their earliest sites and whether any early features might be identifiable through fieldwork or excavation.<sup>124</sup>

Within Brittany (west of the Vilaine) as a whole there are doubtless many local variations, yet some general features make comparison with

<sup>121</sup> Giot and Monnier, 'Le cimetière', 165.

<sup>122</sup> Giot, Fleuriot and Bernier, *Les premiers Bretons*, 35; Giot, Guigon and Merdrignac, *The British Settlement of Brittany*, 84–96.

<sup>123</sup> Ludlow, 'Identifying Ecclesiastical Sites', 71–6; Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish Churchyards'.

<sup>124</sup> Guigon, *Les églises*, II presents the available documentary and archaeological evidence for small monastic establishments and parish churches in early medieval Brittany: very little material evidence relates to the fifth to tenth centuries.



Celtic Britain difficult and suggest some fundamental differences. The late medieval and modern development of the ecclesiastical landscape in Brittany is very different from that in either Wales or Cornwall. In these latter regions, substantial parish churches and a number of chapels were built in the later Middle Ages, after which there was little church-building until the nineteenth century. In Brittany, most existing church buildings are later in date, having been rebuilt in the sixteenth century and after with probable substantial remodelling of the surrounding features: this is particularly apparent in the case of the *enclos parroissiaux* of northern Finistère, where the creation of walled churchyards with monumental entrances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have destroyed earlier enclosures and other features. There are also large numbers of chapels, most of them comparatively recent foundations but some probably occupying early sites of worship. The potential data set is therefore enormous, but its historical exploitation is difficult.<sup>125</sup> At first glance, the average parish church in Brittany has a very different aspect from that of a typical Welsh or Cornish parish church. Even in small villages, the church tends to be set in a built environment that is determinedly civic, often sharing a central square with the *mairie* and/or market hall or attached to other ranges of buildings. Some churches can be entered directly from streets or squares rather than being set back within churchyard enclosures as is the case with most rural churches all over Britain – not just in the Celtic regions.<sup>126</sup> Churchyards are typically rectilinear, walled, levelled and paved rather than grassed, suggesting the obliteration and modernisation of earlier boundaries. In Cornwall and Wales many parish churches have remote settings: in Cornwall, in particular, many are in waterside (riverine or maritime) locations.<sup>127</sup> In Brittany, isolated waterside churches exist but they are chapels rather than parish churches.<sup>128</sup> The principal churches in most parishes, and even the majority of chapels, appear more deliberately located to serve a lay community than is typical in Wales or Cornwall.<sup>129</sup> This may be partly a result of Brittany's early modern prosperity and devoutness, attracting settlement clusters around churches, or perhaps of the even later spread of the

<sup>125</sup> Couffon and Le Bars, *Diocèse de Quimper et de Léon*; Couffon, *Répertoire . . . du diocèse de Saint-Brieuc et Tréguier*. More collections of data on Breton parish churches and chapels are listed in Provost, *La fête*, 24–5, note 6. Unfortunately, the descriptions tend to be confined to the existing fabric and decoration of the buildings and do not include archaeological data or detail on the churches' locations and surroundings.

<sup>126</sup> Examples: Carnac (M), Nevez (F), Nizon (F), Port-Launay (F).

<sup>127</sup> Padel, 'Local Saints', 308; Ludlow, 'Identifying Ecclesiastical Sites', 81.

<sup>128</sup> Those of the dioceses of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier are vividly described by Largillière, *Les saints*, 147–56.

<sup>129</sup> Provost, *La fête*, 33–4.

civic ideals of metropolitan France; however, charter-evidence suggests that local churches were spatially central and community-oriented as early as the ninth century. 'Houses clustered around them and roads radiated from them ... transactions were often performed in or in front of the local church'.<sup>130</sup> We may be dealing with a fundamental difference dating as far back as the late antique period. However, in any case, the corollary is that medieval and modern re-workings of the built environment are much more likely to have removed the earliest medieval evidence in Brittany than in Britain. By the same token, archaeological investigation there would be more disruptive than similar work on British churches. For the foreseeable future, it appears that students of the early Breton Church will have to do without much archaeological data relating to local churches; however, it is possible that some promising sites may be selected and investigated. At the least, the observation made for some sites which also have inscribed stones (Plourin, F; Louannec, CA; Sainte-Tréphine, CA) that the churchyard area stands up to 2 m above the surrounding ground level, gives reason to think that the sites have been in use for many centuries – or possibly that early churches might be built on artificially raised areas of ground, as the place-name-element *podum* implies in Wales.<sup>131</sup> Site-by-site observation of how church buildings fit into surrounding settlement patterns, roadways and field systems is a promising avenue of study.

In Wales and Cornwall, as stated earlier, early medieval inscribed and carved stones survive in large numbers (around 550 in Wales, over fifty in Cornwall and west Devon) and their presence can suggest an early origin for known ecclesiastical sites.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, they can assist in prospecting the landscape for as yet undiscovered burial places and religious enclosures.<sup>133</sup> Monuments can illuminate individual churches' history and contacts: for instance, the inscriptions revealing royal patronage and/or commemoration at Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major), Morgannwg, and Llangadwaladr, Môn, and the pair of pillar crosses found at Llandochoau and Llandaf.<sup>134</sup> In Brittany, there are far fewer of these

<sup>130</sup> W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 81. For the co-existence of nucleated and dispersed settlement in the Redon area as early as the ninth century, see Astill and Davies, *A Breton Landscape*, 124.

<sup>131</sup> W. Davies et al., *The Early Medieval Inscriptions*, 126, 143, 170; Padel, 'Brittonic Lann'.

<sup>132</sup> Wales: Edwards, *A Corpus*, II and III; Redknap and Lewis, *A Corpus*, I. South-west England: Okasha, *Corpus*.

<sup>133</sup> Ludlow, 'Identifying Ecclesiastical Sites', 78–80; Edwards, 'Christianising the Landscape'.

<sup>134</sup> Redknap and Lewis, *A Corpus*, I.369–89 (G63, G65, G66); Edwards, *A Corpus*, III.180–3 (AN26); Redknap and Lewis, *A Corpus*, I.329–37 (G42) and I.320–3 (G36). Knight, *South Wales*, 40, 58.

monuments: twenty-six inscriptions dating from the eleventh century and before (plus two from the Channel Islands), of which seven are inscribed slates found inside burials in the sixth- to seventh-century cemeteries of Ille-et-Vilaine. Their rarity – as in northern Britain and eastern Wales – may reflect the absence of the influence of Irish epigraphy.<sup>135</sup> Few though they are, the inscribed stones of Brittany are a precious source of information on the early Church in general, and on their find-sites in particular. The range of scripts used reinforces the reality and longevity of Brittany's insular connections.<sup>136</sup> One example is the pillar with a cross in the parish churchyard at Lanrivoaré in Finistère. The inscription features the personal name *Gallmau* in Insular decorative capitals reminiscent of those in the Lindisfarne Gospels.<sup>137</sup>

As several inscriptions date from the seventh or eighth centuries, they help to illuminate a period of Breton history that has produced very little other evidence. They allow, or reinforce, the identification of some important ecclesiastical sites. In some cases, as at Lanrivoaré and Plourin in Finistère, toponymy and charter-evidence work together with the inscriptions to suggest the existence of early religious foci. In others an inscription is the initial clue to the early origins of a religious site, as in the case of the famous fifth- or sixth-century inscribed granite sarcophagus at Lomarec (M), where excavation revealed that the chapel built around it stands on a foundation of Gallo-Roman brick and tile.<sup>138</sup> However, when all due allowance is made for losses, it seems clear that, in contrast to Cornwall and the west of Wales, inscriptions and stone sculpture were never a defining feature of the growth of Christianity and of a post-Roman elite in Brittany.

Similarly, fewer early medieval portable items connected with Christian cult survive from Brittany than from anywhere else in the Celtic world. Almost the only metalwork to survive, where Ireland, Wales and Scotland boast chalices and patens, croziers and reliquaries, consists of six bronze handbells (out of a total of 101 early medieval bells from the Celtic-speaking regions) – and even these have been thought to be of Welsh or Cornish manufacture.<sup>139</sup> There is also a group of seven anthropomorphic bone figurines used as pendants, which are as yet undatable for want of comparanda.<sup>140</sup> The only early monastery sites to have been excavated are

<sup>135</sup> WAB, 156–7, 168.   <sup>136</sup> WAB, 171.

<sup>137</sup> W. Davies et al., *The Early Medieval Inscriptions*, 113–20.

<sup>138</sup> W. Davies et al., *The Early Medieval Inscriptions*, 183–94.

<sup>139</sup> Bourke, 'Early Breton Hand-Bells'. For a survey of the evidence for relics and reliquaries, see Edwards, 'Celtic Saints', 244–65.

<sup>140</sup> Giot and Guigon, 'Dark Age Anthropomorphic Figurines'; Guigon, 'Les sept "premiers Bretons"'.

Landévennec (definitely monastic), Île Lavret (probably) and Le Yaudet (possibly).<sup>141</sup> The findings at Landévennec prove the antiquity of a monastic foundation for which the earliest written evidence dates from the ninth century. It parallels Llandochoau, Llanilltud and Bassaleg in south-east Wales in that it was sited adjacent to a large Roman villa and may possibly have made use of still-standing villa buildings in its earliest phase. In this respect it appears unique in western Brittany, although in eastern Brittany as elsewhere in Gaul there are examples of Roman buildings being reused as ecclesiastical buildings.<sup>142</sup> A stone oratory and two other rectangular buildings were built at Landévennec in the seventh or eighth century, before the introduction of the Benedictine Rule in 818 led to the building of an enlarged church and cloister. There is also a cemetery (containing plain-dug and wooden coffin burials) in which one of the earliest graves gave a radiocarbon date of AD 470–635, implying that the monastery was indeed founded in the generations immediately following the end of Roman Britain, as the *Vita* of its founder St Winwaloe implies.<sup>143</sup> However, all three ‘monastery’ excavations are notable for the modesty of their remains. There is no trace of luxury objects: no evidence of craft-working, as there is at Clonmacnois and Portmahomack, or imported pottery or glassware such as that found in the cemetery at Llandochoau.

In brief, the most general contrast that can be drawn between early Christian archaeology in Brittany and those in most other parts of western Europe, apart from sheer lack of evidence, is the absence of an obvious hierarchy of sites. This is apparent in toponymy (to be more fully discussed in [Chapter 6](#)), as well as in archaeology. Almost everywhere in Insular and Continental Europe in the post-Roman centuries, it is obvious from both written sources and archaeology that ecclesiastical sites were a vital part of the topography of power. By the seventh century, various ranks of religious establishment could be distinguished physically, from major urban cathedrals and basilicas (on the Continent) and rural monasteries endowed with large estates, down to hermitages and chapels. In many parts of the Insular world, even where written source material is lacking, archaeology has allowed the identification of ‘pairings’ between high-status secular and ecclesiastical sites, revealing an early symbiosis (though not identity) between lay

<sup>141</sup> Bardel, ‘L’Abbaye Saint-Gwénolé’; Giot, ‘*Insula quae Laurea appellatur*’; Galliou and Cunliffe, ‘Le Yaudet en Ploulec’h’.

<sup>142</sup> Guigon, ‘The Archaeology’, 174–5, 184, 187–8.

<sup>143</sup> Bardel, ‘L’Abbaye Saint-Gwénolé’; Bardel and Pérennec, ‘Le monastère de Landévennec’, 135; Pérennec and Bardel, ‘Landévennec, un monastère carolingien’; Knight, *South Wales*, 59.

and ecclesiastical leadership. Examples include Burghead and Portmahomack in northern Scotland; Bamburgh and Lindisfarne in Northumbria; Dinas Powys and Llandochoau in Morgannwg; and Tintagel and the church-site of St Matheriana in Cornwall.<sup>144</sup> At one level down from episcopal and favoured royal establishments were important rural churches staffed by several priests: the baptismal churches of France, the minsters of Anglo-Saxon England and the 'mother churches' of Wales were all of this general type.<sup>145</sup> They seem to correlate with secular administrative units such as *pagi*, hundreds and cantrefs. Below these again were estate churches and chapels. It was not until the central Middle Ages that these different levels of religious provision were fully articulated into a diocesan and parish network.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, variations in wealth and political importance appear to have been present from the beginning. In Brittany, such variations can scarcely be seen. West of the river Vilaine, there was a surviving Gallo-Roman episcopal centre at Vannes and there may have been others at Dol and Alet, although Dol is archaeologically unidentified.<sup>147</sup> For other episcopal sees, there is no evidence pre-dating the Carolingian conquest. The *only* church centre west of Vannes with unequivocally pre-Carolingian material evidence for its existence is Landévennec. Toponymy and later evidence – in particular, the three hundred or so ninth-century charters preserved in the cartulary of Redon, a monastery that was founded in eastern Brittany in 832 on the Carolingian Benedictine model<sup>148</sup> – suggest an explanation for the apparent shortage of high-status Breton churches. From an early period (before the Carolingian conquest) there was an unusually dense provision of churches serving the village communities known as *plebes* in Latin, *ploue* in Breton: territorial units smaller than English hundreds, Welsh cantrefs or Frankish *pagi* or *conditae*.<sup>149</sup> The close association of community and church within the *plou* may account for much of the difference between Brittany and Celtic Britain in the physical remains of early medieval church-sites, a question which will be

<sup>144</sup> Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 107; Knight, *South Wales*, 57–8; Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*, 59.

<sup>145</sup> Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 321; Cambridge and Rollason, 'Debate'; Silvester and Evans, 'Identifying the Mother-Churches'; Davidson, 'The Early Medieval Church'; Ludlow, 'Identifying Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Sites'.

<sup>146</sup> Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards'; Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 321–30.

<sup>147</sup> For the archaeology of Alet see Langouët, 'L'origine gallo-romaine'; Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 36–8.

<sup>148</sup> CR; for an introduction to the scholarship on Redon, see Smith, 'Aedificatio'.

<sup>149</sup> For a summary of the arguments over the origins of the Breton *plou*, see Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 107–116 and references, and see Chapter 6.

discussed further in [Chapter 6](#). There were also many small monasteries (*monasteria*): seventeen are referred to in the charters of Redon.<sup>150</sup> Episcopal authority over all these establishments seems to have been distant, nor were most monasteries large or well-endowed enough to gain dominance over other churches, Landévennec again being the only notable exception. The *plebes* of Brittany may, as Largillière put it, have been ‘little autonomous republics which, for a long time ... recognised no superior authority’.<sup>151</sup>

Unless further archaeological research broadens the evidence base, the conclusion must be that the shortage of material evidence for the early medieval Breton Church points in the same direction as the lack of secular evidence, and both suggest a state of society noticeably different from that of Brittany’s neighbours in either Gaul or Britain, more decentralised, with weaker elites.

### Some Conclusions

The absence of archaeological evidence for Breton migration does not in itself cast doubt on the migration having taken place. The situation is quite different from an ostensibly comparable case, the Gaelic-speaking region of Dál Riata in Argyll, Scotland. Bede, along with annalists and genealogists based in the Gaelic-speaking world, wrote that the kingdom of Dál Riata had been founded through Irish immigration in the early historic period; but Argyll and north-western Ireland at this time had distinctive settlement-forms and portable artefacts which are sufficiently different as to argue (on one view) *against* such a population movement, while the historic evidence is far from contemporary and the language-evidence not closely datable.<sup>152</sup> In Brittany, the contemporary testimony of Gregory of Tours and the strong evidence for language-change puts the fact of migration beyond reasonable doubt. Why, then, would Britons moving to Brittany take with them, and perpetuate, their language and sense of identity but not the visible cultural traits that they developed in Britain itself?<sup>153</sup>

The difference between the archaeological profiles of western Britain and Brittany in the fifth to seventh centuries is perhaps one of degree rather than kind. If Bretons at this time are almost entirely invisible in

<sup>150</sup> Tanguy, ‘*Monasteriola*’, 63–79; W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 83.

<sup>151</sup> ... *petites républiques autonomes qui, fort longtemps, ont dû ignorer toute autorité supérieure*: Largillière, *Les saints*, 212.

<sup>152</sup> Campbell, ‘Were the Scots Irish?’

<sup>153</sup> Such ‘strategies of distinction’ might vary from group to group, as discussed by Pohl, ‘Telling the Difference’, 21–2.

the archaeological record, many western Britons are equally so. John Blair has recently concluded that large areas of early Anglo-Saxon England are bare of the material culture that supposedly defines Angles and Saxons; the same thing is even truer of Celtic Britons.<sup>154</sup> Devon, for instance, lacks re-occupied hill forts and 'late Roman' and 'Celtic' metalwork, and also cist burials, while inscriptions and evidence for Mediterranean trade are confined to the fringes of the county.<sup>155</sup> The absence of such features in Brittany might be due to the regional origin of the migrants or it might be socially determined: a version of Ben Guy's suggestion that it was the poorer members of society who migrated to Brittany, rather than the elite. But the class argument need not be a rigid one: 'peasants left, landlords stayed'. Perhaps, rather, surviving as a member of the post-Roman British elite or moving to Brittany were mutually exclusive strategies. You either stayed, and learned to live in a hill fort, wear a penannular brooch, fight your neighbours and trade your prisoners for wine and tableware or perish – or you went to Brittany in the hope of avoiding these necessities. Perhaps indeed the hope of maintaining a more 'Roman', less 'barbarian' identity was a factor in at least the early stages of migration.

D. H. Miller has written of the prevalence of a 'frontier' dynamic in what we think of as typical early medieval societies.<sup>156</sup> In the economic slump that followed the removal of the compulsion of the Roman imperial state taxation and supply system, operating a frontier was perhaps the only (not very) reliable way of accumulating enough of an economic surplus for any kind of cultural display. In Britain, multiple frontiers rubbed up against each other, providing opportunities for the conflict and plunder that alone would generate a surplus (however ephemeral) for the winners. The old, increasingly permeable Roman frontiers of Hadrian's Wall and the Irish Sea; tribal and factional frontiers within the former province that might or might not coincide with an ethnic demarcation, Briton against Saxon; religious frontiers, Christian against pagan and, later, 'Roman' against 'Celtic'; and the old divide between the grain and cattle lands, the villa zone and the rest, along which there formed the most ruthless early Anglo-Saxon kingdom, the *Mierce* – men of the March, Mercians. The most successful kingdoms grew through having vulnerable 'plunder zones' to exploit, and thus

<sup>154</sup> Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, 24–35, esp. 32: '... the situation with the English outside the "eastern zone" is precisely as with the post-Roman western British: their everyday material culture is below the horizon of visibility.'

<sup>155</sup> Okasha, *A Corpus*, 4 (distribution map); Dickinson, 'Fowler's Type G', 60.

<sup>156</sup> Miller, 'Frontier Societies'.



were able to afford cultural achievements that have echoed down the ages: as Peter Brown put it, ‘the Golden Age of Northumbria . . . rested on much real gold’.<sup>157</sup>

Brittany, by contrast, was rarely in the front line either to plunder or to be plundered. If, to quote Peter Brown again, the Mediterranean itself after Rome’s fall was a ‘numbed extremity’ of the Eurasian land mass, then Brittany was an appendix.<sup>158</sup> Bypassed by such trade routes as remained, it developed a low-pressure, self-sufficient economy.<sup>159</sup> Its imports were things that cost nothing: language, script types and saints. Compared to most parts of early medieval Europe, its lack of cultural display may indicate that it was a relatively safe place to live.

But if high-status trade and high politics passed Brittany by, that does not mean it was entirely isolated from the outside world. Recently, rescue archaeology has permitted extensive excavations that have at last begun to discover early medieval settlement evidence in western Brittany. On the whole, this evidence fits with the conclusions presented here, in that it does not suggest high levels of wealth or power, the trading or manufacture of luxury objects, or objects or practices introduced directly from south-western Britain. It does, however, reveal inhabitants sharing at a modest level in the rural lifestyle and technology of neighbouring regions, insular and continental. Several sites datable to the seventh to ninth centuries in western Brittany apparently consist of individual family farms comprising dwellings and various craft activities within curvilinear ditched enclosures (contrasting with the rectilinear enclosures more commonly found in Merovingian northern Gaul).<sup>160</sup> The presence of sunken-featured buildings is typical both of northern Gaul and early Anglo-Saxon England; corn-drying ovens, on the other hand, are well known from insular sites but within Gaul are specific to Brittany, being an adaptation to damp climates. Some higher-status sites have also been investigated, marked out by their elevated and otherwise strategic locations, large size and earthworks rather than by any more spectacular material: for instance Bresselien (F) and Leslouc’h at Plouédern (F). At Leslouc’h there is a sequence of seventh- and eighth-century pottery, made from local materials, but in forms that hark back to late Roman

<sup>157</sup> Maddicott, ‘Two Frontier States’; Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 350.

<sup>158</sup> Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 202.

<sup>159</sup> Charles-Edwards in *WAB*, 70, suggests that ‘the normal relationship between Bretons and Franks was peace, not war’; see also Brett, ‘In the margins . . . ?’

<sup>160</sup> Maguer and Le Boulanger, *Carhaix-Plouguer: Kergoutois* (<http://bibliotheque.numerique.sra-bretagne.fr/files/original/05d26fa86ce17bc6c65a2e577ccee35b.pdf>) (accessed 05 January 2018).



Dorset Black Burnished Ware and Crambeck ware, while others resemble late Anglo-Saxon 'shelly' ware.<sup>161</sup> Investigation of sites like these, which so far fall into the dating range of the seventh to ninth centuries, with a new departure in the tenth, turns attention away from the 'migration period' to the basic conditions of rural life which Brittany, to a great extent, shared with the rest of north-western Europe.

<sup>161</sup> Catteddu, 'Archaeology of early medieval rural societies'; Blanchet (ed.), *Plouédern (Finistère) – Leslouc'h*, 296–7.

## 2 Settlement and Isolation, 450–800

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No contemporary source mentions British migration to Brittany during the period 350–600 except in the vaguest terms. Yet by the late sixth century the new status of the region was a *fait accompli*. Its name was *Britannia* or *Britanniae*; its inhabitants were *Britanni* or *Brittones*, indistinguishable in this designation from mainland Britons.<sup>1</sup> Later it becomes evident that the region's western and northern *civitates*, those of the *Osismi* and *Coriosolites*, had vanished and been replaced by vaguely defined territorial units with the names *Domnonia*, *Cornubia*, *Poher* and *Poutrocoët*, while *Brouuerech* had been introduced as an alternative name for the *civitas* of the *Veneti* (Map 2.1).<sup>2</sup>

All attempts to explain the emergence of Brittany and its early political development are necessarily based on a small group of written sources (as well as the archaeological evidence surveyed in Chapter 1). First, there are the contemporary records of a series of church councils held in various cities of western Gaul between the 460s and the late sixth century – a few of which mention the presence of Britons.<sup>3</sup> There is an enigmatic cluster of references to a Riothamus, 'king of the Britons', who led a British army from north of the Loire to defeat against the Goths in 469 or 471.<sup>4</sup> Then there is the testimony of Gildas, writing in Britain probably in *ca* 540, that Saxon attacks had caused a seaborne exodus of refugees from Britain, although he did not say where they went.<sup>5</sup> A decade or so later in Constantinople, Procopius, in his history of the wars of the reign of Justinian, gives two pieces of possibly

<sup>1</sup> For the possible significance of the alternation of singular and plural in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, see Coumert, 'Espace et pouvoirs'.

<sup>2</sup> *Poher*, *Poutrocoët* (with the Latin alternative *pagus trans silvam*) and *Brouuerech* (and other spellings) are frequently referenced in ninth-century documents in *CR*: Tanguy, 'Index generalis', 107, 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Concilia Galliae A. 314–A. 506*, ed. Munier, 137–9, 141–9, 150–8; *Concilia Galliae A. 511–A. 695*, ed. De Clercq, 179, 210.

<sup>4</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae* I.7 and III.9, ed. Anderson, I.370–1, II.34–7; Jordanes, *De Origine*, XLV.235–41, ed. Mommsen, *Jordanis Romana et Getica*, 118–9; *LHD*, II.18 (65); transl. Thorpe, 132.

<sup>5</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, 25, ed. and transl. Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 27–8, 98. For the probable chronology of Gildas's account, see *WAB*, 216–18 and references; Wright, 'Gildas's Geographical Perspective'.



Map 2.1 Brittany: regions

relevant information: first, that a Frankish kingdom had come into being some fifty years earlier as a result of a treaty between Franks and Armoricans (*Arboruchoi*); second, that groups of *Angloi*, *Frissones* and *Brittones* were migrating from *Brittia* (presumably Britain) to the Continent in his own time, and that the Franks were settling them on the remotest part of their land.<sup>6</sup> Between 509 and 521, the bishops of Tours, Rennes and Angers wrote a surviving letter to two priests with British names, complaining about unorthodox activities somewhere in their ecclesiastical province.<sup>7</sup> At the end of the sixth century Gregory of Tours wrote his ‘Ten Books of Histories’, which include some richly anecdotal but context-light information on rulers in Brittany from about 550 to 590 and their relations with Gallo-Roman bishops and Frankish kings.<sup>8</sup> Marius of Avenches, Gregory’s contemporary,

<sup>6</sup> Procopius, *De Bellis*, V.xii and VIII.xx.7–8, ed. and transl. Dewing, *Procopius*, III.118–23 and V.254–5. Procopius implied that there existed a semi-mythical island of *Brittia*, to be distinguished from *Bretannia*: Thompson, ‘Procopius’, suggested that he was already using the name *Bretannia* for Brittany; but Tanguy, ‘Procope’, 32–3, noted that he referred to *Bretannia* as an island, and suggested that he derived names for the island of Britain from two different sources.

<sup>7</sup> Jülicher, ‘Ein gallisches Bischofsschreiben’, 665.

<sup>8</sup> *LHD*, IV.4, IV.20, V.16, V.26, V.29, IX.18, IX.24, X.9, X.11 (137–8, 152–4, 214, 232–3, 234–5, 431–2, 444, 491–5). See also Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Gloria Martyrum*, 60, transl. Van Dam, 84–5.

writing at Lausanne, independently recounted one of the same episodes.<sup>9</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, the Italian poet and hagiographer who worked in western Gaul between 565 and *ca* 600, refers obliquely to the continental Britons, mentioning *Redones Britanniae*, '[the *civitas* of] Rennes of Brittany', in his *Life of St Paternus of Avranches*, and praising Bishop Felix of Nantes in a poem as 'prevailing over the claims of the Bretons' (*iura Britannica vincens*).<sup>10</sup> The seventh-century chronicle attributed to 'Fredegar' mentions the Breton frontier (*Brittanorum limes*), a battle between Franks and Bretons in 593, and a Breton king Judicael, *fl.* 635, who also makes an appearance in the *Vita S. Eligii* attributed to Audoen of Rouen.<sup>11</sup> Columbanus, the early seventh-century monastic founder, refers to the *Brittones* near Nantes in one of his letters.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the First *Life of St Samson of Dol*, written probably in the late seventh century and based on an earlier written source, preserves what may be some authentic details about late sixth-century politics in north-eastern Brittany, which is called *Domnonia*.<sup>13</sup>

This is a meagre collection, and historians have tried to supplement it by using two approaches: deducing the likely course of events in Brittany from events elsewhere in the Insular world and continental Europe, and attempting to use sources which were put into writing later, from the ninth century onwards. Much of this book will be concerned with evaluating those later sources. The bulk of the present chapter will be taken up with a review of the existing, analogy-based models for the settlement of Brittany, suggesting some alternative perspectives.

## The Settlement of Brittany: Comparisons and Models

### *Refugees, Soldiers, Saints?*

The earliest recorded explanation for the origin of Brittany is that Britons crossed the sea to escape the occupation of their land by Angles and Saxons.<sup>14</sup> The 'refugee' hypothesis, unevicenced but reasonable in view of the political and economic turmoil of post-Roman Britain, has never been rejected outright, although scholars have attempted to refine it:

<sup>9</sup> Marius of Avenches, *Chronica*, *a.* 560, ed. Mommsen, 'Marii Episcopi Aventicensis Chronica', 237.

<sup>10</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Paterni*, 10, ed. Krusch, 36; *Carmen* III.5, ed. Leo, *Venanti Fortunati Opera Poetica*, 54; *WAB*, 231.

<sup>11</sup> *Chronicle of Fredegar*, IV.15, IV. 20, IV.78, ed. and transl. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book*, 11, 13, 66; *Vita Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis*, I.13, ed. Krusch, 618.

<sup>12</sup> Columbanus, *Epistolae*, IV.9, ed. Walker, 36–7.

<sup>13</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.59, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 232–3; for the dating see [chapter 2](#), [note 139](#) and [chapter 3](#), [note 116](#).

<sup>14</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, *s.a.* 786, ed. Kurze, 73; see [Chapter 3](#).

N. K. Chadwick suggested that Irish attacks on western Britain caused an exodus of refugees as early as the fourth century; K. H. Jackson advanced linguistic arguments for successive waves of forced departures from the south-west; Ben Guy has argued that the majority of migrants were the rural poor of Dorset.<sup>15</sup> It is easy to accept that many of those who moved to Brittany fled to escape hardship or violence. However, most historians have believed that Brittany's decisive and generally recognised change in identity can be explained only if the movement had some authoritative leadership: and this brings us to the search for analogies with the rather better-evidenced movements of the 'Age of Migrations' that changed the face of western Europe during the same period: those of the Goths, Vandals, Franks, Sueves, Lombards, Saxons and others.

These in turn are far from easy to analyse, since the surviving sources of the time are mostly unconcerned with giving detailed definitions of barbarian groups.<sup>16</sup> The shifts and evolutions in historians' general understanding of the 'Age of Migrations' have been reflected in ideas about Breton migration. When La Borderie and Loth produced their ground-breaking histories of early Brittany at the turn of the twentieth century, the Germanic migrants of Europe were seen as entire populations moving long distances with their ancestral social structures intact. Loth, accordingly, envisaged the Romano-British 'tribes' of the *Dumnonii* of south-west Britain and the *Cornovii* of the north-west Midlands removing to Brittany as large population-groups under agreed political leadership.<sup>17</sup> In the later twentieth century, this model was replaced by one in which Germanic migrants were thought to have consisted principally of armies and their dependants (although these could be numerous): on this view, the essential change over the fifth and sixth centuries was the replacement of Roman provincial government by the leadership of barbarian generals who took the title of kings, and this change had been prepared over the previous centuries by the increasing use of defeated or allied barbarian troops (*laeti* and *foederati*) to supplement the Roman army, and their settlement on Roman territory.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, first Chadwick in 1965, then Léon Fleuriot, followed by other researchers, suggested that in Brittany, as elsewhere in Europe, the essential condition for a change in identity was the settlement of an incoming army, by agreement with

<sup>15</sup> Chadwick, 'The Colonization', 262–70; Jackson, *Language and History*, 12–16 and 26; Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 120–7.

<sup>16</sup> For the difficulty of characterising groups of barbarian incomers, see, for instance, Kulikowski, 'Nation versus Army'.

<sup>17</sup> Loth, *L'émigration bretonne*, 157. The same scenario was presented by Bowen in the 1970s: *Saints, Seaways*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> For a brief account see Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 82–4.

Roman authorities. British military units, composed of Roman citizens, were in a different legal position from barbarian *foederati*, but if they came from the less Romanised military zone of the province where non-Latin languages and a non-Roman culture survived or were resurgent, the ultimate result would be similar. The theory seemed the more plausible in that a version of it was in circulation as early as the ninth century: the author of the Welsh-Latin text *Historia Brittonum* alleged that the Britons had been settled in Gaul by Magnus Maximus (emperor 383–8) after fighting to support his bid for imperial power.<sup>19</sup> More recently, however, ethnogenesis theory suggests yet another way of problematising the origin of Brittany. If it is meaningful to talk about British ethnogenesis – if post-Roman British identity was not an automatic inheritance from the Roman and pre-Roman past in Britain, but, like the identities of other post-Roman nations, had to be cultivated and enacted by new ‘strategies of distinction’ – then a single event like a transfer of troops would be insufficient to explain the continuum of conscious Britishness, and of the British language, seen in the early Middle Ages across north and west Britain and Brittany.<sup>20</sup> It could only have been produced by intercommunication over a considerable period of time, during which British and continental Britons developed their British identity in tandem. There were important differences between them, as suggested by the archaeological evidence reviewed in [Chapter 1](#). Yet the process which saw Britons transformed from Roman provincials, ruled by imperial officials, to barbarians (in their neighbours’ eyes, although they still thought of themselves as citizens, *cives*),<sup>21</sup> organised in small-scale dynastic kingdoms, speaking their own language, and distinctive in their religious practices, took place equally in both.

The account of Breton migration that was elaborated by a succession of specialist historians from the 1960s to the early 2000s dealt with these problems by suggesting that an establishment of British-speaking troops in the Armorican peninsula in the late fourth century or even earlier formed the essential bridgehead for successive waves of migration. According to this account, after participating in a series of revolts and power struggles in Gaul during the fifth century, British leaders on the Continent came to terms with the Frankish kingdom of Clovis in the early sixth, facilitating more British settlement (as described by Procopius), in

<sup>19</sup> *HB*, 27, ed. Faral, 19–21.

<sup>20</sup> Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Distinction’. Fundamental studies in the emergence of post-Roman British identity are *WAB*, 1–4, 220–41; Woolf, ‘The Britons’; Woolf, ‘British Ethnogenesis’; Hustwit, ‘The Britons’.

<sup>21</sup> For the term *cives* in post-Roman Britain and its detachment from the idea of being ‘Roman’, see *WAB*, 226–40; Charles-Edwards, ‘Making of Nations’, 25–7.

which the clergy (the saints of Breton legend) played an important part. Saints and secular leaders alike were drawn from elite families which had monopolised office-holding in western Britain for generations. Their wide-ranging interests ensured that for a time in the sixth century there would be cross-Channel rulership, accounting for the shared territorial names *Dumnonia* and *Cornubia* in Brittany and south-west Britain, and for shared personal names in later hagiography and genealogies.<sup>22</sup> However, the increasingly aggressive dominance of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and dynastic conflict among the British rulers themselves, ensured that from the late sixth century onwards British kingdoms on the two sides of the Channel would be isolated from one another and fragmented.<sup>23</sup>

The weakness of the theory is the way a heavy superstructure of detail has been built on an exiguous base of evidence. Most of its individual points can be challenged.<sup>24</sup> Its strength lies in general probability. In as militarised a world as that of the late antique Western Empire, it seems unlikely that an ethnic identity could be established and maintained, overriding pre-existing identities, without military capability; and for that identity to be generally recognised and to become permanent, in a society where the authority of the imperial office was unquestioned, implies an official concession or act of formal approval. Identifying an action that was decisive in enabling British migration, however, quickly becomes a matter of guesswork. Perhaps a more interesting question is at what point 'Britishness' of language and identity began to predominate in the migrants who determined Brittany's future. During the later Roman Empire, military activity – previously an engine of Romanisation – began to be associated with barbarian identity and with languages other than Latin.<sup>25</sup> In Britain, this began a process whereby, by about 700 (perhaps earlier in Brittany), the British language became a primary marker of British identity.<sup>26</sup> There may (as Alex Woolf and Guy Halsall have

<sup>22</sup> For the possible role of the military leadership of the *Tractus Armoricanus* in the formation of Brittany, see Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 136–7.

<sup>23</sup> Pape, *La civitas*, 223–7; Fleuriot, *Les origines*; DUBALA, esp. the summing-up at 243–4; Kerneis, *Les Celtes*; Kerneis, 'L'ancienne loi'; Giot, Guigon and Merdrignac, *The British Settlement*, 99–118; Giot, 'Des Celtes aux Bretons'; Chédeville, 'Francs et Bretons'; Tonnerre, 'L'Armorique'; Merdrignac, 'Des "royaumes doubles"'; Merdrignac, 'Le "glaive à deux tranchants"', 210–13. Bernard Merdrignac and Pierre-Roland Giot, among others, have asserted that this interpretation is unlikely to be overturned: Merdrignac and Plouchart, 'La fondation', 144; Giot, 'Des Celtes aux Bretons', 7.

<sup>24</sup> Fahy, 'When did the Britons ...?'; Brett, 'Soldiers, Saints and States?'; *WAB*, 56–74; Guy, 'The Breton Migration'; Coumert, 'Les relations'.

<sup>25</sup> Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 102–10.

<sup>26</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'The Making of Nations', 22.

variously argued) have been a moment, perhaps in the late fourth century, when the Roman state began to encourage the formation of native kingdoms with defensive capability on and even within the frontiers of Roman Britain.<sup>27</sup> The conditions for British ethnogenesis were being put into place, but it did not manifest itself until after the end of Roman power in Britain.

The career of Riothamus – obscure though it is – illustrates the process. This took place in the 470s, when Britain had been without Roman government for half a century. Roman material culture had vanished from the British lowlands, much of which had apparently passed under the control of Anglian and Saxon warlords.<sup>28</sup> In the west, as described in [Chapter 1](#), a new high-status material culture was beginning to appear in which Iron Age Celtic motifs were revisited and in which Roman symbols, such as Latin inscriptions and imported East Mediterranean pottery and glassware, were used to express allegiance to an idea of Roman civilisation rather than subjection to a now-distant emperor. Against this background, Jordanes tells us of a British ruler, Riothamus, whose power was on a considerable scale. Even if Jordanes exaggerated in stating that he commanded twelve thousand men (a number which would have approximated to the total number of Roman soldiers present in Britain in about 400, before the troop withdrawals of 406–11), he must have had enough to affect the outcome of a battle involving Roman imperial forces and a Gothic army: definitely more than the warband of a kingdom based on a single British *civitas*.<sup>29</sup> He also had the logistical means to transport his army to the Continent. But Riothamus's name was British, appropriately meaning 'great king';<sup>30</sup> and Jordanes calls him 'king of the Britons', a barbarian style of leadership, rather than using a Roman title. His significance for Brittany is that his army was based for a while north of the River Loire, and he was a member of an alliance led by the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo I, the kind of contact which might have led to an official authorisation of settlement on the empire's territory and support for more migration to come. The 470s were the starting date for imports of Phocaean Red Slipware from the eastern Mediterranean to south-west Britain.<sup>31</sup> Although this trade did not visibly affect Brittany, migration from south-west Britain to Brittany may in some way have been facilitated by the diplomatic contacts for which Riothamus's career, and the trade in

<sup>27</sup> Woolf, 'The Britons'; Woolf, 'British Ethnogenesis'; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, 519–26; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 215–19; see also Rance, 'Attacotti, Déisi'.

<sup>28</sup> *WAB*, 38–56.

<sup>29</sup> Jordanes, *De Origine*, XLV.236–8, ed. Mommsen, *Iordanis Romana et Getica*, 118–9; Collins and Breeze, 'Limitanei and Comitatuses', 64.

<sup>30</sup> Higham, *King Arthur*, 153. <sup>31</sup> *WAB*, 223; Campbell and Bowles, 'Byzantine Trade'.



pottery, are evidence. In short, Riothamus's expedition may have been the point at which the necessary conditions for the origin of Brittany – armed force, British identity and imperial fiat – coincided.<sup>32</sup> Once a political and military safeguard for British settlement was in place, Brittany would be the obvious destination for any Britons wishing to leave their homeland, and migration would be channelled there instead of being dispersed over much of northern Gaul.

### *Kingship*

In the late sixth century Gregory of Tours gives us our first detailed political snapshot (and the only one for a long time) of what Brittany had by then become. He describes a number of local rulers, designated 'counts' but with the admission that they had until recently been called kings.<sup>33</sup> The picture is uncannily similar to Gildas's diatribe against British rulers of his own time, written a few decades earlier. Both authors show leaders of kingdoms no larger (where identifiable) than a Roman *civitas*, who are first and foremost warriors, engaging in external, internecine and fratricidal warfare. They have British names, but flaunt at least some trappings of *Romanitas*: Maglocunus of Gwynedd has learned rhetoric from an 'elegant master'; the wife of Waroch of Vannes ostentatiously frees prisoners of war using the Roman ceremony of manumission.<sup>34</sup> They are Christian and flirt with ecclesiastical vocations: Maglocunus has spent time as a monk, Constantine of Dumnonia poses as an abbot, Macliauus has temporarily been bishop of Vannes.<sup>35</sup> (Frankish kings of the time, to the best of our knowledge, did not do such things.) They are forming incipient dynasties: Gildas states that two generations of the same family have been rulers, and Gregory of Tours specifies three generations in the case of the family of Waroch.<sup>36</sup> The only major difference is that while Gildas accuses most of his 'tyrants' of sexual misconduct, Gregory has none to report. In the ninth century, too, when we have detailed evidence, Breton rulers seem more monogamous than their counterparts elsewhere in western Europe.

<sup>32</sup> Following the suggestion of Charles-Edwards, *WAB*, 59–60 rather than Brett, 'Soldiers', 12–13.

<sup>33</sup> *LHD*, IV.4 (137–8); transl. Thorpe, 198–9.

<sup>34</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 36, transl. Winterbottom, 35, 104; *LHD*, X.9 (493); transl. Thorpe, 558.

<sup>35</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 34, 28, transl. Winterbottom, 33, 29, 99, 104; *LHD*, IV.4 (137–8); transl. Thorpe, 199.

<sup>36</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 31, 33, transl. Winterbottom, 31, 33, 101, 102; *LHD*, V.16, X.9 (214, 493); transl. Thorpe, 199, 558; *WAB*, 63.

The sixth-century kings presented by Gildas and Gregory are very different from the professional soldiers and imperial officials who we assume were in charge of late Roman Britain and Armorica. The development of this British kingship, which had a long future ahead of it in Wales and northern Britain, is a difficult historical problem. The word for, and hence the concept, of a 'king', the sole hereditary ruler of a people, was present in Common Celtic (and Indo-European);<sup>37</sup> kingship in Ireland probably had a continuous existence from the pre-Roman Iron Age to the Middle Ages,<sup>38</sup> and there may have been kingships in Roman times in Britain beyond the northern frontier,<sup>39</sup> but within the Roman provinces kingship was obliterated by Roman rule. Yet it re-emerged with surprising speed in the early Middle Ages. To explain this, in Britain as in continental Europe, historians have variously emphasised the contribution of concepts and models from the pre-Roman past, from Christianity and from non-Roman neighbours, the interactions of Roman policy requirements with local leadership, and the exigencies of the post-Roman political crisis. The practice and terminology of kingship in antiquity was certainly diverse, making generalisation difficult.<sup>40</sup> In Britain, at one extreme, historians argue for an uninterrupted development of kingship from pre-Roman roots, or its early re-establishment in the highland west under Roman auspices;<sup>41</sup> at the other, kingship has been compared to a protection racket with a thin veneer of legitimacy, improvised by local 'bosses' from whatever fragments were available.<sup>42</sup> Basically, however, what made kingship viable in post-Roman Europe was the fact that it had long been recognised and encouraged by the Roman Empire as a form of associate rulership for polities outside the empire but within Rome's sphere of influence. As the empire's effective control receded from most of the West, rulers could claim the title of king as a means of asserting supreme legitimate power over their own peoples, while still formally acknowledging the ultimate authority of the emperor – after 476 the Eastern Roman Emperor based in Constantinople. Kingships in the intramural zone of northern Britain (beyond Hadrian's

<sup>37</sup> McCone, "'King" and "Queen"'.  
<sup>38</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 522–85; Yorke, 'Kings and Kingship'.

<sup>39</sup> *WAB*, 35–6, 149.

<sup>40</sup> James, 'The Origins', 40–7. For the diversity of terminology and types of kingship among Germanic peoples in antiquity see Green, *Language and History*, 121–40; for Wales, see Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 10–15, 89–90.

<sup>41</sup> *WAB*, 314–6, 318–37; Woolf, 'British Ethnogenesis', 21–3.

<sup>42</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, 327, uses the term 'bricolage' for this process. For different views of kingship-formation in post-Roman Britain, see Bassett, 'In Search of the Origins'; Wickham, *Framing*, 303–33; Halsall, 'The Barbarian Invasions', 50–1, and *Worlds of Arthur*, 270–99.

Wall) may have originated in frontier client relationships while Roman government was still effective in Britain.<sup>43</sup> The same model could be followed by military commanders, whether Roman or barbarian, who attempted to act independently of the crumbling imperial structure. Such may have been the 'proud tyrant', *superbus tyrannus*, mentioned by Gildas, who took decisions that affected the whole of Britain in the generation after Roman rule ended.<sup>44</sup> Riothamus too may have been this kind of king, as may Aegidius (d. 464/5) and his son Syagrius (d. ca 487), Roman officers who clung to power in northern Gaul when effective imperial authority had ended, and were retrospectively called 'kings of the Romans'.<sup>45</sup>

Neither in Britain nor in Brittany did such post-Roman rulers succeed in maintaining large hegemonies. By the time of Gildas (approximately the 530s) small-scale kingships were the norm in Britain. The application to these of the word *rex* had a Christian dimension, which Gildas and perhaps the Church in general did much to promote. The use of *rex* in the Latin Bible to denote the anointed kings of ancient Israel and, of course, God himself, may have encouraged the growth and enhanced the legitimacy of kingship in late antiquity. In particular, Gildas's explicit identification of Britain with the Chosen People of Israel (*praesens Israel*), extending to comparisons between individual British and Israelite kings, implied acceptance of the royal status of British rulers – albeit reluctant acceptance, in line with the warnings of the prophet Samuel in I Samuel 8.<sup>46</sup> British potentates might define their power in other terms than those of kingship, but still preferably in terms which claimed a notional place in the Roman order. Voteporix, probably a member of the Irish ruling dynasty of the Demetae, was memorialised on the fifth-century stone at Castellldwyran as *protictor*, rather than *rex*.<sup>47</sup>

Brittany too had multiple kings, whose royal status was not assured: since the death of Clovis (511) the Bretons had 'remained under the domination of the Franks and their rulers were called counts and not kings'.<sup>48</sup> If Riothamus, or any other representative of Rome, had implanted

<sup>43</sup> Dick, *Der Mythos*, 213; Fraser, *From Caledonia to Pictland*, 30–42 and 61–7.

<sup>44</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 23, transl. Winterbottom, 26, 97.

<sup>45</sup> LHD, II.27 (71); transl. Thorpe, 139; James, 'The Origins', 46, and references.

<sup>46</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 26, transl. Winterbottom, 28, 98: *boni regis nequam fili, ut Ezechiae Manasses, Demetarum tyranne Vortipori*: 'bad son of a good king (like Manasseh son of Hezekiah), Vortipor, tyrant of the Demetae': Gildas, *De Excidio*, 31, transl. Winterbottom, 31, 101.

<sup>47</sup> Edwards, *A Corpus*, 205–6 (CM3); Sims-Williams, 'Dating the Transition', 226; Wickham, *Framing*, 327. For the title see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 53–4, 598, 636–40; Charles-Edwards, 'Language and Society', 715.

<sup>48</sup> *Nam semper Brittani sub Francorum potestatem post obitum regis Chlodovechi fuerunt, et comites, non reges appellati sunt*: LHD, IV.4 (137–8); transl. Thorpe, 199.

a single kingship in Brittany, it had fractured into smaller units, paralleling the trajectory of kingship in Britain. This may partly explain the kings' readiness to settle for a non-royal title in return for recognition by a higher authority – although early kings in Britain might likewise have been prepared to trade their royalty for a place in a stable hierarchy of power, if such had existed. It is noteworthy that the author of the First Life of St Samson, writing perhaps in the late seventh century of Breton rulers in sixth-century Domnonia, does not use the word *rex* either: he calls the usurper Commorus *iudex* ('judge', a term also used of British kings by Gildas, and of a fourth-century Gothic king, Athanaric, by St Ambrose) and his rival Jonas *praesul* ('patron, protector', comparable to Voteporix's title *protector*).<sup>49</sup>

In the mid-630s, however, the Bretons had a fully fledged king: Judicael, called *rex* by two independent external and near-contemporary sources, the Chronicle of 'Fredegar' and *Vita S. Eligii*.<sup>50</sup> The sources do not specify which part of Brittany he ruled, and it seems unlikely that he dominated the whole of it, but he was not a negligible ruler. According to 'Fredegar', he was persuaded to recognise the supremacy of the Frankish King Dagobert I, attending his court and promising to make amends for unspecified damage done by the Bretons; he refused to eat with Dagobert, on religious grounds, but despite this insult he departed laden with gifts in an interaction presented as a significant success for the Frankish king. In Britain, too, kingships seemed to be on an upward trajectory early in the seventh century. The first British ruler to be commemorated as *rex* in a contemporary inscription was Cadfan of Gwynedd, who died in 625: *Catamanus sapientissimus opinatissimus omnium regum*, 'the wisest and most renowned of all kings'.<sup>51</sup> His son and successor, Cadwallon, took British kingship to the height of its military effectiveness in 633–4 when, in alliance with Penda of Mercia, he killed the king of Northumbria and spent a year ravaging that kingdom.<sup>52</sup> In south-east Wales, the dynasty of Meurig ap Tewdrig was beginning a rise to consolidated power at the expense of minor royal families.<sup>53</sup>

So far the direction of political development in western Britain and Brittany seems the same; even to the extent that Breton rulers, like their British counterparts, achieved their most visible successes on their

<sup>49</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.53–9, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 224–33; Schaffner, 'Britain's *Iudices*'; James, 'The Origins', 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Iudacae rex Brittanorum* (twice) in *Chronicle of Fredegar*, IV.78, ed. and transl. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book*, 66; *Brittanorum princeps* and *rex* in *Vita Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis*, I.13, ed. Krusch, 618.

<sup>51</sup> Edwards, *A Corpus*, III.180–3 (AN26).

<sup>52</sup> *WAB*, 345, 389–90; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.20, ed. and transl. Colgrave and Mynors, 202–5.

<sup>53</sup> W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, 65–95.

frontiers, consolidating resources through raiding and the seizure of territory. On the border with Francia, Breton leaders could take possession of a walled Gallo-Roman city (Vannes), could raid the richer lands to the east and amass treasure to reward their followers and occasionally acquire ecclesiastical offices that delivered meaningful power.<sup>54</sup> While British-speaking settlers may eventually have isolated and outnumbered Romance-speakers most thoroughly in the west of Brittany, already in the sixth century political power may have been centred in the east (as it has been at most times since).<sup>55</sup> Thus, the power of Breton kings derived partly (and parasitically) from their relationship with Francia, but it may also have partly depended on continued contact with polities in Britain.

### *Territories*

So far, kingship in Brittany has been discussed only in general terms, but at this point it is desirable to consider individual named territories within Brittany and their possible relationships with Britain.

One of the long-standing assumptions of early Breton history is that sixth- to eighth-century Brittany was divided into three political units: Domnonia, Cornouaille and the Vannetais or *Brouuerech*.<sup>56</sup> Gregory of Tours's sketch of the career of Waroch of Vannes shows the last in the process of formation in the late sixth century. The other two are presumed to have pre-existed and to be associable with the other two leading families mentioned by Gregory, the dynasties of Conomor and Bodic. This picture may be too tidy; however, it is tempting to see Waroch's capture of Vannes (578) as a disruption of an earlier situation in which the main Breton polities were defined by their association with regions in Britain. This, in turn, was a wholesale disruption of the earlier *civitas*-structures of the Roman period: the *civitas* of the Osismi was both dismembered to form Cornouaille, and partly amalgamated with that of the Coriosolites to form Domnonia.<sup>57</sup>

The question of the early relationship between Brittany and south-west Britain is raised in its most acute form by the doubling of regional names in the south-west peninsula of Britain and in Brittany itself. Both peninsulas contain a *Domnonia* in the north and a *Cornubia* in the south (with variations in spelling).<sup>58</sup> Even a sub-regional name is duplicated: the

<sup>54</sup> On the importance of Vannes, see also Guy, 'The Breton Migration', 141.

<sup>55</sup> For a comparable argument in relation to the settlement of England, see Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 250–2, 289–91.

<sup>56</sup> *WAB*, 68–9 and references. <sup>57</sup> *WAB*, 23–6, 56–8.

<sup>58</sup> The name of the region of Brittany now called Cornouaille in French poses a particular problem because in medieval Latin sources it appeared in a variety of forms. Their evolution is historically significant in itself, and to choose any one of them is to prejudice

*pagus Tricurius* (the hundred of Trigg) in Cornwall parallels *Treger* in Brittany (modern French Tréguier).<sup>59</sup> In maximalist interpretations, the identity of names becomes evidence for well-defined political units straddling the English Channel, created as part of a late-Roman settlement; minimalist views suggest that the names as applied to Brittany were merely vague popular appellations or even the inventions of the ninth-century hagiographers of Landévennec.<sup>60</sup> Yet regional names are not bestowed, and do not persist, without good reason: they must imply that regional identities in Brittany were formed under a strong and lasting influence from the corresponding British regions.

The British derivation of these names seems clear. The *Dumnonii* of south-west Britain, with their capital at Exeter, are listed in Ptolemy's *Geography*, dating from the mid-second century, as one of the *civitates* constituting Roman Britain.<sup>61</sup> A few historical references show that the region survived the end of Roman Britain as an autonomous political unit, but most of it was absorbed by Saxon Wessex during the eighth century (at latest).<sup>62</sup> What is now the county of Cornwall had apparently belonged to the *civitas* of the *Dumnonii*; the first clear reference to Cornwall, under the Latin name *Cornubia*, is in about 700, just as eastern Dumnonia was undergoing conquest.<sup>63</sup> It seems reasonable to infer that British Cornwall had existed since Roman times and earlier as a sub-

various issues. It would also be potentially misleading to use the Breton form *Kernev*, since it is not directly attested in early medieval sources. The solution adopted here is to use the modern French *Cornouaille*, but readers should be aware that this is ahistorical and merely conventional. For the Roman and post-Roman south-western British kingdom, *Dumnonia* is used, and for the northern Breton region, *Domnonia*, again, conventionally: *Dumnonii* is the name used in Ptolemy's *Geography* for the inhabitants of the far south-west of Britain, and is never found in connection with Brittany; in the early Middle Ages *Domnonia* is used for both, probably under the influence of Latin orthography (Jackson, *Language and History*, 259–60, 275).

<sup>59</sup> *Vita I.S. Samsonis*, I.48, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 216–7; *Vita I.S. Tudualis*, 2, ed. La Borderie, 'Saint Tudual', 85; *WAB*, 23–4; Tanguy, 'Les pagi bretons', 381–2. It is not certain that the Breton name derives from the Cornish one since a similar regional name occurs in other parts of Gaul.

<sup>60</sup> For references, see Merdrignac, 'Présence', 84–5, note 9. For examples of maximalist and minimalist views, see Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 166; Coumert, 'Le peuplement', 35–42.

<sup>61</sup> Ptolemy, *Geography*, II.2, ed. and transl. Stevenson, 49–51; Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names*, 242–3. See Coumert, 'Le peuplement', 17–21, based on Strang, 'Explaining Ptolemy's Roman Britain'.

<sup>62</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS. A, s.a. 823, ed. Bately, 41; transl. Whitelock et al., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 40. See *WAB*, 22; Padel, 'Asser's *Parochia*', 66; Probert, 'New Light'.

<sup>63</sup> Aldhelm, *Carmen rhythmicum*, lines 8–10, ed. Ehwald, 524; English translation in Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm*, 177–9. The only possibly earlier reference to Cornwall is a garbled place-name in the 'Ravenna Cosmography' (compiled ca 700 AD on the basis of earlier sources): *purocoronauis*, for which the emendation *Durocornauis* or *Durocornouium* ('fort of the Cornish') has been suggested: Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names*, 324–5.

region of Dumnonia, and that its name emerged into history during the century and a half (approximately) that it was the only surviving remnant of the British polity. However, there were also *Cornovii* in the West Midlands, placed by Ptolemy around Wroxeter (*Viriconium*), perhaps forerunners of the early medieval Welsh kingdom of Powys; and there was another group of the same name in the far north of Scotland.<sup>64</sup> Joseph Loth believed that it was the West Midland *Cornovii* who migrated to Brittany.<sup>65</sup> A link with Cornwall seems more plausible, but the appearance of some apparently Powysian saints' names in Breton Cornouaille (see Chapter 6) warns against hasty conclusions. In Brittany, both names appear later than in Britain: *Domnonia* in the seventh-century Life of St Samson, *Cornubia* not until the third quarter of the ninth century.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, in Brittany the names are not people-names (as were most of the earlier *civitas*-names of Gaul and Britain), but territorial names: their inhabitants are not designated *Cornubi*/*Cornovii* or *Domnonii*, but *Cornugillenses*, *Domnonenses* and similar secondary formations.<sup>67</sup> Unlike instances of 'name-twinning' in Roman times – *Parisi* and *Atrebates* are found both in Britain and in Gaul, for example – there is a 'borrowed' aspect to the Breton names, despite Wrdisten's assertion that Cornouaille was an ancestral homeland, a *patria*.<sup>68</sup>

Domnonia in Brittany is known exclusively from hagiographical sources, beginning with the seventh-century *Vita I S. Samsonis*. In this text, St Samson arrives from Cornwall at an unspecified point on the north coast of Brittany, and founds his principal monastery at Dol, not far from the present border with Normandy. He then travels to visit the Merovingian king, Childebert, to intercede for Judual, the son of an earlier ruler, whom the king has imprisoned at the instigation of 'Commorus', an 'unjust and external judge' (*iniustus et externus iudex*) who has usurped his rule. The story climaxes with Judual, once released, setting sail from the mouth of the Seine and travelling to Jersey and Guernsey to collect fighting men with whom he returns to *Domnonia* to defeat 'Commorus' in battle: this is the only time that *Domnonia* is named.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *WAB*, 14–17; Sims-Williams, 'Degrees of Celticity', 9; Webster, *The Cornovii*, 18–21.

<sup>65</sup> Loth, *L'émigration*, 157.

<sup>66</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.59, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 232–3; Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 13, 30; Guillotel, 'Le premier siècle', 64–8.

<sup>67</sup> W. Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 18–21, emphasises the territorial sense of political nomenclature in early medieval Wales; this seems to mark a change from the Romano-British period when *civitates* were given the collective names of their peoples, *Dobunni*, *Carvetii* and the like.

<sup>68</sup> Jones and Mattingly, *An Atlas*; Koch (ed.), *Celtic Culture*, I.312–13; *Vita S. Winwaloei* II.19, ed. De Smedt, 232.

<sup>69</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.53–9, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 224–33.



There is much in this account that is suggestive of the continuation of an earlier relationship between north-east Brittany and Britain. We note that Judual was able to use sea transport for military purposes (so, incidentally, was Waroch of Vannes, according to Gregory of Tours).<sup>70</sup> But this was only one facet of the relationship. Comparative study of migration suggests that for a population to establish itself, two-way traffic between the source and the destination of the migrants is needed, and movement proceeds along familiar routes to established entry points.<sup>71</sup> The most active port of contact between Brittany and Britain had always been Alet (Saint-Malo), about 30 km from Dol, connecting primarily with the coast of Dorset. As mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), the fourth-century pottery from Dorset, Black Burnished Ware, is found in large quantities at Alet. The ware may have continued in production until some time in the fifth century.<sup>72</sup> Alet, as an active port and a military strongpoint, was both an obvious point of entry for British migrants of any sort and a centre that any would-be ruler of Brittany needed to control. That the Channel Islands were effectively Breton during the early Middle Ages is confirmed by surviving British inscriptions on Jersey and Guernsey and by ninth-century hagiographical texts.<sup>73</sup> A group of five seventh- to ninth-century British-language inscriptions at Wareham in Dorset, extreme outliers geographically and chronologically from any related groups of inscriptions in Britain, might even be evidence for the existence of an elite group of Bretons, with their own ecclesiastical leadership, maintaining a presence for a long period at the British end of the Saint-Malo–Channel Islands–Dorset route established since prehistory.<sup>74</sup> By this route, British settlers could have continued to arrive in Brittany during the sixth and seventh centuries both from Dorset and from Devon; the name *Dommonia* suggests that links with Devon had become more important by the late sixth century. The prevalence of early *plou*- place-names all along the north coast fits with the impression of geographically coherent and organised migration.

In north-east Brittany itself, a cluster of rich religious establishments with relatively early evidence – the bishopric of Alet, the monastery of Saint-Méen (apparently attached to Alet, and owning many possessions

<sup>70</sup> *LHD*, X.9 (491–3); transl. Thorpe, 557.

<sup>71</sup> Halsall, ‘Two Worlds Become One’, 528.

<sup>72</sup> Gerrard, ‘How Late Is Late?’ For sea transport, see also [Chapter 1](#).

<sup>73</sup> W. Davies et al., *The Inscriptions*, 302–4; Merdrignac, ‘Horizons insulaires’, 153–8; *Miracula S. Wandregisili*, ed. Holder-Egger, 406–9; *Vita S. Maglorii*, ed. Van Hecke, 790; *Vita I S. Marculphi*, II.13, ed. Henschen and Papebroch, 75. For early medieval sources on the Channel Islands, in general, see Ridel, ‘Sur la route des Vikings’.

<sup>74</sup> Cramp (ed.), *Corpus*, VII, 65, 116–24, illustrations 114–41, and references. For linguistic evidence that the inscriptions may be Breton, see Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions*, 87–8.



by the time of Charlemagne), and the monastic bishopric of Dol – testifies to large-scale landowning.<sup>75</sup> No other part of early medieval Brittany contains evidence for such a concentration of landed wealth: a potential royal central zone which would have enabled its rulers to project their power westward along the north coast. All this being so, it is not surprising that Judicael, the one early Breton ruler to be unequivocally called a king, was based in this area. The genealogical tradition that Judicael was a grandson of St Samson's protégé Judual, and the persistence of hagiographical traditions about him, may point to the existence of a long-lasting and effective kingship here.<sup>76</sup> As will be seen in [Chapter 5](#), there is some evidence that Judicael's family retained wealth and political importance, if not royalty, into the second half of the ninth century, surviving the Carolingian conquest. Domnonia was still a familiar concept to hagiographers at the time: the Lives of Sts Winwaloe and Paul Aurelian name rulers of Domnonia (pre-dating Judicael) and refer to specific sub-regions, *pagi*, within it ([Map 2.1](#)).<sup>77</sup> However, it had been dismembered by 819/20 when a Frankish count, Rorgon, was in control of Poutrocoët, its inland eastern part.<sup>78</sup> It was never to be revived as a political unit, although it continued to be mentioned as a literary trope in saints' Lives composed in the central Middle Ages.

Breton Cornouaille, meanwhile, is not named at all in pre-ninth-century sources. Thereafter, it appears under two alternative Latin names: *Cornubia* and *Cornugallia*. In the 850s, it was the sphere of action of a bishop, according to a charter from Redon which mentions Anaweten, *cornogallensis* [*sic*] *episcopus*.<sup>79</sup> The preface to the Hymn to St Winwaloe by Clement states that Clement wrote while Rivelen was ruler of Cornubia (*rector Cornubiae*) and Salomon (857–74) ruled Brittany.<sup>80</sup> In the slightly later *Vita S. Winwaloei* by Wrdisten, *Cornubia* is lauded in verse as a political unit that had had a glorious past, but had in some undefined sense been laid low, undergone a 'subjection' and 'bows defeated under an external rod'.<sup>81</sup> This subjection did not lead to its disappearance, however. A *comes Cornubiae* is mentioned in a mid-tenth century charter from Landévennec.<sup>82</sup> In the early eleventh century a new

<sup>75</sup> Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 53–5, 68–71; Guillotel, 'Les origines du ressort', 59; Brett, 'Monasteries, Migration'.

<sup>76</sup> For Judicael, see also [Chapter 5](#). <sup>77</sup> Tanguy, 'Les *pagi* bretons', 372–83.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 70–1; CR, 164, pp. 127–8.

<sup>79</sup> CR, Appendix 31, p. 366, discussed in DUBALA, 145 and note 11.

<sup>80</sup> *Vita S. Winwaloei*, ed. De Smedt, 263, discussed by Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 13, 30; Guillotel, 'Le premier siècle', 64–8.

<sup>81</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, II.20, ed. De Smedt, 231: *Item de eius subiectione. At nunc pressa iacet heroum orbata potentum / Caede gemens uicta externo sub fasce reflexa.*

<sup>82</sup> CL, 24, p. 561.

dynasty assumed the title (*comes Cornubiensis*, *Cornugallensis*), and in 1066 its holder became duke of Brittany.<sup>83</sup> From the ninth century onwards, then, the political reality of Cornouaille is assured, at exactly the time that Domnonia's disappears.

The name *Cornubia* used by the Landévennec sources is identical to the term first used by Aldhelm for Cornwall in Britain *ca* 700 (an artificial latinisation of the tribal name *Cornovii*), while *Cornugallia* and its adjectival forms are derived from the Old English word for the Cornish (*Cornwealas*) rather than a Brittonic form.<sup>84</sup> Does this imply that Breton Cornouaille came into existence as a separate political unit at the same time that British Cornwall did – in an event linked to the collapse of the greater Dumnonia in Britain? Probably not: scholarly Latin terminology is not necessarily a guide to contemporary usage, still less to political reality. There is evidence that a vernacular word for Cornouaille was in early use in Brittany, as there is not for Domnonia. The *Corn-* element is found compounded in place-names in other parts of Brittany: *plebs Cornou* on the Vilaine (now Pierric) and *Rancornou* or *Rancornuc* in Marzan (now Rangornet) are mentioned in ninth-century charters from Redon, and Plouguerneau in Léon is recorded as *Ploekerneu ca* 1330.<sup>85</sup> The element is directly cognate with *Cernyw*, the word used in Welsh texts from the ninth century onwards for Insular Cornwall.<sup>86</sup> If the place-names imply the existence of settlements of recognisably Cornish or Cornouaillais people in the ninth century or before, outside Cornouaille, this complicates matters. It implies that in Brittany, *Corn-*ishness was after all seen as a personal and ethnic designation, prior to being a territorial one, in a way that being 'Domnonian' was not. The length of time over which Bretons interacted with Cornwall in Britain, after British Dumnonia had lost its identity in English Devonshire, may explain this. It does not, however, elucidate the origins of Breton Cornouaille as a territorial unit. The region that became the heartland of Cornouaille in the eleventh century, between the secular capital, Quimper, and the leading monastery, Quimperlé, contains scarcely any place-names in *plou*.<sup>87</sup> This may possibly

<sup>83</sup> *CL*, 36, p. 567, dated 1008 × 1019 (Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 107); *CR*, 356, p. 308, dated 1021.

<sup>84</sup> Merdrignac, *DUBALA*, 134, suggests that the Landévennec authors' Cornish terminology may have been derived directly from Aldhelm's, as Aldhelm's *Enigmata* were known and quoted in Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloëi* (Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 417). For *Cornubia* see Padel, *A Popular Dictionary*, 72–3.

<sup>85</sup> *Plebs Cornou* or *Cornon*: *CR*, 57, 108, 184, 224, 225, 124, pp. 45, 82, 143, 173, 174, 193; *Rancornou*: *CR*, 266, 334, pp. 216, 284; Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 130–1; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Redon* (facsimile edn.), 60; Tanguy, 'Cornou'; *DUBALA*, 224.

<sup>86</sup> *WAB*, 16, 24; Jackson, *A Historical Phonology*, 241–2.

<sup>87</sup> *Plou*-names are absent from an area bounded approximately by the rivers Odet (in the west) and Scorff (in the east) and the Montagnes Noires in the north. Plourin, 'Questions d'onomastique', 198; Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 129–30.

suggest that Cornouaille originated in a different phase, or a different kind of migration from that which produced Domnonia. There is no pre-twelfth-century hagiography from Cornouaille, and its leading saints – Corentin, Tudi, Ronan, Budoc, Melor – all seem to have had important connections in other parts of Brittany, or to have been promoted from Landévennec, a church that lay on the border with Domnonia and had a Domnonian founder. Either Cornouaille had missed out on an important phase of church-establishment in Brittany's early centuries, or the memory of any such phase had been superseded.

There may have been other early political units in Brittany. Two candidates especially worth noting are Léon and Poher. Their names suggest that they were founded on Roman strongpoints, and they may therefore represent earlier and more circumscribed polities than do the somewhat vague ethno-territorial labels *Domnonia* and *Cornubia*. Léon (from *legio-nem*, 'legion'), a diocese and a self-contained region in the north-west of Brittany throughout the Middle Ages, is first mentioned in Wrmonoc's *Vita Pauli Aureliani* (884).<sup>88</sup> Poher, \**pagus Caer*, 'the territory of the [ancient or ruined] Roman city', may have been a long-lasting remnant of the Roman *civitas* of the Osismi, named as it was for the *civitas*-capital, Carhaix. It appears in ninth-century sources as the sphere of action of counts, related to the line of Breton rulers installed by the Carolingians.<sup>89</sup> Most scholars have identified it with Cornouaille, but it seems in fact to have been a separate unit in the ninth century.<sup>90</sup> Like the larger and smaller kingdoms of Wales, the sub-regions of Brittany may have varied in nature as well as extent, Domnonia and Cornouaille perhaps being conglomerates that only sometimes took effective political shape, while Léon, Poher and other *pagi* might be attached to or detached from them according to circumstances. A 'layering' of power at the sub-regional, regional and provincial levels (Alet, Domnonia and Brittany) is suggested by separate anecdotes involving rulers in Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* (ca 865 × 872).<sup>91</sup>

What are we to make of the idea that individual rulers in sixth-century Brittany held hegemonies spanning the Breton and the Insular *Domnonia* and *Cornubia*? The prime candidate for such rulership is 'Conomor'. Charles-Edwards has established that the 'unjust' ruler *Commorus* in the First Life of St Samson, and the protagonists of two separate Breton

<sup>88</sup> Tanguy, 'Les pagi bretons', 378–9.

<sup>89</sup> *CR*, 107, 247, pp. 81, 198–9: *Riuuallon comme Poucaer; Iedechael princeps Poucher*. See Pettiau, 'A Prosopography', 178, 182; Tanguy, 'Les pagi bretons', 387–8.

<sup>90</sup> Guillotel, 'Le premier siècle', 64–8; Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 231–2; Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 12–13, 35–6; *contra*, Yeurch, 'Poher et Cornouaille', 58–61. For further discussion, see Coumert, 'Le peuplement', 42; Jankulak, 'Breton *Vitae*', 220, note 8.

<sup>91</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.34, 37, ed. Lot, 375, 377.

episodes in the Histories of Gregory of Tours, *Chonomoris* and *Chonoober*, given their close correspondence in time and place, are likely to have been one and the same person, whom he proposes to call Conomor and locate in Breton *Dommonia* in about 546 to 560.<sup>92</sup> The Life of Samson calls him *externus*, implying that he was an interloper of some kind.<sup>93</sup> Nora Chadwick suggested he was a Gallo-Roman;<sup>94</sup> recent Breton historiography has favoured the theory that he was a Briton with a cross-Channel military command recognised by the Frankish kings. This is based in part on the statement in the ninth-century *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani* that a king 'Mark, who was called by another name Quonomorius', in an uncertain location somewhere between the saint's origins in Wales and his destination in Brittany, had 'four languages of diverse peoples ... subject to his command' (see Chapter 3).<sup>95</sup> The same character has also been argued to be the *Cu[n]omorus* who is mentioned in a sixth-century inscription at Castle Dore, Fowey, in Cornwall, and the *Kynwazur* who appears in a section of the fourteenth-century Jesus College MS 20 collection of Welsh genealogies, in a pedigree that seems to contain both real and legendary rulers of south-west Britain.<sup>96</sup> The chain of identifications that this suggests can become unstoppable. André-Yves Bourgès, followed by Bernard Merdrignac, has identified Conomor (on the basis of the \**cuno-*, 'hound' element in his name) with Aurelius Caninus ('dog-like'), one of the 'five tyrants' of Britain criticised by Gildas.<sup>97</sup> The Latin name Aurelius then allows further family connections to be postulated: St Paul Aurelian himself, 'Afrella', the Gwentian aunt of Samson in that saint's *Vita*, and Ambrosius Aurelianus, the victor of Gildas's Battle of Mount Badon *ca* 500. Such a 'clan' would have had wide-ranging interests from South Wales through the south-west peninsula to Brittany: their ultimate ancestor, it is suggested, was Marcus Aurelius Carausius, the Menapian who ruled Britain in defiance of the Roman Empire in 286–93.<sup>98</sup> This

<sup>92</sup> WAB, 67–8. <sup>93</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.53, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 224–5.

<sup>94</sup> Chadwick, *Early Brittany*, 223.

<sup>95</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.8, ed. Cuissard, 431.

<sup>96</sup> Okasha, *Corpus*, no. 10, 91–6. The first line of text has been reported as containing various different names including DRUSTANVS, but in Okasha's opinion the name is 'irrecoverable'; for discussion, see Padel, 'The Cornish Background', 55; Padel, 'Some South-Western Sites', 240–3. *Ach Morgan ab Owain* from Jesus College, Oxford, 20, sections 10–11, *EWGT*, 45, and ed. Guy, 'Jesus College 20', 341; Pearce, 'The Traditions'.

<sup>97</sup> Bourgès, 'Commor'.

<sup>98</sup> Merdrignac, 'Des origines insulaires', 72–5; Merdrignac, 'Des royaumes doubles', 60–1; DUBALA, 217–25. See also Padel, 'Some South-Western Sites' and 'The Cornish Background', 77–9. The usefulness of the name Aurelius to trace specific family connections is reduced by the fact that it was widely adopted as an additional name signifying newly acquired Roman citizenship after the Edict of Caracalla (212) extending citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire: Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 386–8.

reconstruction outdoes those of medieval genealogists, making the adoption of Magnus Maximus as an ancestor of Welsh dynasties seem positively modest.

Similar extrapolations have been made in relation to Theuderic son of Bodic, another of the late sixth-century Breton rulers mentioned by Gregory of Tours. Theuderic's name as given is a Frankish one, and has been taken to imply that Bodic enjoyed Frankish patronage or even a marriage alliance.<sup>99</sup> Gregory tells us that Theuderic was driven into exile by a neighbouring ruler, Macliavus, but eventually gathered *a Britannia viris* and regained his lands. Gregory's phrase is usually translated as 'a band of Bretons', but, as Charles-Edwards points out, it might equally well mean 'men from Britain', and imply that Theuderic had been able to retreat to south-west Britain or Wales and mobilise support there, as Judual is said to have done on the Channel Islands.<sup>100</sup> This possibility does not necessarily support the additional conjectures that occurrences of the name *Tezdwdr* in Welsh genealogy are due to a family connection with this half-Breton, half-Frankish Theuderic; or that a story of the exile of a Breton Budic to Wales in a twelfth-century saint's Life, that of St Oudoceus from Llandaf, derives from a genuine and independently preserved tradition of Theuderic's exile (see [Chapters 5 and 7](#)).<sup>101</sup> Nor need this family necessarily have been based in Cornouaille, as most historians have deduced by a process of elimination. Poher or the western Vannetais are other possibilities.

The literary careers of Conomor, Bodic and other characters will be traced further in subsequent chapters. The view taken here is that the surviving evidence does not permit a detailed account of their historical careers, nor of the establishment of Brittany in general. However, the evidence does strongly suggest that Breton kingship until the seventh century was an extension of British kingship, perhaps as dependent on British as on Frankish political support and patronage; and the names of the larger regions of Brittany, Domnonia and Cornubia, linked as they are to British polities which survived – or in the case of Cornwall, emerged – as late as the seventh and eighth centuries, may likewise imply long-lasting political influence from south-west Britain in particular. Correspondingly, the existence of the large territory of Brittany, absorbing migrants and attracting political ambitions, must have had a considerable impact on political outcomes in western Britain, although we have little evidence on the matter.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Quaghebeur, 'Structures politiques', 19–20.

<sup>100</sup> *LHD*, V.16 (214); transl. Thorpe, 273; transl. Buchner, I.309 (*bretonische Männer*); *WAB*, 69.

<sup>101</sup> *DUBALA*, 119–24. <sup>102</sup> *WAB*, 73–4; Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*, 257.

*A Lost Century?*

After the 630s, evidence for Breton kingship vanishes for over a century. Frankish writers had nothing to report on Brittany and Brittany produced no source-material of its own. The next Breton king we hear of is Morman, who led a rebellion against the Emperor Louis and was killed in battle in 818.<sup>103</sup> As one might expect, Frankish authors denied the legitimacy of his kingship, and it is unclear whether he belonged to any established royal family. Subsequently the royal title was used only by members of the dynasty of Nominoe, established in power by the Carolingians in 831 (see [Chapter 3](#)). Did Breton kingship, after starting level with the post-Roman kingships of Britain, simply fade away? Or if not, what was the reason for its prolonged period of obscurity?

To a degree, Brittany's obscurity in the late seventh and eighth centuries continues to mirror Celtic Britain. There, too, very little surviving source-material was produced. While kingdoms in north and south-west Britain fell to Anglian and Saxon expansion, in Wales, the implication of exiguous annals and slightly later genealogical records is that kingships stabilised, with no large-scale changes to the political map until the Viking Age.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps the situation in Brittany was similar. However, if the decline in the dynamism of Breton kingship was still greater, some explanations can be found.

From the beginning, British rulers in Brittany faced greater difficulties than did either successful barbarian military kings or post-Roman British kings. In contrast to the Saxons, they could not draw on generations of experience as mercenaries, raiders and general opportunists on the fringes of the Roman Empire; nor, if they were newcomers, did they have the advantage of belonging to long-standing local networks as British kings did. In Britain itself, archaeology shows that rulers enhanced their power by appropriating ancestral places and prehistoric features in the landscape;<sup>105</sup> in Brittany, as noted in [Chapter 1](#), there is no clear archaeological evidence for royal or aristocratic activity before the ninth century.

The key to the divergence between Celtic Britain and Brittany may be the disparity in the resources available to kings and aristocrats. In Britain, it seems that the withdrawal of the Roman state led to a breakdown not only of the tax system but also of landownership as understood in Roman law. By the seventh century, full and exclusive state-backed rights to land had been replaced by complicated overlapping rights and mutual obligations (not clearly defined in surviving sources), which had originated in

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 63–6.      <sup>104</sup> Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 31–5.

<sup>105</sup> Hustwit, 'The Britons', 254–9, 263, 304–14, and references (accessed 26 August 2020).



the need to renegotiate political power in the state's absence.<sup>106</sup> This was true both in Anglo-Saxon and in British-dominated regions. Seventh-century kingships, however improvised their origins, were well established at the apex of these 'ranked' societies and had time-honoured common features. A king itinerated within a core territory, supported by hospitality from his leading aristocrats and a standardised system of food renders from other subjects; feasting, display and the business of rulership took place at archaeologically identifiable central places.<sup>107</sup> In Francia, by contrast, Roman state structures survived to a greater extent. Aristocrats retained their rights as exclusive landowners; the Merovingian kings, although they gradually lost the ability to levy universal taxation, compensated for this by their own huge landed wealth. Like Insular rulers they itinerated, moving between royal estates and palaces, but these are less visible archaeologically than their Insular counterparts, partly because defence was not a key requirement.

In Brittany, it may be suggested that kingship was not able to develop fully either along British/English or Frankish lines. The breakdown in Roman resources for ruling had been at once too thorough and not thorough enough. Kings in Brittany may, for instance, have been able to draw on Roman fiscal resources by delegation either from the imperial government itself or from Frankish kings,<sup>108</sup> but in practice these resources are likely to have been depleted through rebellion, repression and general insecurity already by the late fifth century; even before that, the region may not have been fiscally self-supporting. There were no active civic or commercial centres west of Vannes. The division of the *civitates* of the Osismi and Coriosolites, and the complete disappearance of the name of the former, imply that Breton rulers were unable or unwilling to maintain the *civitas*-structures.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, unlike in Britain, exclusive legal landownership seems to have survived; but in contrast to Francia, large-scale aristocratic landowning seems to have been a rarity and small peasant proprietors – hard to tax on any rewarding scale – were correspondingly numerous.

This brings us to another potential factor in the relative weakness of Breton kingship: the strength of the local communities or village territories called *plebes* in Latin, *ploue* in Breton. Place-names containing the *plou*-

<sup>106</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, 306–33; Wendy Davies, however, has argued that in south-east Wales the decisive move away from late Roman landowning structures took place in the eighth century: W. Davies, 'Land and Power'.

<sup>107</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, 303–54; Charles-Edwards, 'Early Medieval Kingships'.

<sup>108</sup> Quaghebeur, 'Structures politiques', 21–37, esp. p. 32; Gendry, *De l'Armorique*, 73–83.

<sup>109</sup> *Contra* Quaghebeur, 'Structures politiques', 21, who argues that the three ruling families of Brittany mentioned by Gregory of Tours corresponded to the three westernmost *civitates* of the peninsula.

element are found in most parts of Brittany and there is plentiful evidence in charters and hagiography for the *plebes* as functioning, ubiquitous institutions in the ninth century. (See [Chapter 1](#) and, more fully, [Chapter 6](#).) Their origins have been much and inconclusively discussed. Some historians suggest that they originated in the installation of groups of British soldiers on the land in the fifth century (although the ninth-century *plebes* have no apparent military function); others have seen their genesis as primarily ecclesiastical.<sup>110</sup> A recent theory combines both ideas, suggesting that they originated as (secular) groups of migrants who asserted their British identity in religious separatism but eventually absorbed the whole rural population.<sup>111</sup> In any case, *plebes* appear in the Redon charters as communities consisting mainly of peasant owner-cultivators, with hereditary leaders called *machtierns* who presided over legal proceedings and exacted dues of various kinds, regulating their own affairs with no routine responsibility to lords or other higher authorities.<sup>112</sup> There is no precisely analogous institution either in Britain or in Francia, suggesting that the *plebes* were created by the particular circumstances of the Breton migration and settlement. They may be the key to understanding how British language and identity spread to the non-British majority: a classic case of incoming migrants dominating not through ‘complex power structures’, which probably did not exist in late fifth- and sixth-century west Armorica, but by ‘directly implanting themselves within local communities’, or indeed creating such communities for themselves.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps, also, by analogy with the Franks in Gaul, the British immigrants were originally exempt from tax, making British identity covetable by the non-British majority.<sup>114</sup>

Did a weakening of kingship in Brittany allow the *plebes* to develop their unique autonomy, or was the power of kingship limited from the beginning by the strength of *plebs*-communities? The *plebes* rested on the property-rights of their small-scale peasant proprietors: a version of individual landownership ultimately founded on Roman law, in contrast to the superimposed royal, lordly and family rights over land that developed in early medieval Britain.<sup>115</sup> The implication may be that the *plebes* preserved social structures to which Breton rulers were obliged to adapt from the first, even in the Redon area, near Vannes, where we have good

<sup>110</sup> Kerneis, ‘Le soin des âmes’; Tanguy, ‘Les paroisses bretonnes primitives’, 29; and see [Chapter 6](#).

<sup>111</sup> Woolf, ‘*Plebs*’, 232–4. <sup>112</sup> Davies, *Small Worlds*; Davies, ‘Priests’; *WAB*, 321–2.

<sup>113</sup> Guy, ‘The Breton Migration’, 111–2; Woolf, ‘Apartheid and Economics’, 117–9.

<sup>114</sup> For taxation in Merovingian Francia see Wickham, *Framing*, 105–15.

<sup>115</sup> Davies, ‘Land and Power’, 16–19; Wickham, *Framing*, 314–33, 338; Gendry, *De l’Armorique*, 223.



evidence for Breton rulers being successful and aggressive in the sixth century. Kings could perhaps mobilise the inhabitants of the *plebes* militarily – accounting for the effectiveness of Breton armies in the sixth century and in the ninth – but found it difficult to extract economic resources from them.

The result may have been that Breton rulers depended to a high degree on external support, both from Frankish and British rulers, and on the proceeds of warfare, and these ceased to be forthcoming after the mid-seventh century. The demise of Dumnonia in Britain as a political force around the turn of the eighth century has already been mentioned. On the Frankish side, the Merovingian kingdom settled back during the seventh century to its centre of gravity, which was the ‘militarised zone’ of late Roman Gaul: the area from the Seine basin to the Rhine.<sup>116</sup> This was where signs of economic activity were concentrated: rich family monasteries, the ceramic industry, participation in trade with eastern England. So far from continuing their attempts to dominate Brittany, the later Merovingian kings no longer enforced their authority directly even in the Breton borderlands. The Rennais, Nantais and Maine were left to bishops (some with conservative, Gallo-Roman names) who presided over local power blocs, increasingly detached from court life.<sup>117</sup> The evidence for trade at Nantes, plentiful during the sixth century, declines. After the gold coinage of the Merovingian kingdoms was replaced by the silver *denier* from about 670, the mints of Nantes and its region seem to have ceased operating.<sup>118</sup> Finds of Aquitainian pottery in the Nantais – both *dérivées sigillées paléochrétiennes* and ‘E ware’, which was exported to western Britain via the Loire – belong to the sixth and early seventh centuries and cease to appear thereafter.<sup>119</sup> Nor was it replaced by other products: the absence of Seine and Rhine valley pottery from the Rennais, Nantais and western Maine suggests that the trade networks of northern Gaul barely touched the region.<sup>120</sup> Western Francia as a whole had become a backwater, neither threatening Brittany nor offering the promise of large-scale economic or political rewards from engagement with it.

Did functioning regional kingships nevertheless survive in Brittany until they were swept away by Carolingian armies in the late eighth century? Possibly, but we can say very little of them. The status and attitude of the Church may have been unhelpful. If any literate person

<sup>116</sup> Wickham, *Framing*, 103.

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 46–7; Brett, ‘In the Margins ...’, 33–40.

<sup>118</sup> Tonnerre, ‘Le commerce nantais’, 6–12 and 27.

<sup>119</sup> Rouche, *L’Aquitaine*, 189–91 and references; Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, 46–8.

<sup>120</sup> Giot and Fichet de Clairfontaine, ‘Quelques aspects’, 55–61; Wickham, *Framing*, 798.

was concerned to record the progress of Breton rulership in the centuries before 800, this is not apparent. Historians, from the author of the *Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc* in the fourteenth century to Bernard Merdrignac in the early twenty-first, have attempted to distil a narrative of royal and aristocratic power from Brittany's abundant saints' Lives.<sup>121</sup> But if one reads the early Lives at face value one cannot help noticing what a slight and vague role secular rulers play in them, by comparison with any other hagiographical tradition of the early medieval West. What the *Life of St Samson* does show us is the reality of an *ecclesiastical* dynasty with branches on both sides of the Celtic sea in the seventh century.<sup>122</sup> This information makes explicit what we would otherwise have to glean from the indirect evidence of script, textual transmission and saints' cults: that personal and especially ecclesiastical links continued when political power relationships between Brittany and Britain had largely lapsed. In terms of the theory of ethnogenesis in which successful aristocratic families act as the *Traditionskern*, the bearers of a core identity and awareness of the past around which a people could coalesce, the early rulers of Brittany seem to have fulfilled the role weakly, if at all.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps the more potent vectors of *Tradition* were indeed the clergy, imbued with a Gildasian idea of exclusively Christian and Brittonic civic identity, and scepticism towards kings and kingship.<sup>124</sup> And perhaps it was the *plebes*, small-scale communities grouped around local saints (see [Chapter 6](#)) and exerting the pull of religious fervour, that most effectively persuaded or compelled Gallo-Romans to adopt the British identity of the new arrivals. A Breton identity, separate from identity as Britons or commitment to *plebs* or region, may have been consciously developed only when it was imposed from outside by Carolingian ideology, as suggested in [Chapter 3](#).

### Britons in Isolation? The Ecclesiastical Evidence, 550–800

The religious traditions of Bretons may have played a large part in defining who they were; they also contributed largely to the isolation experienced by Bretons and Britons among their neighbours in the seventh and eighth centuries. An increasingly negative attitude towards the Britons can be seen both in Britain and in Gaul as English and Frankish ethnic consolidation proceeded. In Gaul during the sixth century, Gallo-Romans were uniting with Franks in a polity from which the Bretons

<sup>121</sup> *Chronicon Briocense*, ed. G. Le Duc and C. Sterckx; *DUBALA*.

<sup>122</sup> Sowerby, 'A Family and its Saint'.

<sup>123</sup> For the *Traditionskern* concept, see Reimitz, 'Ethnogenesis' and references (accessed 03 June 2020).

<sup>124</sup> Hustwit, 'The Britons', 210–11, 384–5 (accessed 19 August 2020).

were excluded.<sup>125</sup> Gregory's anecdotes make it clear that while Frankish kings might attempt to control Breton rulers, they could not appoint or remove them as a matter of course. Accordingly, Bretons never joined the governing elite of the Frankish kingdoms: 'isolation was the price of independence'.<sup>126</sup> In the seventh century, religious disagreements sharpened political tensions. In 541, the Gallic Church had accepted the method of calculating the date of Easter proposed by Victorius of Aquitaine, which was not accepted by the British (including Breton) and Irish churches.<sup>127</sup> This did not end embarrassing disputes on the date of the major Christian festival within the Gallic Church itself,<sup>128</sup> but the issue became a political one when papal missionaries, supported from Gaul, set about converting the English to Christianity from 597 onwards and tried somewhat ineptly to extend their authority to the Insular Britons.<sup>129</sup> Within a few years, Easter became the focus of disagreement between the missionaries and British bishops.<sup>130</sup> The writings of Bede are telling evidence for the long-term deterioration of relations, especially after the Synod of Whitby in 664.<sup>131</sup>

The Irish Church too was affected, and its most famous representative abroad, the abbot Columbanus, who had arrived in Gaul from Ireland in 590 or 591, weighed into the controversy in a letter to Pope Gregory I, asserting the right of the *ecclesiae occidentis*, the 'western churches', to uphold their own practices over against *isti Galli* – 'those Gauls'.<sup>132</sup> Columbanus appealed to the authority of British teachers of the generation before his own, Gildas and *Uennianus*, to whom he accorded the title *auctor*.<sup>133</sup> However, the Easter controversy eventually drove a wedge between the British and the Irish Churches. When English convert kings and bishops became enthusiasts for Rome, the Britons may have felt that the papacy was placing its authority at the service of their conquerors and oppressors. For the Irish, the controversy, though bitterly fought, did not involve the same

<sup>125</sup> *WAB*, 226–41. <sup>126</sup> *WAB*, 70–1, 234. <sup>127</sup> *WAB*, 74 and references.

<sup>128</sup> *LHD*, V.17, X.23 (215, 514–5); transl. Thorpe, 274, 581–2.

<sup>129</sup> Flechner, 'Pope Gregory and the British'; *WAB*, 239–41.

<sup>130</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.2, II.4, ed. and transl. Colgrave and Mynors, 134–43, 144–9.

<sup>131</sup> *WAB*, 396–410; Sharpe, 'Armagh and Rome', 64–5; Flechner, 'Dagán'; Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and Shunning'.

<sup>132</sup> Sharpe, 'Gildas', 196–202; Bullough, 'The Career', 10; Wood, 'The Irish'; Wood, 'Columbanus, the Britons'.

<sup>133</sup> Columbanus, *Epistolae* I.7, ed. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 8. On the debt of early Irish scholarship to Gildas, see *WAB*, 207–9; Sharpe, 'Gildas', 196–202. On the identity of the *Uennianus* mentioned by Columbanus, see also Ó Riain, 'The Irish Element', 'Finnian or Winniau?', 'Finnio and Winniau: A Question of Priority', 'Finnio and Winniau: A Return to the Subject', and 'The Making of a Saint'; *e contra*, Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau'; Fleuriot, 'Le saint "breton" Winniau'; Dumville, 'The Colophon'; Dumville, 'St Finnian of Movilla'. Clancy, 'The Real St Ninian', 13–16, reviews the debate.

political jeopardy. By the 630s, Columbanus's monasteries on the Continent and at least some of the churches of Ireland had adopted the Continental Easter; the last important church of the Gaelic sphere, Iona, followed suit in 716. The Britons of Wales, however, did not change their Easter date until 768.<sup>134</sup> The disagreement did not prevent co-operation between British and Irish churchmen, but it cast a chill on it.<sup>135</sup>

The impression given by the fifth- to eighth-century evidence for the activity of British and Breton ecclesiastics on the Continent is that Britons were regarded as ecclesiastically separate, and potentially suspect, from the beginning.<sup>136</sup> In the fifth century, Britain was supposed to have originated and harboured the Pelagian heresy;<sup>137</sup> in the sixth, British migrants disrupted ecclesiastical structures where they settled, and a surviving letter from the bishops of Tours, Rennes and Angers to two British priests, Lovocat and Catihern, dated between 509 and 521, complains of their unorthodox practices.<sup>138</sup> In the sixth century, nevertheless, some Britons were accepted into the Continental Church in their own right. In the seventh century, they were still accepted, but mainly in churches influenced by Columbanus, under the auspices of the Irish; in the eighth, references to Britons disappear almost completely.

St Samson is the British saint whose Life most conspicuously brought Britons together with Gallo-Franks and Irish. The *Vita I S. Samsonis* is certainly the earliest work of Breton hagiography, probably written in the late seventh or very early eighth century.<sup>139</sup> Samson is usually identified with the bishop of that name who signed the proceedings of the Council of Paris held between 556 and 573.<sup>140</sup> According to the *Vita*, he began his career in south-east Wales, travelled to Ireland, and then, via Cornwall, to his final home of Dol in Brittany, taking with him an Irish abbot whom he had cured of demonic possession.<sup>141</sup> *Peregrinatio*, ascetic exile for the love

<sup>134</sup> Dumville, 'Annales Cambriae and Easter', 27; Guy, 'The Origins', 40–1.

<sup>135</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Britons in Ireland', 16–17; *WAB*, 240.

<sup>136</sup> *WAB*, 228–34, 239–41.

<sup>137</sup> Barrett, 'Saint Germanus', 199–200 and references; *WAB*, 49–50.

<sup>138</sup> Jülicher, 'Ein gallisches Bischofsschreiben', 665; Coumert, 'Espace et pouvoirs'.

<sup>139</sup> Ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*. Arguments for this date are presented by Sowerby, 'The Lives', and *WAB*, 238–9 and note 58; a date at the turn of the ninth century is suggested by Poulin, 'La circulation', 67–81 (superseding the same author's earlier arguments). For a review see Olson, 'The Date'. Poulin's contention ('La circulation', 67–73) that *Romania* could still be used to mean north-western Gaul in the Carolingian period is not supported by his cited example from the mid-ninth-century *Revelatio ecclesiae sancti Michaelis archangeli* which refers to Italy, not to Gaul.

<sup>140</sup> *Concilia Galliae A. 511–A. 695*, ed. De Clercq, 205–10; *WAB*, 66.

<sup>141</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.37–40, 46–52, 59, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 200–5, 212–23, 230–3.

of God, was an important strain in early medieval Insular Christianity;<sup>142</sup> Samson and his companions, including the unnamed Irish abbot, have a good claim to be the first medieval *peregrini* from the Insular Church, arriving on the Continent at least twenty years before Columbanus.<sup>143</sup> If Samson's monasteries of Dol and Pental, the latter on the lower Seine, were founded in Samson's lifetime on land granted by the Frankish king, as his Life claims, then they were in the very forefront of the movement of royal patronage of monasteries in the Merovingian kingdoms usually considered as beginning with Columbanus.<sup>144</sup> The ability of Samson (or his church) to attract such patronage outside Brittany was arguably the means to the composition and preservation of his Life and the spread of his cult. It was from the lower Seine region that Samson's reputation initially spread through Francia: his cult was recognised at Saint-Wandrille by 772, and the earliest manuscripts of his Life are provenanced from Saint-Ouen (Rouen), Jumièges and Fécamp.<sup>145</sup> Relics of Samson are recorded at Chelles near Paris in the eighth century, at Pfäfers in Rhaetia in the ninth, and at Lierneux (Belgium) at about the same time.<sup>146</sup> If the *Tigermal* ... whose obit is in the Annals of Lorsch in 707 is identified as *Tigernomaglus* the dedicatee of the First Life of Samson, this isolated mention of a Breton churchman in a Frankish chronicle may also be attributable to Samson's special fame.<sup>147</sup>

Samson was not the only Briton to find a role in the sixth-century Gaulish Church. Gonotiernus, bishop of Senlis in the ecclesiastical province of Rheims, a Briton to judge by his name, subscribed to the canons issued by the Council of Orléans in 549. The same bishop, his name spelled Gonothigernus, was present some years later at the Council of Paris attended by Samson, together with Ferrocinctus of Évreux (whose name, 'iron-girdled', may be a translation of the Breton name Iarnuiscid, attested in the ninth century).<sup>148</sup> One of

<sup>142</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'The Social Background'; Johnston, 'Exiles', and bibliography cited therein; Wooding, 'The Representation'.

<sup>143</sup> For Samson as *peregrinus* see Wooding, 'The Representation'. For a comparison with Columbanus, Wood, 'Columbanus, the Britons', 111–4.

<sup>144</sup> For a summing-up of the historiography on Columbanus, see Flechner and Meeder, 'Controversies', 209 and notes 12–14; Wood, 'Columbanian Monasticism', and references.

<sup>145</sup> Brett, 'The Hare', 98–9. <sup>146</sup> Smith, *Relics and the Insular World*, 22–4.

<sup>147</sup> Sowerby, 'The Lives', 20–2. The shared name-element may indicate a family or institutional connection between this bishop and the sixth-century Gonothigernus of Senlis.

<sup>148</sup> *Concilia Galliae A.511–A. 695*, ed. De Clercq, 205–10; Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 84. For discussion, see Wood, 'Columbanus, the Britons'; J. R. Davies, 'Bishop Kentigern', 71; Lajoie, 'Les établissements', 32–5.

the eighth-century relic-labels from Chelles also commemorates a British-named saint, an otherwise unknown *Uurgonezlo*.<sup>149</sup>

In the seventh century, Britons on the Continent are found mainly in Columbanian contexts – although this may partly be an artefact of the way in which Columbanian monasticism has dominated the source-material and the scholarship on the seventh-century Frankish Church.<sup>150</sup> The Life of Columbanus mentions an abbot Carantoc (another British name) who ruled over a monastery, *Salicis*, that was already established when Columbanus settled nearby at his first foundation of Annegray.<sup>151</sup> There were Britons or Bretons among the monks who travelled with Columbanus, and who shared his exile when he was expelled from Burgundy.<sup>152</sup> Columbanian influence within Brittany may be implied by the connection between Judicael, Breton king of the 630s, and the Columbanian monastic founder Audoen of Rouen.<sup>153</sup> Two reputedly British (probably Breton) saints of the mid-seventh century, Winnoc of Bergues and Judoc of Saint-Josse, founded monasteries on the north coast of Gaul, according to their ninth- and tenth-century Lives.<sup>154</sup> Another possible Briton, Condedus, appears in the late seventh century in hagiography from St Wandrille, allegedly finishing his career at Pitres.<sup>155</sup> The ninth-century Life of St Machutus (Malo) by Bili claims that Machutus spent time at Columbanus's foundation, Luxeuil.<sup>156</sup> Machutus, like Samson and Judicael, was based in north-eastern Brittany, and his connection with Columbanus is reinforced by two place-names near Saint-Malo: the parish of Saint-Coulomb, with its church dedicated to Columbanus, and the lake of Saint-Coulman or Coulban.<sup>157</sup>

'How much more could be said about British/Breton influence [in the Merovingian Church]?' asks Ian Wood. But his co-authors can say bluntly that the Britons 'were not a factor in continental affairs at that

<sup>149</sup> Smith, *Relics and the Insular World*, 22–4; Fleuriot, 'Samson, *Uurgonezlo*'; Russell, 'Facing Different Ways'.

<sup>150</sup> The evidence is summarised by Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 149–56 and treated more fully in Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais'.

<sup>151</sup> Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, I.7, ed. Krusch, 165.

<sup>152</sup> Jonas, *Vita Columbani* I.11, I.13, I.20, ed. Krusch, 170–1, 174, 179; Kerlouégan, 'Présence', 193; Wood, 'Columbanus, the Britons'; Wood, 'Columbanus in Brittany'.

<sup>153</sup> *Chronicle of Fredegar*, IV.78, ed. and transl. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book*, 66; *Vita S. Eligii*, I.13, ed. Krusch, *Vita Eligii Episcopi Noviomagensis*, 680.

<sup>154</sup> For Judoc, see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 98–119; Lapidge, 'A Metrical *Vita*'. See Chapter 5.

<sup>155</sup> *Vita S. Condedi*, ed. Krusch and Levison; Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais', 132; Deuffic, 'Le monachisme breton', 114–5.

<sup>156</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I. 46, ed. Lot, *Mélanges*, 381.

<sup>157</sup> Kerlouégan, 'Présence et culte', 195; Merdrignac, 'La perception', 68; Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais', 123–4; Bourguès, 'Le culte de Colomban'.

time'.<sup>158</sup> Outside the context of Columbanian monasticism, the mentions of Britons in seventh- and eighth-century Gaul dry up almost completely.<sup>159</sup> In the majority of references to 'Britain' and 'Britons' in continental monastic contexts, it seems clear that England is meant, and that British terminology is used in an antiquarian or geographical sense.<sup>160</sup> Mark Handley has surveyed the epigraphic evidence (ranging from elaborate tombstones to pilgrim graffiti) for Insular travellers and émigrés on the Continent between 350 and 800: there are only two possible examples of British names later than the early fifth century, out of a total of twenty-eight inscriptions.<sup>161</sup> Early medieval *libri memoriales* have survived from a few European monasteries: these were used to record the names of visitors and of monastic communities in 'confraternity' with the host monastery, and of their dead for whom prayers were to be offered. They contain thousands of names of otherwise unknown individuals of the eighth and ninth centuries. It is possible that a Brittonic name or two is lurking in them unidentified, but none has yet drawn the attention of scholars.<sup>162</sup> Occasionally, Britons may have presented themselves as Irish.<sup>163</sup> However, it would be unsafe to argue that large numbers of 'disguised' Britons were active in the Frankish Church.

By the mid-eighth century, the Frankish mission field was spreading eastward into Saxony, Bavaria and beyond, with English and Irish personnel such as Boniface (d. 754) and Virgil of Salzburg (d. 784) in the forefront. Boniface clashed with some of the Irish clergy, and brought the authority of Frankish rulers and the papacy to bear against them.<sup>164</sup> A letter of Pope Gregory III to the bishops of Bavaria and Alamannia in ca 738 adjures the bishops to 'reject both heathen rites and the doctrine whether of Britons coming from elsewhere or of false and heretical priests'.<sup>165</sup> On the face of it, this implies that Britons were active in the

<sup>158</sup> Wood, 'Columbanian Monasticism', 92; Flechner and Meeder, 'Controversies', 197.

<sup>159</sup> Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais'; Le Duc, 'La Bretagne'; Fox, 'The Political Context', 53–4; Lapidge, 'Latin Learning', 92.

<sup>160</sup> See, for example, Merdrignac, 'Liberatus, Libertinus?'; Brooks, 'English Identity', 43.

<sup>161</sup> Handley, 'Saxons, Britons and Scots', 750–1, 753–4 (Tedeschi, 'Graffiti altomedievali', 417; Carletti, 'I graffiti', no. 9).

<sup>162</sup> Roy Flechner's suggestion that the names *Marchwart*, *Marchrat* in the Reichenau confraternity lists are Breton is surely mistaken: these are well-known Germanic names. Flechner, 'Paschasius', 416 and note 50; Förstemann, *Altddeutsches Namenbuch*, cols. 913–15.

<sup>163</sup> Fleuriot, 'Les très anciennes lois des Bretons', 70–1; Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais', 119; Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 206.

<sup>164</sup> Flechner and Meeder, 'Controversies'.

<sup>165</sup> *Et gentilitatis ritum et doctrinam vel venientium Brittonum vel falsorum sacerdotum hereticorum sive adulteros, aut undecumque sint, rennuentes ac prohibentes abiciatis*: Boniface and Lull, *Epistolae*, 44, ed. Tangl, *Die Briefe*, 71.



field, however suspect. However, it is more likely that the pope was using ‘Britons’ in a geographical sense to mean Anglo-Saxons (those who arrived without proper credentials). A pejorative sense may also be intended, as it is in a passage in the ninth-century Life of Alcuin in which an English visitor is disparaged by the monks of Tours as ‘this Briton or Irishman’ (*iste Britto vel Scoto [sic]*).<sup>166</sup>

Even the Bretons’ immediate neighbours had little to say of them. Numerous Lives of sixth- and seventh-century saints who originated in or near Breton territory present their protagonists as Gallo-Roman or Frankish and are silent on the presence of Bretons.<sup>167</sup> (The frequent citing of ‘Brittany’ as the home of these saints in modern accounts is to that extent misleading.) Even in the ninth century, *Vitae* from the Rennais and the Nantais (those of Meroveus, Martin of Vertou and the *Vita I* of Melanius) ignore the Bretons despite their important regional political role.<sup>168</sup> Such reticence seems to go beyond hagiographical convention and become something close to *damnatio memoriae*. It is mirrored in mainland Britain in the Life of St Boniface by Willibald: although Boniface received his early education at *Escanastre* (usually identified as Exeter) in the late seventh century, when Devon was presumably still largely inhabited if not ruled by British-speakers, they go unmentioned.<sup>169</sup>

The implication seems to be that there was only a brief period when Britons were accepted as near-equal partners in the ‘monasticisation’ of Frankish Gaul. It began with the rise of Insular ascetic monasticism in the mid-sixth century, and continued as long as England was non-Christian, or its conversion an uncertain enterprise. While there were no political powers in lowland Britain to whom continental leaders could connect ideologically, trade and ecclesiastical contact with the Insular world concentrated upon western Britain. The Loire, perhaps after a land-crossing of south-west Britain, was Columbanus’s route of entry to Gaul, bringing him into potential contact with Bretons as well as Britons. In the wave of enthusiasm for monasticism in northern Gaul in the generation after Columbanus’s lifetime, Britons could participate, and be active in Belgic Gaul, where Britain had most easily communicated with the Continent in Roman times and where British migrants had

<sup>166</sup> *Vita Alcuini*, 18, ed. Arndt, 193, cited by Picard, ‘*Omnes sancti chori*’, 71.

<sup>167</sup> As noted by Smith, *Province and Empire*, 16, note 32. For examples, see Tonnerre, ‘*Deux ermites*’; Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Albini*, ed. Krusch, 27–33; *Vita I S. Amandi*, ed. Krusch and Levison; Donatus, *Vita S. Hermelandi*, ed. Krusch and Levison; *Vita S. Emiliani*, ed. Allain, ‘*Une vie*’.

<sup>168</sup> *Vita S. Merovei*, ed. Brunterc’h, ‘*Géographie historique*’, 57–63; *Vita I S. Melanii*, ed. Krusch; Letaldus of Micy, *Vita et miracula S. Martini Vertavensis*, ed. Van Hecke; excerpts in MGH SRM III, 567–75. See Head, *Hagiography*, 82–5, 218–9.

<sup>169</sup> Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, 1–2, ed. Levison, 4–11.



also settled.<sup>170</sup> But by the mid-century, the Britons were no longer needed. St Fursa (d. 650) had found patronage from the king of East Anglia on his journey from Ireland to north-eastern Gaul. The Irish in Europe increasingly used the Roman route from Britain to the north Gaulish coast, landing between Boulogne and the mouth of the Rhine, and the Loire route (and Brittany) lost their importance.

It seems overconfident to claim that 'Ireland-(Wales)-Cornwall-Brittany was an obvious route [for travel to the Continent] and almost certainly remained so even after that across England was opened up in the seventh century . . . in particular we may suppose that Brittany remained a highway for Irishmen travelling to the Irish centres in central Europe'.<sup>171</sup> A map of the centres of Irish monasticism and scholarship in the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms would show a swathe of points from the Channel coast eastwards to the Rhineland and southwards to Italy: not only Brittany, but most of western Gaul would be a blank.<sup>172</sup> If the Breton and Irish churches stayed in touch – as the Welsh and Irish churches certainly did – then personal and institutional links must have been deliberately formed and cultivated in the face of considerable practical and ideological difficulties.<sup>173</sup>

Brittany's contacts with Wales and Cornwall may be supposed to have been more readily maintained throughout the 'dark period' of Breton history, and [Chapter 6](#) will deal with the evidence for this. However, the later seventh and eighth centuries are equally 'dark' in the Insular Brittonic regions. It is only in the ninth century that evidence for communication becomes plentiful, after the Brittonic churches had symbolically abandoned their resistance to the Roman Easter (the Breton Church had certainly done so before 818).<sup>174</sup> This evidence will be discussed in [Chapters 3 and 4](#).

<sup>170</sup> Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 134–62; *WAB*, 57–8, 74.

<sup>171</sup> Dumville, 'Some British Aspects', 21–2; see also Gougaud, 'L'œuvre'.

<sup>172</sup> See, for instance, map 5, Carey, 'Learning, Imagination and Belief', 73.

<sup>173</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Britons in Ireland'; *WAB*, 186, 191.

<sup>174</sup> Merdrignac, 'Le "glaive à deux tranchants"', 196–7.

### 3 Brittany and Its Insular Past in the Ninth Century

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#### The Discovery of Breton Origins

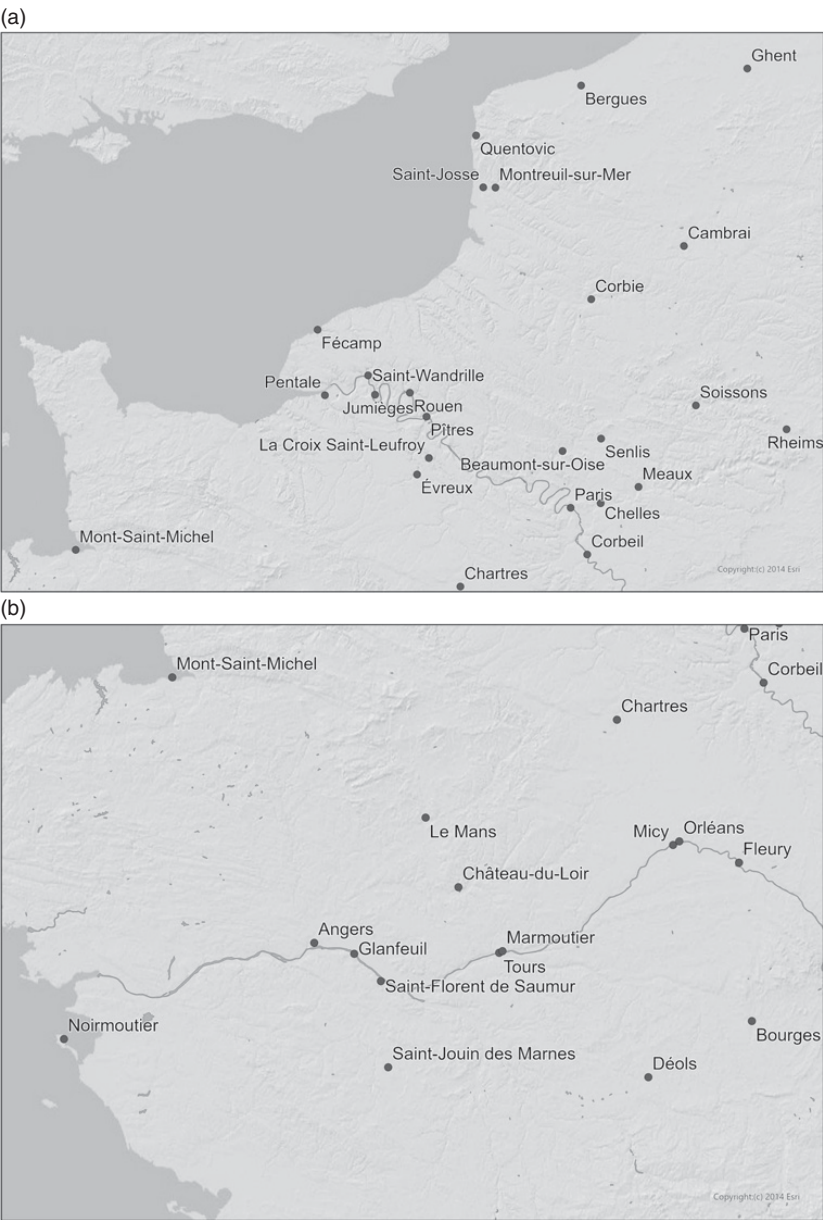
Brittany's engagement with the Carolingian Empire, beginning at almost exactly the time when Pippin III was crowned as the first Carolingian king (751), and ending with the decline of the West Frankish kingdom in the last quarter of the ninth century, increased the quantity of source-material available for Brittany, emanating both from within and outside the region, and is therefore a phase that has been well and thoroughly covered in modern historiography (Map 3.1).<sup>1</sup> The early Carolingians seem to have imposed their rule on Brittany for mainly ideological reasons, both to vindicate their inheritance from the Merovingians and to impose what they saw as Christian orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup> Compared to their much more extensive conquests in the east and south of Europe, the resources they devoted to holding Brittany down were minimal. Even so, their intervention encouraged the emergence of a Breton ruling dynasty and a broader sense of Breton unity. This in turn prompted scholarly interest in the origins of the Bretons, which is the main focus of this chapter. Before exploring this theme in detail, it is worth briefly examining the Carolingians' political influence on Brittany.

The Carolingian dynasty's centre of gravity was the Rhineland, and Brittany came only intermittently into their sights. Charlemagne delegated his Breton campaigns to his seneschal Audulf in 786 and to Count Wido (commander of the Breton march) in 799. After Wido's campaign, a court annalist observed that for the first time all of the Bretons had been made subject to the Franks.<sup>3</sup> This unitary view of Brittany became more visible during the reign of Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious. Louis' *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817 attempted to preserve the integrity of the empire by establishing

<sup>1</sup> For Carolingian Brittany, a brief introduction is provided by Brett, 'Brittany and the Carolingian Empire', and thorough general treatments by Smith, *Province and Empire*, and Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 193–408. For a historiographical overview, see W. Davies, 'Franks and Bretons'. For Pippin III and Brittany, see Smith, 'The Sack of Vannes'.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 60–7; Smith, 'Confronting Identities'; Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 17–21.

<sup>3</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 799, ed. Kurze, 108.



Map 3.1 Early medieval Brittany and its connections in Western Europe

(c)



Map 3.1 Cont.

the position of his ambitious sons; it also propounded the Christian unity of the areas under his overlordship.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, Louis at first took active measures to maintain hegemony in Brittany: his expedition of 818 was occasioned by the Bretons raising one of themselves, Morman, to kingship.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Brittany was strategically significant to Louis' attempts to defend West Frankish churches and cities against Viking attacks. The mouth of the Loire was attractive to fleets circling the Breton coastline, eventually becoming a base for those voyaging southwards to the Mediterranean as well as forces venturing inland.<sup>6</sup> Yet faced with revolts by his sons and factions of the aristocracy, Louis eventually abandoned attempts at direct rule of Brittany. Instead, in 831, he established a Breton *missus imperatoris* or royal representative, Nominoe, to rule the region. A single Breton polity was thus institutionalised, and with the succession of Nominoe's son Erispoe in 851, the rule of a single dynasty was established.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, upon the death of Louis the Pious the empire had been divided between his sons, as formalised in the Treaty of Verdun (843).

<sup>4</sup> *Ordinatio Imperii*, ed. Boretius, 270–3 (no. 136). <sup>5</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 63–6.

<sup>6</sup> For the Loire, see Price, *The Vikings*, 22–3; Jeanneau, 'Les moines de Saint-Philibert de Noirmoutier', 106–7; Cooijmans, *Monarchs and Hydrarchs*, 223–5. For long-distance voyages, see Christys, *Vikings in the South*, 5–6, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 119–20.

While various members of the Carolingian dynasty continued to use the title 'emperor', their territorial scope no longer resembled that of Charlemagne or Louis. Charles the Bald ruled West Francia, yet ongoing tensions between the brothers threatened to undermine his authority (especially given that his eldest brother, Lothar, enjoyed some support in Charles's kingdom).<sup>8</sup> The situation was exacerbated by feuding between the West Frankish magnates and by Nominoe's wavering loyalty to Charles. In 843, the Frankish magnate Lambert defected to Lothar and sought Nominoe's support. The two attacked Charles's favoured count of Nantes, Rainald, and in the ensuing chaos Nantes suffered a devastating Viking assault.<sup>9</sup> The deterioration of Charles's authority enabled Breton attacks to continue intermittently for eight years, culminating in Erispoe's crushing victory at the Battle of Jengland (851). The ensuing peace agreement began a new phase in Frankish-Breton relations, for Charles conceded West Frankish lands to Erispoe, a strategy that would be repeated for Erispoe's cousin Salomon. In 831 the boundary of Brittany was at the River Vilaine as it had been in the late sixth century, but Salomon, by the end of his reign, also controlled the Nantais, Rennais, Cotentin and Avranchin and part of Anjou.<sup>10</sup> These areas were significant to Charles's defensive measures against the Vikings of the Seine and Loire, who occasionally joined forces with Salomon. Charles's grant of 867 was made in return for lasting peace, as well as Salomon's fidelity and aid against the Vikings.<sup>11</sup> Charles carefully managed his relationships with Erispoe and Salomon by forging marital and spiritual bonds and by granting regalia.<sup>12</sup> The Breton rulers not only assumed these symbols of rulership, they also adopted Carolingian techniques of ruling to the best of their ability: Salomon even attempted to create an archdiocese of Brittany with its archiepiscopal see at Dol.<sup>13</sup> Such ambitious measures lifted these rulers above their peers and legitimised their claims to power throughout Brittany.

For the most part, Salomon achieved a delicate, if tense, balance between the interests of the Carolingian dynasty, the West Frankish aristocracy and various Viking forces. Yet his murder by three Breton magnates in 874 revealed the internal tensions that threatened to undermine Breton political unity.<sup>14</sup> These conflicts continued for a decade, at which point the two

<sup>8</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 132–6; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 93–4.

<sup>9</sup> *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, s.a. 843, ed. Grat et al., 44; *Chronicon Namnetense*, 6, ed. Merlet, *La chronique de Nantes*, 14–17; Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*, 15–19.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 100–1, 107–8.

<sup>11</sup> *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, s.a. 868, ed. Grat et al., 151; Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 28–34; Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*, 20–32.

<sup>12</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 166; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 108–14.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, 'The "Archbishopric"'.

<sup>14</sup> *Annals of Saint-Bertin*, s.a. 874, ed. Grat et al., 196; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 120–2.

leading Breton contenders, Alan I and Judicael, were confronted by renewed Viking attacks. Following Judicael's death in battle, Alan (d. 907) became the sole ruler. The same Viking forces preoccupied the heirs of Charles the Bald in West Francia, diverting their attention from Brittany.<sup>15</sup> Alan's relationship with Emperor Charles the Fat may have followed the model set by his predecessors and Charles the Bald; certainly Alan deployed Carolingian regal language and occasionally used the term *rex*.<sup>16</sup> His reign may have marked a second high-point of political power and stability in Brittany, but is less well known than that of Salomon, since the interest of Frankish chroniclers in Breton affairs had waned. Finally, the first experiment in Breton political unity was brought to a dramatic end by Vikings in 919.<sup>17</sup>

This, briefly, is the context for the emergence of ideas about the origins of Brittany in the ninth century. These appeared for the first time in both Carolingian and Welsh Latin literature some time earlier than in Brittany itself, and it seems likely that the three areas were interconnected and that the same ideas and models, if not the same individual scholars, were active in them. In the late eighth and early ninth centuries, Brittany, the Frankish kingdoms, and the kingdoms of Wales were all experiencing major changes which called for an intellectual response. In Francia, the political and military success of the Carolingian dynasty enabled – and was justified by – the spectacular revival of scholarship known as the Carolingian Renaissance. In Gwynedd, north Wales, the final adoption of the Roman date of Easter in 768 in a context of sustained military pressure from the English kingdom of Mercia must have occasioned conflict and soul-searching.<sup>18</sup> This was followed by the rise to power of the Merfynion dynasty, aggressively expansionist rulers who re-opened western Wales to the Irish Sea – and the outside world in general – after a century and a half of relative isolation.<sup>19</sup> For Brittany, Carolingian conquest similarly ended a prolonged period of disengagement. In these circumstances, even those external contacts that had almost certainly existed continuously, between Brittany and the other Brittonic-speaking regions, were liable to be transformed. Literate Britons could no longer ignore – as they had, to some extent, in the preceding centuries – the challenge of ideas from outside.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Price, *The Vikings in Brittany*, 34–8; Cassard, *Le siècle des Vikings*, 33–42.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 192–3; Maclean, *Kingship and Politics*, 76, 154.

<sup>17</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, s.a. 919, ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, 3. However, for an argument that the 'Viking crisis' in Brittany was less dramatic than it seems, see McNair, 'Vikings and Bretons?'

<sup>18</sup> *WAB*, 350, 411–28; Dumville, '*Annales Cambriae* and Easter'; Guy, 'The Origins', 38–45.

<sup>19</sup> For these events see *WAB*, 467–79, and *MWG*, 68–71; for their probable impact on the Church, J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 384–6.

<sup>20</sup> For the conservatism of Welsh 'Dark Age' learning see Lapidge, 'Latin Learning', 91–3, 102.



As Julia M. H. Smith has noted, sixth- and seventh-century texts show no curiosity about Breton origins.<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Tours, Venantius Fortunatus, Marius of Avenches, 'Fredegar' and the author of the First Life of Samson took the existence of a continental *Britannia* for granted without attempting to justify it. During the immediate post-Roman centuries, the constitutionally vague position of all the polities of western Europe posed a stumbling block to historians: Brittany was at first no exception.<sup>22</sup> But from the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth centuries, a crucial time for forming ideas about ethnic origins in Britain and in much of western Europe, Brittany was disengaged from the Frankish kingdoms and probably fragmented politically.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that origin-stories in Brittany were preserved at the level of individual churches and families – both are seen in *Vita I S. Samsonis* – and not generalised to 'Brittany' as a whole.<sup>24</sup>

Bede, in the eighth century, mentioned the *Tractus Armoricanus*, but only to suggest that the Britons of Britain had originally come from those parts, rather than the other way round: his aim may have been to cast doubt on the idea that the Britons were the primordial inhabitants of Britain.<sup>25</sup> The first aetiology of Brittany itself was produced by *literati* from the ideologically sophisticated Carolingian Empire, in the context of Frankish attempts to dominate the region. The first brief attempt is found in the revised version of the Royal Frankish Annals for 786, and consists of a statement that 'after the island of Britain had been invaded by Angles and Saxons, a large part of its inhabitants crossed the sea and occupied the regions of the *Veneti* and *Coriosolites* at the extreme end of Gaul.'<sup>26</sup> This is the earliest source to link the Anglian and Saxon invasion of Britain with the origin of Brittany, although this idea may ultimately be derived via Brittany from Gildas's statement about Britons fleeing overseas from Saxon destruction.<sup>27</sup> There is no consensus as to the Reviser's identity or date, or even exactly at what point in the text his revisions end;

<sup>21</sup> Smith, 'Confronting Identities'. The present section depends heavily on the ideas developed in Smith's paper.

<sup>22</sup> Lifshitz, 'The Vicissitudes', 369.

<sup>23</sup> The *Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, 'Fredegar's' *Chronicle*, *Liber Historiae Francorum*, Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (which includes the origin-legend of the Picts as well as of the English) were produced over this period: WAB, 188–91; Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, 153–61, 215–6, 403–5; Fraser, 'From Ancient Scythia'.

<sup>24</sup> Sowerby, 'A Family'.

<sup>25</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.1, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 16–17; Charles-Edwards, 'Celtic Britain', 155.

<sup>26</sup> *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 786, ed. Kurze, 73: *Nam cum ab Anglis et Saxonibus Britannia insula fuisset invasa, magna pars incolarum eius mare traiciens in ultimis Galliae finibus Venetorum et Coriosolitarum regiones occupavit*. Scholz (transl.), *Carolingian Chronicles*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, 25, ed. and transl. Winterbottom, 27, 98; Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.1, ed. De Smedt, 174.



however, it seems likely that he worked between 801 and 817, hence, probably, during a period when it seemed that the Frankish conquest of Brittany would be permanent.<sup>28</sup>

Following the revolts of the early part of Louis the Pious's reign, the story of a hostile Breton invasion of Gaulish territory was elaborated and sharpened by Ermoldus Nigellus in his *Carmen in Honorem Hlodouici* (826 × 828), which contains a lengthy account of Louis's campaign against the Breton ruler Morman in 818, introduced by a historical sketch in which treachery is the keynote. The Bretons had arrived as helpless refugees and had then attacked the Gauls who had kindly received them. The fact that they shared the Christian faith made their behaviour more, not less, reprehensible. Ermoldus drew on classical ethnographic accounts of the Britons, including Caesar's recently rediscovered *Gallic War*, for his portrait of Bretons, in particular the allegation that brothers shared their wives.<sup>29</sup>

Scholars in the Brittonic-speaking regions were probably aware of ideas like these, and set out deliberately to counter them. Frankish ideas on the history of nations, including that of the Bretons, could have reached Wales quickly and directly in the second quarter of the ninth century. Thanks to the survival of 'Dubthach's cryptogram' and the letter explaining it, we know of a group of Irish scholars with Carolingian court connections who visited the court of King Merfyn Frych of Gwynedd (ca 825–44).<sup>30</sup> It was also in Gwynedd, in 829/30, that the author of *Historia Brittonum* (*HB*) worked: the earliest extant version of the text, the 'Harleian' recension, is dated to 'the fourth year of King Merfyn'.<sup>31</sup> Several features of this work reveal the author's familiarity with Frankish historiography, and an intention to improve on it. In the Chronicle of 'Fredegar' (ca 660 × 714) and the *Liber Historiae Francorum* (727), it was claimed that the Franks were descended from Aeneas, the survivor of the Trojan War who founded Rome according to Vergil's epic *Aeneid*.<sup>32</sup> (The idea that Trojans had settled in Gaul could indeed be found as early as the fourth century in the history of Ammianus Marcellinus.<sup>33</sup>) In *HB* the Britons, too, are attached to the line of Aeneas, and the author extends the Frankish

<sup>28</sup> Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 7; Collins, 'The "Reviser"'.  
<sup>29</sup> Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmen in honorem Hlodouici*, III.1262–1311, ed. Faral, *Ermold le Noir*, 98–103; Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, V.14, transl. Edwards, *Caesar*, 252–3; Smith, 'Confronting Identities', 179. The earliest surviving manuscript of *De Bello Gallico* is an early ninth-century production with Fleury provenance: for description and bibliography, see <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc34029k> (accessed 23 September 2019).

<sup>30</sup> In Brussels Bibliothèque Royale 9565–66: Derolez, 'Dubthach's Cryptogram'; Lapidge, 'Latin Learning', 92; Préaux, 'Un nouveau manuscrit'.  
<sup>31</sup> *HB*, 4, 16, ed. Faral, 5, 13–14. For the authorship and composition of *HB*, see Guy, 'The Origins', 45–55.

<sup>32</sup> Collins, *Fredegar*, 82–3, 102; Wood, 'Defining the Franks', 50–4.

<sup>33</sup> Yavuz, 'From Caesar to Charlemagne', 4–5 and references.

adoption of the Trojan legend by linking the genealogy of Aeneas to biblical history through Ham, the son of Noah.<sup>34</sup> The author also quotes from the so-called 'Frankish Table of Nations' as an alternative source for British origins, although this text (ultimately dating from the sixth century), which listed mythical ancestors for various peoples of Europe, was the author's less preferred version.<sup>35</sup> The recension of the 'Frankish Table of Nations' used in *HB* was of the 'Italian type', so called because its three manuscripts seem to have originated in Italy: however, the text's Italian phase was not of any great importance from the point of view of its transmission to Wales because, as Walter Goffart shows, the 'Italian type' derives from the northern or 'Transalpine' textual tradition and one of its manuscripts, though possibly Italian in origin, had returned north of the Alps and was at Reichenau by 822.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the 'Frankish Table' was available at a centre which had both Irish and Breton contacts, as argued in [Chapter 4](#). It may have been from Reichenau itself that the text reached north Wales, but the direct contact between the court of Gwynedd and major Irish centres of scholarship on the Continent evidenced by Dubthach's cryptogram amply accounts for the availability of Frankish and Irish synthetic history to the author of *HB*.<sup>37</sup> A later indication of such contact is the passage in the *Miracula Sancti Germani* by Heiric of Auxerre, written in the 870s, in which the saint recounts a miracle of St Germanus which he had heard from a British anchorite at Soissons, named Marcus: the story, of Germanus's deposition of the tyrant Benlli, is also found in *HB*. Heiric ends by saying that Marcus had sworn that the story was 'contained in catholic letters among his people', which implies that Marcus had seen a manuscript either of *HB* itself or of the lost Welsh-Latin *Liber Germani* which was one of its sources.<sup>38</sup>

Familiar as he was with wider European scholarship, the author of *HB* took care to correct historiographers who did insufficient justice to the place of the Britons in history. His claim of Trojan ancestry for the Britons through an unjustly cursed Brutus, son of Aeneas, is a rejoinder to the

<sup>34</sup> Rio, *Mythes fondateurs*, 65–9, even suggests that the claim of Trojan ancestry for the Britons in *HB* was inspired by the rivalry of Franks and Bretons on the Continent.

<sup>35</sup> Dumville, '*Historia Brittonum*', 409–10; Wadden, 'The Frankish Table', 4–5. For the use made of the 'Table of Nations' in Frankish historiography of the ninth century and before, see Reimitz, *History*, 82–3 and 216–7. See also the remarks of Wood, 'Universal Chronicles', 49–50, on the similarity in arrangement between *HB* and 'Fredegar's' Chronicle.

<sup>36</sup> Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 229 (early ninth century): Wadden, 'The Frankish Table', 2–3; Goffart, 'The Supposedly Frankish Table', 114, 125–7; N. J. Evans, 'Cultural Contacts', 141–4; *WAB*, 441.

<sup>37</sup> Derolez, 'Dubthach's Cryptogram'. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, xciii, suggested that 'Brittany was the channel of communication' for this and similar information, but this need not be the case.

<sup>38</sup> Heiric of Auxerre, *Miracula Sancti Germani*, II. viii. 80–82, ed. Migne, cols 1245–6; for discussion see Guy, 'The Life', 3.

accepted etymology of Isidore of Seville that derived the name of the Britons from the word 'brute'.<sup>39</sup> His assertion that a Briton, Rhun son of Urien, baptised the Northumbrian king Edwin can be read as a response to Bede's allegation that the Britons had failed to preach Christianity to the English.<sup>40</sup> His assertion of the origins of Brittany may likewise be a 'correction' of the Frankish account that had recently gained currency. According to *HB*:

The seventh [Roman] emperor to reign in Britain was Maximianus. He went forth from Britain with all the troops of the British and killed Gratian, the king of the Romans, and held the empire of all Europe. He refused to send the soldiers who had gone forth with him back to Britain, to their wives and children and lands, but gave them many districts from the lake on top of Mount Jove to the city called Quentovic, as far as the Western Mass, that is, the Western Ridge. They are the Armorican British, and they never came back, even to the present day. That is why Britain has been occupied by foreigners, and the citizens driven out, until God shall give them help.<sup>41</sup>

David Dumville has noted how the author of *HB* repeatedly uses the phrase 'to this day' (*usque in hodiernum diem* or *usque hodie*) when discussing the numerous population-movements that had led to the existing situation in Britain and Ireland, validating his statements about the past by reference to the present.<sup>42</sup> The author's explanation of the origin of Brittany deals neatly with a number of contentious points. By attributing the settlement of Britons to a Roman emperor, albeit a usurper, he asserts its legitimacy and absolves the Britons themselves from responsibility for having wrongfully occupied anyone else's land, as Frankish sources claimed. The *Royal Frankish Annals* stated that the Bretons had come to Brittany in flight from the Angles and Saxons. *HB* inverts cause and effect, defending Britons from the charge of military weakness by claiming that Britain had been occupied by the English precisely *because* its armed forces had been diverted into the settlement of Brittany. Both theories are based ultimately on passages in Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*, but while the Frankish version emphasises Gildas's refugee narrative, the Welsh version builds on his allegation that Magnus

<sup>39</sup> *Brittones quidam Latine nominatos suspicantur, eo quod bruti sint*: Isidore, *Etymologiae*, IX. II.102, ed. Lindsay, vol. 1 [no p. nos]: Smith, 'Confronting Identities', 177.

<sup>40</sup> *HB* 63, ed. Faral, 43. For *HB* as a 'reply to Bede', see Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions', 117–8; Charles-Edwards, 'Celtic Britain', 156–7.

<sup>41</sup> *HB*, 27, transl. Morris, *Nennius*, 24–5; ed. Faral, 20–21: *Septimus imperator regnavit in Britannia Maximianus. Ipse perrexit cum omnibus militibus Brittonum a Britannia, et occidit Gratianum, regem Romanorum, et imperium tenuit totius Europae, et noluit dimittere milites, qui perrexerunt cum eo, ad Britanniam, ad uxores suas et ad filios suos et ad possessiones suas, sed dedit illis multas regiones a stagno quod est super verticem Montis Iovis usque ad civitatem quae vocatur Cant Guic, et usque ad cumulum occidentalem, id est Cruc Ochidient. Hi sunt Brittones Armorici, et nunquam reversi sunt hac usque in hodiernum diem. Propter hoc Britanniam occupata est ab extraneis gentibus et cives expulsi sunt, usque dum Deo auxilium dederit illis.*

<sup>42</sup> Dumville, 'Historia Brittonum', 411.

Maximus had ‘despoiled [Britain] of her whole army’.<sup>43</sup> Inasmuch as Maximus had become a founding figure from whom several Welsh royal dynasties traced their descent, this was also a way of asserting Welsh kinship with (and seniority over) the Armorican Britons.<sup>44</sup> The use of the word *Armorica* itself to mean Brittany – a word redolent of classical antiquity, perhaps gleaned from a reading of Bede or Constantius’s *Life of Germanus* – is another innovation, which was taken up later in the ninth century by Asser of St Davids and by the hagiographers Wrdisten and Wrmonoc in Brittany. The attempt to define an extended territory for the Armorican Britons (although a certain identification of the places listed in the passage, other than Quentovic, seems impossible), may depend on some knowledge of the former extent of the *Tractus Armoricanus*, overlaid by an awareness of the locations in Francia where British clergy had been active in the Merovingian period: itself probably a legacy of the traffic between Britain and the imperial capitals at Trier and Milan in the fourth century.<sup>45</sup>

Eventually, in the later ninth century, Brittany experienced its own literary flowering and there, as in Francia and Wales, we find authors paying attention to the Insular origins of the Bretons. However, the very event that allowed Brittany to be conceptualised as a political unit – the Carolingian conquest – must also have inhibited the exploration of these origins. The ruling house of Brittany largely owed its position to Frankish overlords, and was either uninterested in, or wary of, promoting a historiography in which possession of Brittany was legitimised by reference to a British past. By contrast with the synthetic history of *HB*, explicitly concerned with contemporary Welsh dynasties and their right to rule, scholarly consideration of the past in ninth-century Brittany was expressed almost entirely through the medium of hagiography, by authors who maintained a discreet distance from contemporary politics, restricting their comments on secular rulership to the remote past.

Camouflaged, deliberately or not, by their sacred context, several hagiographers made statements about Breton identity. In *Vita II Samsonis*, Brittany is called *Brittonum patria*, the word *patria* suggesting ‘a territory,

<sup>43</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio*, 14, transl. Winterbottom, 21; the interpretation suggested by Guy, ‘Constantine’, 387, is followed here.

<sup>44</sup> Guy, ‘Constantine’, 386–7, discusses the (probably Welsh) source of the account of Breton origins in *HB*. He suggests that the name-form Maximianus (which occurs only in this passage and its derivatives) arises from a misunderstanding of the abbreviated form *Maxim* (as used in the Harleian genealogies).

<sup>45</sup> Merdrignac, *DUBALA*, 81–8, reviews the arguments and concludes plausibly that *Mons Iovis* referred to the Great St Bernard pass in the Alps, reflecting ninth-century Frankish usage: for example Heiric, *Miracula Sancti Germani* I.8, ed. Migne, cols. 1243–4. See also Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 249–50 and Camby, ‘Limites politiques’, 99. Le Duc, ‘Leoteren’, however, suggests that *Mons Jovis* meant Mont-Dol, near Dol, and that *Cant Guic* means Léon.

people and a jurisdictional identity'.<sup>46</sup> The word *gens*, in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, was applied to people believed to have common descent; among the Britons and English, though not among the Franks, it also designated people with a common language.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, Wrmonoc in *Vita Pauli Aureliani* identifies a *Britannica gens* in Brittany, recognisable by its language.<sup>48</sup> The clearest statement of Breton origins is found in Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloei*, composed between 857 and 884 by an abbot of Landévennec who was in touch with men of letters as far afield as Italy and doubtless conversant with Frankish ideas on history.<sup>49</sup> The arrival of St Winwaloe's family in Brittany is related as part of a full-scale origin story which opens the text. 'The island of Britain', it begins, 'from which our lineage, as is commonly said, drew its origin in former times . . . ' and, depending heavily on Gildas, proceeds to a description of the beauties and riches of Britain and how these led to dissent and vice.<sup>50</sup> The Britons were punished for their sins by famine, plague and invasion, but a few escaped 'to foreign soil, either to Ireland, although hostile, or to the Belgic lands' (a classical term taken from Gildas), and in the case of Winwaloe's parents, 'to Armorica, where they had heard that a sheltered space of land was still quiescent, without disasters'. Fracanus, Winwaloe's father, is presented as a second Abraham, whose blessing with saintly offspring follows from his obedience to God's call to leave his homeland.<sup>51</sup>

This account does not appear to owe anything to the statement about Breton origins in *HB*. However, like *HB*, Wrdisten's account is based (still more thoroughly) on Gildas, and also draws on a Vergilian background. Where the author of *HB* creates an explicit genealogical link between Aeneas and the Britons, Wrdisten associates Fracanus with Aeneas implicitly by means of textual echoes of the *Aeneid*.<sup>52</sup> Bernard Merdrignac assumed that Wrdisten, like Vergil, uses the word *origo* to

<sup>46</sup> Smith, 'Confronting Identities', 173.

<sup>47</sup> Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 250–7; Ewig, 'Volkstum', 244, 270–1; Charles-Edwards, 'The Making of Nations' 12–15.

<sup>48</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, 1, ed. Cuissard, 418; Smith, 'Confronting Identities', 174.

<sup>49</sup> He dedicated a brief version of his Life of Winwaloe to Bishop John of Arezzo (ca 868–900): Fawtier (ed.), 'Une rédaction inédite'; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 430–6. See also, Garavaglia and Morice, 'Clôture et ouverture'.

<sup>50</sup> *Britannia insula, de qua stirpis nostri origo olim, ut vulgo refertur, processit*: Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.1, ed. De Smedt, 174.

<sup>51</sup> . . . pauci . . . aut Scotticam quamvis inimicam, aut Belgicam . . . alienam petivere terram . . . Armoricam, ubi tunc opacum adhuc sine clade audiebatur siluisse terrae spatium: Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.1–2, ed. De Smedt, 174–7.

<sup>52</sup> Merdrignac, 'L'Énéide', 202; *DUBALA*, 162. The phrase *stirpis nostrae origo* in *Vita Winwaloei* I.1 echoes *Aeneid* XII l. 166, *Hinc pater Aeneas, Romanae stirpis origo*; in *Vita Winwaloei* III.2 (the verse Life), ed. De Smedt, 250, Fracanus is again introduced with the words *Vir fuit antiqua magni de stirpe Britonum*, echoing *Aeneid* VI l. 864, *Filius, anne aliquis magna de stirpe nepotum*.

refer to a specific person; he suggested that the sentence was a veiled reference to some unifying ancestor-figure for the Bretons – an early prototype for Geoffrey of Monmouth's Conan Meriadoc.<sup>53</sup> Joseph Rio, however, suggests that Wrdisten's *origo* refers to Aeneas himself. Rio also calls attention to a passage in Ermoldus's *Carmen in honorem Hlodouici* in which a Frankish envoy negotiating with the Breton ruler Morman compares the Franks with Aeneas, and Morman with his adversary Turnus, taking this as evidence for an explicit dispute between Frankish and Breton *literati* over who could legitimately claim Aeneas as an ancestor.<sup>54</sup> Certainly Wrdisten's account seems, like *HB*, designed as a reply to Frankish claims about Breton origins. He concedes that the Bretons have been forced to leave their own country, but presents their journey to Brittany as providential, the escape of a righteous remnant from a divinely ordained disaster. He is silent on the fate of the pre-existing population of Brittany, but, in the face of Frankish accusations of violence, seems to imply that the Bretons moved peacefully into a deserted landscape: when Fracanus lands on the north coast of Brittany, he is shown 'finding a certain fairly large estate, about the size of a *plebs*, surrounded on all sides by forests and thorn-bushes, which is now called by the name of its finder' – Ploufragan.<sup>55</sup> Other Breton hagiographers of the ninth century created a similar atmosphere of a depopulated landscape inhabited, if at all, by other British migrants, and by monsters and wild animals which it was the saints' task to tame.<sup>56</sup> These accounts are quite different from the narratives of killing and expulsion developed to account for the disappearance of assimilated peoples in Britain – the Britons in England, the Irish in Wales and the Picts in Scotland.<sup>57</sup>

However, the major historical statements made in the ninth century about Breton origins by three parties concerned in the case – a Frankish court chronicler, a Welsh scholar and a Breton abbot – each took a different, self-justifying stance in the matter, but within a thought-world that they held in common: the assumption that the origins of peoples in post-Roman Europe might be harmonised with the Bible and the *Aeneid* and credited (as in these models) to patriarchal founder-figures.<sup>58</sup> Gildas,

<sup>53</sup> Merdrignac, 'L'Éneide', 202; 'Les origines antiques', 50; 'Présence', 113–4.

<sup>54</sup> Ermoldus Nigellus, *Carmen in honorem Hlodouici*, III.1394–9, ed. Faral, *Ermold le Noir*, 108–9; Rio, *Mythes fondateurs*, 38–42.

<sup>55</sup> *Fundum quendam reperiens non perparvum, sed quasi unius plebis modulum, silvis dumisque undique circumsaepum, modo iam ab inventore nuncupatum*. Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I. 2, ed. De Smedt, 177.

<sup>56</sup> Cassard, 'Le génocide originel'; Cassard, 'La mise en texte', 373–4.

<sup>57</sup> Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.34, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 116–7; Charles-Edwards, 'Language and Society', 703–8; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, I.8, ed. Greenway, 24–5.

<sup>58</sup> Reynolds, 'Medieval *Origines Gentium*', 375–7.



as the earliest post-Roman scholar to identify a non-Roman *gens* explicitly with the Hebrews of the Old Testament, was in a sense the originator of all these theories.<sup>59</sup> A basic account of the history of Brittany – that the Britons had arrived and re-peopled the region after the time of the ‘Romans or Gauls’ – seems to have been understood not only among the small number of scholars who read and wrote history books, but rather more widely. So it appears from a document of 874 × 876 relating a dispute between the abbey of Redon and a certain Greduuoret over the lordship of a group of tenants (*coloni*). The tenants allegedly said that ‘none of their seed had heard such a thing [as Greduuoret’s claim] either in the time of the Romans or the Gauls, or in the time of the Britons’.<sup>60</sup> A long-term periodisation of Breton history had passed into popular consciousness – or at least general monastic consciousness.

An idea of the *adventus Brittonum* also seems to be present in the first entry of the brief chronicle entered in the computistical manuscript Angers BM 476 in the first half of the tenth century.<sup>61</sup> The editor renders the almost illegible second and third lines of the text as follows:

... *adventum Britonum in <L>etouia insul<a> etia* ...  
 ... *acentibus suis occi* ...

(‘... the coming of the Britons to the “island” of Letavia also (?)’, followed apparently by a mention of killing [*occidere*, although it might be a form of *occidens*, ‘west’] those nearest to them [*adiacentibus* or a similar word]).

Does this imply that the Frankish idea of a violent Breton takeover had, after all, gained acceptance among semi-assimilated Breton scholars – a step along the road to the slaughter envisaged by Geoffrey of Monmouth? A hint at the author’s attitude is provided by the fact that his chronicle is framed by Breton conquest and Viking retribution, and about half the entries in between refer to the violent deaths of (mostly Breton) rulers. Even as brief a chronicle as this implicitly uses the template of sin followed inexorably by retribution that the Britons derived from their historiographical models: Gildas, the *Historia Adversum Paganos* by Orosius, and ultimately the Hebrew Bible.<sup>62</sup>

Missing from the Bretons’ own ninth-century origin-story is any attention to political relationships between Insular and Continental British rulers, or a sense that legitimate power had been transferred, or derived, from the Insular world. In Breton hagiography, saints beginning their

<sup>59</sup> Dumville, ‘Post-Colonial Gildas’. Gildas applies the word *gens* to the British in, for example, *De Excidio Britanniae* 21, ed. Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 24, 95.

<sup>60</sup> CR, 261, p. 211: *hoc dicentes: nullus de semine eorum haec audivit neque in tempore Romanorum seu Gallorum, neque in tempore Brittanorum.*

<sup>61</sup> *Annales Rotonenses*, ed. Bischoff, 105.

<sup>62</sup> For manuscripts of Gildas and Orosius in Brittany, see [Chapter 4](#).



careers in Britain and moving to Brittany encounter secular rulers, but there is no direct indication that any ruler in Britain also played a political role in Brittany.<sup>63</sup> As suggested, such a theory may have been politically unpalatable as long as Brittany was under Carolingian lordship. It would have to wait until the genealogy of Riwal was formulated in about the year 1000. The theory of *HB*, that Brittany had been bestowed on its people by 'Maximianus', does not seem to have found favour in Brittany itself until after it was repackaged by Geoffrey of Monmouth (with an enhanced role for a Breton founder, Conan Meriadoc) in the 1130s. The 'Chartres recension' of *HB*, which may have been created in Brittany, omitted the section on the settlement of Brittany altogether (although this section may have been edited out earlier, in the course of the text's Irish transmission, rather than by a Breton redactor).<sup>64</sup> Thus, even in the articulate ninth century, only limited attention was given to the origin of the Breton people by either Bretons or their neighbours; but much indirect evidence on British–Breton relations can be gleaned from Breton hagiography.

## Breton Hagiography and Insular Contact

### *Characteristics of Breton Hagiography*

The ninth century saw a burst of literary activity in Brittany, as several ecclesiastical centres produced Lives of their founding saints. As well as historiographical statements about the Insular origins of the Bretons, these works contain implicit information about contacts between Brittany and the Insular world at the time they were written. It ranges from overt statements about the authors' sources, to detectable literary influences, stylistic features and narrative motifs for which analogues can be found in Insular texts.<sup>65</sup>

This section, after a brief general survey of Breton hagiography and its characteristics in relation to Insular and Frankish hagiography, will deal with the evidence of individual texts for contact between Brittany and the Insular

<sup>63</sup> Possibly excepting 'Commodus': *Vita I Samsonis*, I.53, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 224–5. For a judicious discussion see *WAB*, 67–8.

<sup>64</sup> Chartres BM 98: Dumville, 'An Irish Idiom', 183.

<sup>65</sup> Students of medieval Breton hagiography still work within the parameters set by Duine in his *Mémento*, a comprehensive catalogue of sources. For texts composed before the year 1000, the standard reference work is Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*. Introductions to this material as literature include Smith, 'Oral and Written'; (briefly) Merdrignac, *Les Vies des saints*; Merdrignac, 'Breton Hagiography', in Koch (ed.), *Encyclopedia*; (at greater length) Merdrignac, *Recherches*. For hagiography as evidence for Breton–Insular contact, see Kerlouégan, 'Les Vies', and the recent summings-up by Poulin, 'Présence', and Jankulak, 'Cross-Channel Intercourse'.

world. Because it is convenient to concentrate general discussion of Breton hagiography in one chapter, the survey will range chronologically over the whole of the Middle Ages; however, the individual texts to which further sections of the chapter are devoted belong to the ninth and early tenth centuries. The focus will be on hagiography in the sense of extended literary narratives about saints' lives and miracles, leaving other written material connected to the cult of saints to be discussed in [Chapter 6](#).

In early medieval Francia, the writing of *Vitae* of bishops and monastic founders evolved from a late antique tradition which was maintained by the leading sixth-century authors Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours. It was routine for notable bishops, abbots and abbesses to be provided with biographies: there was never a major caesura in their production.<sup>66</sup> In the Carolingian period, regional church councils even condemned the veneration of saints without *Vitae*.<sup>67</sup> In the Insular world as a whole, such texts are rarer.<sup>68</sup> Bursts of hagiographical activity were prompted by external stimuli: conversion, diplomatic initiatives, reform movements and conquests. In the intervals between these, local saints could maintain their place in the devotion of the faithful without Lives. Relics (primary and secondary), liturgical commemoration (as revealed by calendars, litanies and martyrologies) and a tangible presence in the local landscape, were sufficient.<sup>69</sup> Brittany should probably be seen as a home of 'hagiography in special circumstances', like the Atlantic Archipelago, rather than 'routine' hagiography, like Francia. However, in its production of hagiography in preference to other forms of historical writing, Brittany was perhaps more comparable to southern Frankland than to either the central parts of the Frankish kingdom or to the Atlantic Archipelago.<sup>70</sup>

At this point it may be useful to outline some general characteristics of 'Insular', 'Celtic' or 'Brittonic' hagiography, as compared to 'Frankish' hagiography, that would allow one to situate Breton hagiography in relation to either cultural sphere: however, this is not at all a simple task. Even characterising the Breton Lives as a corpus has not yet progressed very far,

<sup>66</sup> Collins, 'Observations'; Kitchen, 'Gregory of Tours'. For a conspectus of Merovingian hagiography, see Heinzelmänn, 'L'hagiographie mérovingienne'.

<sup>67</sup> Geary, *Living With the Dead*, 23.

<sup>68</sup> For England, see Lapidge and Love, 'The Latin Hagiography', 224; Campbell, 'Some Twelfth-Century Views', 138–40; for Wales, Davies, 'Property Rights', 517–8; Guy, 'The Life of St Dyfrig', 2–4 and references, correcting over-pessimistic assessments by, for example, Lapidge and Love, 'The Latin Hagiography', 272–3. For Ireland, see Herbert, 'Latin and Vernacular Hagiography', 327–60; Stalmans, *Saints d'Irlande*.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written', 324–6, and see [Chapter 6](#).

<sup>70</sup> For the prevalence of monastic foundation-legends over political historiography in the medieval south of France, see Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, 9–13. For Aquitaine's medieval reputation as a nursery of saints, see Bozóky, 'Introduction'. For the eschatological motive in Irish annal-keeping, see Flechner, 'The Chronicle of Ireland'.

partly because of a scholarly preference for studying the evolving ‘dossiers’ of single saints. Only recently has the question of intertextuality or a common purpose or awareness on the part of Breton hagiographers begun to be raised systematically.<sup>71</sup> A more serious difficulty is in characterising the Continental ‘standard’ against which the Insular ‘fringe’ is to be defined. The sheer quantity of surviving hagiography from the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms ensures that it has not been studied with the same thoroughness as the relatively manageable corpora of Insular Lives. There are scholarly indexes to the narrative motifs found in Irish, Welsh and Breton hagiography, which, although proceeding on slightly varying principles, usefully lead scholars to potentially comparable aspects of the texts.<sup>72</sup> No such index or general scholarly survey of Carolingian hagiography exists, nor even a comprehensive list of the relevant texts, which run into hundreds, the majority of which have been published only in the venerable *Acta Sanctorum* and *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* collections, or in some cases not at all.<sup>73</sup> In the absence of the materials for a full comparative study, comparisons of selected groups of texts can give results that are interesting as starting-points for discussion, but are unlikely to be definitive.<sup>74</sup>

At the basic level of language, all surviving hagiography from Brittany is written in Latin, the universal language of the medieval western Church.<sup>75</sup> There are a few features in the grammar, syntax and vocabulary of our corpus of texts which suggest that authors were first-language speakers of British Celtic, but this need not imply active contact with the

<sup>71</sup> Poulin’s demonstrations of the interdependence of a number of Breton *Vitae* (*L’hagiographie bretonne*, 68, 258, 440) is a milestone in this respect: so, for the eleventh century, is Bourgès, ‘L’atmosphère religieuse’.

<sup>72</sup> Merdrignac, *Recherches*, II.197–224; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*; Bray, *A List of Motifs*.

<sup>73</sup> Julia M. H. Smith lamented this gap in scholarship in 1992 (Smith, ‘Early Medieval Hagiography’); it has not been filled since. The volume on the hagiography of northern France between 750 and 950 by A. Dierkens and A.-M. Helvétius, announced in successive volumes of the Corpus Christianorum *Hagiographies* series (up to 2017), has not yet appeared. Gibson, ‘The Carolingian World Through Hagiography’, provides an overview. Bultot-Verleysen, ‘Hagiographie d’Aquitaine’, surveys the hagiography of Aquitaine between 750 and 930. Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, 431–58, gave a selective list of 217 biographies from the Carolingian world between 750 and 920. A more thorough audit of Merovingian saints’ Lives is that by Heinzelmann, ‘L’hagiographie mérovingienne’, who notes (p. 31) that 509 Gaulish saints who lived between 501 and 751 are the subjects of at least one text listed in BHL (many of these texts were of course composed later).

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Stancliffe, ‘The Miracle Stories’; Picard, ‘The Marvellous’; Picard, ‘Hagiographie’.

<sup>75</sup> Fleuriot (*Les origines*, 270, 284; *Héritage celtique*, 66–7; ‘Les très anciennes lois’, 70–1) argued that *Vita S. Brioci* and *Vita II S. Tugdual* were translated from texts in Old Breton, on the basis of statements by the authors of the surviving texts that their source-texts were in a ‘foreign’ and ‘barbarous’ language. However, this probably referred to the style of the Latin: Tanguy, ‘De *Briomagus* à *Briocus*’, 23–4; Merdrignac, ‘Des auteurs inspirés?’, 30–2.

British 'homeland'.<sup>76</sup> Other features may reflect specifically 'Celtic-Latin' literary tastes: for instance the elaborate vocabulary known as 'hisperic', and stylistic devices such as interlaced nouns, adjectives and verbal phrases.<sup>77</sup> But these and other 'Celtic' or Insular features such as dual prose and verse presentations, double prefaces and alphabetical hymns had passed into use in the Carolingian world via English and Irish scholars by the time examples of them occur in Breton hagiography, in the ninth century.<sup>78</sup> Thus they are not necessarily diagnostic features of an Insular, as opposed to a Continental, culture-sphere. As regards literary models, Celtic and English hagiographers relied on the same foundational texts as did their Continental counterparts. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, Athanasius's *Life of St Anthony*, the *Life of St Martin* by Sulpicius Severus, the *Dialogues of Gregory the Great*, provided templates: 'saints were crucial building blocks in Christian universality'.<sup>79</sup> Occasionally, more regionally specific models can be pinpointed, such as the use of Gildas by the hagiographers of Landévennec, and a reference to the thought-world of biblical apocrypha (particularly popular with Hiberno-Latin authors) in the episode in *Vita I S. Samsonis* involving a *theomacha*, an 'enemy of God'.<sup>80</sup> The bulk of the literary sources directly referenced by Breton hagiographers, however (and they are a wide selection, evidence for the quantity of reading matter available to ninth-century Bretons), could have been found in any well-stocked library in western Europe.<sup>81</sup> To that extent, the assumption that one can meaningfully characterise Breton hagiography as either 'Insular' or 'Continental', 'Celtic' or 'non-Celtic', is misleading.<sup>82</sup> No 'Celtic' hagiographer ever wished to exclude the wider world of Christendom from his work.<sup>83</sup>

But however determinedly universal a hagiographer's work, he could not of course avoid being affected by his local culture: numerous scholars have sought analogues for episodes of Breton *Vitae* in secular Irish or Welsh literature or in folklore. These, however, are difficult to prove, especially as parallels are rarely extensive or precise. Some are close in substance, but chronologically so widely separated that their significance remains mysterious: for instance, the parallel between the *theomacha*

<sup>76</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*: Flobert (ed.), *La Vie ancienne*, 66–8; *WAB*, 625. In the *Vitae* of St Winwaloe: Kerlouégan, "'Faire'"; Le Hénaff-Rozé, 'Les brittonismes'; Harvey, 'Technical Vocabulary'.

<sup>77</sup> Lemoine, 'Note'; Kerlouégan, 'Une mode stylistique'; Winterbottom, 'A "Celtic" Hyperbaton?'

<sup>78</sup> Poulin, 'Présence'. <sup>79</sup> Palmer, *Early Medieval Hagiography*, 96.

<sup>80</sup> Merdrignac, 'Une course en char'; see Dumville, 'Biblical Apocrypha'.

<sup>81</sup> See Kerlouégan, 'Les citations ... profanes'; Kerlouégan, 'Les citations ... chrétiens'; Wright, 'Knowledge'; Wright, 'Some Further Vergilian Borrowings'.

<sup>82</sup> W. Davies, 'The Myth'. <sup>83</sup> O'Loughlin, "'A Celtic Theology'", 57–8.

episode in *Vita I S. Samsonis*, just alluded to, involving a demonic female with her eight sisters, and the nine witches in the thirteenth-century Welsh tale *Peredur*, or Morgen and her eight sisters in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*.<sup>84</sup> One major difficulty with such comparisons is the extent to which Celtic mythological material, in the form in which we encounter it, is already affected by the same biblical and classical models as were available to the hagiographers. 'Folkloric' motifs, too, overlap with the Bible and the classics and can rarely be pinned down to any particular region, let alone an ultimate source.<sup>85</sup>

Perhaps more promising than the search for references to pre-Christian mythology is the search for regional specificities in the Christian thought-world of hagiographers. For example, one characteristic of British-Latin hagiography is the absence of collections of posthumous miracles, as discussed further in Chapter 6.<sup>86</sup> Another (as Barry Lewis points out) is an absence of stories of conversion from pre-Christian religions, and hence 'a general cultural understanding . . . that the Britons had been Christian since time out of mind – but they were just not very good at it.'<sup>87</sup> The 'bad Christian' ruler who needs correction or punishment from a saint is a figure strongly characteristic of Brittonic hagiography, although of course there are models and analogues in Scripture and in medieval hagiography from elsewhere.

Generalising about Insular and Breton hagiography is difficult partly because early (pre-eleventh-century) hagiographical texts are strongly individuated: each text has a marked character of its own. Arguably, Insular hagiography – perhaps because its production was less routine – took longer to become generic than did Continental hagiography.<sup>88</sup> In Wales and Ireland, it seems to have been only in the central Middle Ages that hagiography became sufficiently stereotyped for 'typical' story-patterns to be identifiable. This may partly have resulted from Lives being redacted into the surviving manuscript-collections by a limited number of authors or editors.<sup>89</sup> Breton *Vitae* maintained a greater variety throughout the Middle Ages, perhaps partly because they were not the object of systematic collection until the early modern period. However, still more recent popular tradition about local saints in Brittany creates an

<sup>84</sup> Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', 45; Hall, 'The Meanings', 176 and note 224 (accessed 05 August 2019); for another example, see Merdrignac, 'Lug', 59–63.

<sup>85</sup> Powell, 'Once Upon A Time', 176.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written', 335–6; see also Merdrignac, "'*Ut uulgo refertur*'", 106.

<sup>87</sup> Lewis, 'The Saints', 447.

<sup>88</sup> For the generic nature of hagiography see Palmer, *Early Medieval Hagiography*, 20–1; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 77–9; for the varied nature of the earliest Irish hagiography, see McCone, 'An Introduction', esp. 35–6.

<sup>89</sup> For this process in Ireland, see Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*.

impression that eventually certain favourite story-motifs came to be applied to large numbers of saints indiscriminately. It would be interesting to test more thoroughly the hypothesis that hagiography relating to saints of the distant past grew less varied over time, recycling a more limited range of material. The corollary is that in the early medieval period, it is difficult or impossible to define a 'typical Celtic' saint. A story-motif that comes to seem 'characteristically Celtic' may be a motif that has an unexceptionable biblical or patristic origin, and is not confined to 'Celtic' hagiography, but secondarily comes to have a strong presence in these texts that may reflect a regional circulation of information and a sphere of shared taste. A case in point is the motif of the saint who subdues a serpent or dragon, an ultimately biblical theme that attained a high symbolic importance in the First Life of Samson and reappeared in many later Breton and Welsh saints' Lives, but was by no means confined to them.<sup>90</sup> A contrasted cluster of anecdotes about saints' harmonious relationship with animals has been seen as Celtic, although it too occurs elsewhere.<sup>91</sup> The miraculous provision of fish for food, a biblical miracle, is particularly popular in the Lives of Brittonic saints, in keeping with their maritime locations.<sup>92</sup> Miracles relating to saints' sacred possessions, notably altars and bells, substitute to some extent in Celtic saints' Lives for post-mortem miracles occasioned by corporal relics.<sup>93</sup> Accounts of

<sup>90</sup> Merdrignac, 'Une course en char'; Krajewski, *Archetypal Narratives*, 114–20; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, 91–2; Bray, *A List of Motifs*, 88; Carney, *Studies*, 123; Rauer, *Beowulf*, 55–8, 174–93; Herrick, *Imagining the Sacred Past*, 83–6; Van Torhout, 'De saint Pair', 104–5.

<sup>91</sup> Lord, 'Nature, Fertility'; Poulin, 'Présence'; Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 57–84. For the 'revelatory swine' motif, see Jankulak, 'Alba Longa'. The saint protects animal from hunters: Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 118–22. Examples from the Celtic world: Irish *Vitae*: Bray, *A List of Motifs*, 89. Illtud, Cybi, Oudoceus: Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, 87. Mechyll: Lewis, 'St Mechyll', 26–7. Melangell: *Historia Divae Monacellae*, ed. Pryce. Guenael: *Vita S. Guenaili*, 15, ed. De Smedt, 677. Brioc: *Vita S. Brioci*, 33, ed. Plaine, 176. Ninnoc: *Vita S. Ninnocae*, in *Cartulaire de Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and de Berthou, 62–3. Petroc: *Vita I. S. Petroci*, 11, ed. Grosjean, 'Vies', 494; Neot: Orme, *The Saints*, 201. An animal traces the bounds of a saint's monastery: Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.34, ed. Lot, 375; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, 87–8, 159; Lewis, *Medieval Welsh Poems*, 137. Stags or untamed oxen plough for the saint: *Vita S. Leonorii*, 11, ed. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 144–5; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 114–5; Bray, 'The Study', 271; Hughes, 'The Historical Value', 364–5.

<sup>92</sup> *Vita S. Maglorii*, 16, ed. Van Hecke, 'De S. Maglorio', 787; *Vita S. Turiavi*, 12, ed. Plaine, 'Vie antique', 42; Orme, *The Saints*, 201 (Neot), 228 (Levan); *Vita I. S. Petroci*, 9, ed. Grosjean, 'Vies', 493; Bourgès, [hagiohistoriographie.medieval.blogspot.com/2011/04/corentin-le-poisson-miraculeux-et.html](http://hagiohistoriographie.medieval.blogspot.com/2011/04/corentin-le-poisson-miraculeux-et.html) (Corentin); Lapidge, 'The Cult', 197; Doble, 'Saint Indract', 15–21.

<sup>93</sup> For examples of the use of portable altars outside the 'Celtic' world in the early Middle Ages see Palazzo, 'L'espace'. Altars: *Vita S. Leonorii*, 6–7, ed. and transl. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 140–1, 50–1; *Vita III S. Patricii*, 27, ed. Bieler, *Four Latin Lives*, 135–6; HB, 71, ed. Faral, 60–1; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, 166; Padel, 'Local



miraculous voyages by sea are popular in Breton hagiography as in Insular hagiography in general, for obvious reasons.<sup>94</sup> Finally, the somewhat bizarre motif of living saints donating single teeth as relics to their followers occurs both in Irish hagiography and in the eleventh-century *Vita III S. Tugdual* from Tréguier.<sup>95</sup>

Examples of such motifs, and what they may reveal about Breton-Insular contact, will be discussed in the following chapters. Suggestive as these are of contact and of a pool of story-motifs used preferentially by Celtic hagiographers, only an examination of the entire corpus of early medieval hagiography will eventually allow us to separate what is locally distinctive from what is generic. The examination of regional patterns of miracle, begun by projects like the 'Mapping Miracles' database (<https://mappingmiracles.wordpress.com>), is promising. However, given the public and declaratory nature of hagiography as literature, and the mobility of saints, their relics and their devotees, we should not expect their distribution to fall into tidy patterns.<sup>96</sup> As Barry Lewis points out, 'most of the clichés of hagiography probably spread through the early medieval West in . . . untraceable ways', through oral contact and liturgy, rather than by direct textual borrowing.<sup>97</sup>

### *The Texts: Chronology and the Question of Rewriting*

With the exception of the First Life of Samson, the *Vitae* to be discussed in this chapter belong to the later ninth and early tenth centuries.<sup>98</sup> The Second Life of Samson was an early gambit in the attempt to have Dol

Saints', 315–6. Bells: Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, 166–7; Henken, *Traditions*, 283; Bray, *A List of Motifs*, 96, 99, 102, 104; *Vita S. Leonorii* 18, 23, ed. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 150, 154–5; *Vita Gildae*, 10, transl. Williams, 28–9; Förster, 'Die Freilassungsurkunden', XXII, p. 89; Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 69–70; *LL*, 136–7; *Vita S. Golveni*, 17, ed. La Borderie, 'Saint Goulven', 224.

<sup>94</sup> Jean-Christophe Cassard's suggestion that the increasingly impossible methods of sea travel in Breton saints' Lives through the Middle Ages reflect the population's turn away from the sea is undermined by the fact that 'impossible voyages' appear also in Welsh and Irish hagiography at a time of proven maritime contact between those regions: Cassard, *Les Bretons et la mer*, 112–30; Bray, *A List of Motifs*, 126–7; Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 39, ed. and transl. Sharpe and Evans, 134–7. See also *Vita S. Paterni*, 13, *VS*, 256–7.

<sup>95</sup> Erskine, 'The Relic Cult', 35–6: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/3398/> (accessed 29 August 2018); Tirechán, *Collectanea*, 45.1, ed. Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, 158–9; *Vita S. Moluæ*, xlix, ed. Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, I, 222; *Vita S. Finniani*, 14, ed. Heist, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 100; *Vita III S. Tugdual*, 19, ed. La Borderie, 'Saint Tugdual', 106; Merdrignac, 'L'espace et le sacré', 278; Merdrignac, 'La perception', 70.

<sup>96</sup> For the distribution of an arguably Insular or 'frontier' genre of hagiography in which the subject is an innocent murder-victim, see Brett, 'St Kenelm'.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis, 'The Saints', 436.

<sup>98</sup> A chronological table of ninth-century Breton hagiography is given by Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 66–8.



made an archiepiscopal see: it probably dates to the 850s or 860s.<sup>99</sup> A date of *ca* 860 has been proposed for the *Vita et prima translatio* of Maglorius, the patron of Léhon, although a later date is possible.<sup>100</sup> The *Vita S. Machutis* by Bili dates from the episcopate of Ratuili of Alet, its dedicatee, between 865 and 872 (two anonymous shorter versions of the saint's Life were produced in the late ninth or early tenth century).<sup>101</sup> *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, an account of the early years of the monastery of Redon, was probably written between 868 and 888;<sup>102</sup> finally, Wrdisten, abbot of Landévennec, produced two prose versions and one in verse of the Life of Winwaloe, his abbey's founding saint, between about 860 and 884, and in 884 his disciple, Wrmonoc, wrote the *Vita Pauli Aureliani* on the founder of Saint-Pol-de-Léon.<sup>103</sup> It is difficult to connect this burst of hagiographical production closely to Carolingian influence on the Breton Church, given that it took place the best part of a century after the initial Carolingian conquest. It may have been the archiepiscopal claims of Dol that sparked the revival: Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* and *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* both function at least partly as responses to Dol's claims.<sup>104</sup> More generally, emulation between churches is likely to have been a factor once any one Life was produced. The preconditions must have been a certain level of wealth and institutional security in the establishments concerned, familiarity with the use of hagiography in promoting a saint's cult, and access to appropriate literary models. It may have been only after the territorial expansion of Brittany, beginning in 851, that sufficient patronage and wealth was accumulated, and the Breton Church reached a level of self-confidence, for literary production to 'take off' in this way; manuscript-production shows a similar chronology.

However, as with manuscript-production, the fact that all the surviving examples date from within a certain time frame does not preclude the possibility that earlier writings existed. Most Breton hagiographers claimed that they were working from earlier written Lives of their subjects.<sup>105</sup> This claim, made with a compelling level of circumstantial detail in *Vita I Samsonis*, is much vaguer in the ninth-century Lives by Bili,

<sup>99</sup> *Vita II S. Samsonis*, ed. Plaine, 'Vita antiqua'; Sowerby, 'The Lives', 12–13.

<sup>100</sup> *Vita S. Maglorii*, ed. Van Hecke.

<sup>101</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, ed. Lot; *Vita anonyma longior*, ed. Lot; *Vita anonyma brevior*, ed. La Borderie, 'Autre Vie'.

<sup>102</sup> *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, in Brett (ed. and transl.), *The Monks of Redon*.

<sup>103</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, ed. De Smedt; Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, ed. Cuissard. For the dating of the various texts see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 207–18 (Maglorius); 155, 163, 170–84 (Machutus); 89, 92–3 (*Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*); 403–5, 413, 426 (Winwaloe); 274 (Paul Aurelian).

<sup>104</sup> Bourges, 'Origines de la rivalité', 4 (accessed 29 April 2020).

<sup>105</sup> On this theme, see in general Poulin, 'Les réécritures'; Poulin, 'Présence'; Merdrignac, 'The Process'; Cassard, 'La mise en texte', 367–8.

Wrdisten and Wrmonoc.<sup>106</sup> Such statements continued to be made in later Breton hagiography, for instance in the eleventh-century *Lives* of Brioc and Tugdual and the twelfth-century *Life* of Gurthiern.<sup>107</sup> In the cases of Machutus and Winwaloe, they misled some twentieth-century researchers into taking secondary, abbreviated versions of the *Lives* to be the original versions; other scholars hopefully envisaged the existence of lost seventh-century or even sixth-century hypotexts and were inclined to credit the existing *Lives* with too much historical accuracy on that basis.<sup>108</sup> In reaction, there has been a tendency to dismiss such claims as mere rhetorical flourishes.<sup>109</sup> However, this seems unsafe given the numerous known instances of rewriting, and the disappearance of pre-ninth-century Breton manuscripts. The centres of literary composition in ninth-century Brittany may have had a longer history of engagement with the Gallo-Frankish or Insular traditions of hagiographical writing than is apparent from extant works. It has been argued that the reason why Samson is the solitary Breton saint with an extant *Life* as early as the seventh century is that his monastery had uniquely strong contacts with the Frankish Church.<sup>110</sup> These contacts, however, may perhaps be more accurately seen as the means to the *preservation* of Samson's *Vita I* than to its composition. If *Vita I S. Samsonis* was transmitted in manuscript to Dol's affiliated houses in Normandy and to other neighbouring monasteries like St Wandrille and Jumièges before *Vita II* was written, that may have been what ensured the survival of *Vita I* alongside *Vita II*. If *Lives* of other founding saints in Brittany were confined to single-text pamphlet-sized manuscripts (*libelli*) in their subjects' own monasteries, replaced with steadily more corrupt copies when they wore out, it would have been all too easy for them to disappear once the rewriters had finished their work.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, Prologue and Preface, ed. Lot, 341–2, 352; Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, Book I, Preface, and Book II, Preface, ed. De Smedt, 172, 210 (see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 406 and references); Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, Preface, ed. Cuissard, 417.

<sup>107</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 78, 456–7 and references; Guillotel, 'Le dossier', 222.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Latouche argued that the short *Life* of St Winwaloe found in BL MS Cotton Otho D. VIII was a mid-ninth-century work by Clement of Landévennec on which Wrdisten based his longer *Life*: *Mélanges*, 9–22, followed by Guillotel, 'Les origines', 103–4 and 109–13. Poulin, 'Le dossier de saint Guénolé', demonstrates that the short *Life* is an abbreviation of Wrdisten's. See also Brett, 'L'hagiographie'; Morice, 'L'abbaye de Landévennec', I.81, I.125; Merdrignac, 'Présence', 93. Lot, *Mélanges*, 97–180, followed by other commentators, argued that the *Vita anonyma longior* of St Machutus was the source of both the *Vita anonyma brevior* and Bili's *Vita*; Merdrignac, 'Un bon géant', 98–104, argued that Bili's *Vita* came first and the two anonymous *Lives* were derived from it. Poulin, *L'hagiographie*, 147–84, agrees.

<sup>109</sup> Merdrignac 'The Process', 180–2. <sup>110</sup> Brett, 'The Hare and the Tortoise?', 100–1.

<sup>111</sup> For examples of such single-text manuscripts, see Poulin, 'Les *libelli*'.

It follows that when a hagiographer makes a claim about his personal knowledge, he may not be speaking in his own right but merely reproducing verbatim a statement in an earlier text. The author of the Second Life of Samson can be caught doing this on one occasion, repeating a 'first-person' observation by the author of the *Vita I*, who in turn may have taken some of 'his' observations from the \**Vita primigenia* he claims to have studied.<sup>112</sup> One must, therefore, enter a caveat regarding the use of ninth-century Breton hagiography as evidence for contemporary contacts between the Breton and Insular churches. The possibility exists that references to such contacts are 'fossils' left over from earlier stages of composition, which no longer reflected reality when the surviving Lives were written.

However, in view of the fact that the ninth-century hagiographical production of Brittany was part of a convergence with the norms of the Carolingian Church, it is interesting in itself that every ninth-century saint's Life (except *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, which dealt with very recent 'saints') emphasised the Insular British origins of its subject – origins which belonged to a distant past by the time the *Vitae* were written.<sup>113</sup> Even Bili's *Vita Machutis*, usually read as promoting Carolingian ecclesiastical norms, begins with the saint's participation in St Brendan's voyage, which might have seemed exotic, if not disreputable, to mainstream Carolingian scholars (despite the subsequent popularity of the Brendan story on the Continent).<sup>114</sup> Samson, the original British pilgrim-saint, was a dominant presence in the ninth-century Lives (Machutus, Maglorius and Paul Aurelian are presented, respectively, as cousins and a fellow-pupil of Samson).<sup>115</sup> In this way, Breton hagiography implicitly affirms the story that was received wisdom in Francia and Wales by the early ninth century: that the Bretons were indeed a people derived from the island of Britain.

As well as asserting British origins, four of the six major ninth-century hagiographical texts dealing with Breton saints of the 'migration period' contain extensive information about contacts between the hagiographer's own church and cult sites in Britain. This information will now be

<sup>112</sup> *Vita I Samsonis*, I.48, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 216–7; *Vita II S. Samsonis*, I.16, ed. Plaine, 109; for comment, see Sowerby, 'The Lives', 7–8.

<sup>113</sup> See the fundamental study by Kerlouégan, 'Les Vies'.

<sup>114</sup> Mac Mathúna argues that Bili's use of the voyage as an expression of the contemplative ideal was in direct opposition to the prevailing Benedictine ideal of stability; Merdignac suggests that the anonymous authors subjected this material to censorship (*censure*). Mac Mathúna, 'Contributions', 27; Merdignac, 'Un bon géant', 111. For the Continental tradition of Brendan literature, see Strijbosch, 'Searching', and references.

<sup>115</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 69–70. In *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, 20, ed. Cuissard, 453, Judual, the ruler of Domnonia, is said to have been a cousin of Samson.

analysed. The exceptions are Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloei*, for reasons to be discussed later, and the *Vita*, *Miracula* and first *Translatio* of St Maglorius, in which all the Insular material is clearly derived from one of the Lives of Samson.

### *The Lives of St Samson*

The First Life of Samson, probably composed in the late seventh century or at the beginning of the eighth, gives valuable evidence of the connections that then existed between Brittany and Celtic Britain.<sup>116</sup> The author of the extant Life consistently distinguishes Brittany, *citra mare* (on this side of the sea), where he lives and works, and Britain, *ultra mare* (beyond the sea), which he has visited to consult an earlier Life, the *litterae transmarinae* or *gesta emendatoria* of Samson. In Cornwall, he has venerated a stone on which Samson was reputed to have carved the sign of the cross. In Wales, he has visited the island monastery founded by Samson's mentor Piro. The monastery in which Samson lived with two of his brothers still existed 'when I was in Britain' (*quando ego fui in Britannia*). Finally, Samson's feast day is said to be kept in the author's time 'among many Britons and Romans beyond and on this side of the sea'.<sup>117</sup>

The Life has often been ransacked for its circumstantial picture of the Church of south-east Wales in the sixth century, one that fits remarkably well with the impression given in the contemporary writings of Gildas. Somewhat candidly, without sorting the information into obvious moral categories, the author describes a large and rich monastery where scholarship was pursued, but discipline might be lax; smaller monasteries of varying degrees of repute; and individual efforts at greater asceticism, with Samson in the forefront.<sup>118</sup> Other points of interest are the jurisdictional role of the bishop, in the shape of Dyfrig; the mention of learned Irish pilgrims, suggesting that the Irish Church was overtaking the British

<sup>116</sup> The Preface seems to state (in such crabbed Latin that the translation will always be doubtful) that a Life of Samson had been composed by a deacon named Henoc who was a cousin of Samson, and that a nephew of Henoc, aged over eighty at the time and living in a monastery in Britain, had provided both this written Life and oral testimony to the author of the extant text. This information, even if reliable, gives no more than a vague idea of the date of composition of the extant Life, but perhaps makes it unlikely that it was written much less than a century after Samson's death; that is, almost certainly not before 650. See Olson, 'Introduction', and references.

<sup>117</sup> *Vita I. S. Samsonis*, I.20, I.41, I.48, II.11, ed. Flobert *La Vie ancienne*, 178–9, 206–7, 216–7, 258–9. The author's allusions to his own research in the *Vita* are collected by Kerlouégan, 'Les Vies', 200–1, and Poulin, 'La circulation', 53–5; their overall probability is endorsed in Lewis, 'The Saints', 437.

<sup>118</sup> Sharpe, 'Gildas', 199.

Church intellectually; and the strongly familial organisation of the Church in general. The nephews of Abbot Illtud fight for their inheritance, and Samson himself (despite his moral purity) places relatives in charge of his own foundations.<sup>119</sup>

The importance of the cast of characters in *Vita I Samsonis* is for the most part confirmed by the later cultic landscape of south-east Wales. The author of the *Vita* credited Samson's education to Illtud, a pupil of Germanus. This fits with the emphasis on these two saints as founders in the ninth-century *HB*.<sup>120</sup> 'The monastery of Illtud' in the text may reasonably be identified as Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major).<sup>121</sup> The author visited it, presumably at some time in the seventh century, describing it as 'magnificent', and implying that he had studied a text about Illtud there.<sup>122</sup> This impression is confirmed by the series of elaborate inscribed stones erected at Llanilltud in the eighth and ninth centuries, including a monument commemorating an Abbot Samson and King Iuthael (Ithel) of Gwent, indicating that the church served as a royal burial-place.<sup>123</sup> The juxtaposition of the names reminds us that *Iuthael* was later given a place in the royal genealogy of Breton Domnonia: might this reflect continuing contact? (See Chapter 5.) One of the ninth-century inscriptions includes orthography apparently influenced by Continental spoken Latin, which, as Thomas Charles-Edwards has suggested, may have come via Brittany.<sup>124</sup> In 988 Llanilltud was sacked by Vikings, but it was in existence at the time of the Norman Conquest.<sup>125</sup> However, the early traditions about Illtud found in *Vita I Samsonis* and *HB* seems, to an extent, to have been eclipsed and replaced there between the ninth century and the twelfth. When a Life of Illtud was written in about 1120 (probably by Caradog of Llancarfan), none of the *HB*-material and very little of that from *Vita I Samsonis* was included.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Sowerby, 'A Family'.

<sup>120</sup> *HB*, 32–5, 39–48, 71 ed. Faral, 23–7, 30–5, 60. Higham, *King Arthur*, 179–80 and 226–9, argues that the *mirabilia* section of *HB* containing the Illtud story was originally an independent (and later) work, added to the *Historia* in South Wales in the tenth or eleventh century. However, the fact that this section appears in the Irish translation, *Lebor Bretnach*, which was derived from the 'Nennian' recension of *HB* that never had a southern Welsh textual phase, suggests that it was part of the original text: see Guy, 'The Origins', 45–7.

<sup>121</sup> Wooding, 'The Representation', 142–9.

<sup>122</sup> *Vita I Samsonis*, I, 7, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 156–7.

<sup>123</sup> *WAB*, 123–5, 626; Redknap and Lewis, *A Corpus ... I*, G63–G71, 369–96. The 'Ithel' stone is G65.

<sup>124</sup> *WAB*, 631.

<sup>125</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, MS 'B', ed. Gough-Cooper, *Annales Cambriae: The B-Text*, <http://cronicleau.bangor.ac.uk/documents/AC%20B%20first%20edition.pdf>, 45 (accessed 11 April 2018).

<sup>126</sup> *Vita S. Illuti*, 1, *VSB*, 194–5.

The cult of Dyfrig also survived until the eleventh century, perhaps centred on the church of Moccas in Herefordshire which preserved a sequence of charters and, possibly, a *Vita*.<sup>127</sup> Piro, the luckless abbot who drowned while intoxicated in *Vita I Samsonis*, may be commemorated in the Welsh name of Caldey Island – Ynys Bŷr.<sup>128</sup> The only named Welsh saint in *Vita I Samsonis* whose presence in the local landscape cannot be securely traced outside the Life is Samson himself.<sup>129</sup> Was Samson's local reputation gradually eclipsed because he did not personally found any religious establishments in Wales, nor die there to leave a burial-place around which a cult could centre? It was otherwise in Cornwall, where Samson did found a monastery, which conserved the earliest version of Samson's written Life, and where distant relatives of the saint himself survived to give testimony to the author of the surviving *Vita*.<sup>130</sup> In this case, too, the author does not name the monastery. There are three places in Cornwall with medieval dedications to Samson as well as the island of Samson in the Scillies. However, none of these is necessarily Samson's original site, which may never have been named after him.<sup>131</sup>

*Vita I Samsonis* also refers to 'the monastery which is called Docco', which can almost certainly be identified as Lanow in St Kew parish: it is independently attested as 'Landochou . . . the *monasterium* of St Dochou and St Cywa' in a tenth-century West Saxon charter.<sup>132</sup> A monk there, Uuiniauus, has a name famed as that of a teacher of Irish saints and author of a penitential.<sup>133</sup> Completing Samson's peregrinations in the Celtic-speaking world is his family takeover of a monastery in Ireland at *arx Etri* (Dún Étaí, now Howth Head, near Dublin).<sup>134</sup> The fact that there is no clear evidence of an early cult of Samson in Ireland does not disprove the historicity of this episode; but its chief interest for present purposes is in the

<sup>127</sup> J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 370–6; Guy, 'The Life'.

<sup>128</sup> Edwards, *A Corpus* . . . II, P6, 294–9; WAB, 626–9, 661; Wooding, 'The Representation', 147–53, cautiously supports the identification of Caldey Island as the site of Piro's monastery.

<sup>129</sup> Jankulak, 'The Absent Saint'; Jankulak, 'Present and yet Absent'.

<sup>130</sup> *Vita I Samsonis*, Prologue 2, I.61, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 140–3, 234; Sowerby, 'A Family', 24, 29–31.

<sup>131</sup> These are St Sampson, Golant; St Samson, South Hill; and Lellizzick near Padstow, formerly site of a chapel to St Samson. *Vita I Samsonis*, Prologue 2, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 140–3; Olson, 'Early Monasteries', 10–14; Orme, *The Saints*, 228–30; Jankulak, 'Present and yet Absent', 172–3. Richard Sowerby has suggested that the \**Vita primigenia* of Samson referred to by the author of the surviving *Vita* was actually composed at and for Samson's Cornish monastery: 'The Lives', 25–30.

<sup>132</sup> London, Public Record Office, MS C47/52/1/1: discussion and references in Olson, *Early Monasteries*, 14, 81–4.

<sup>133</sup> Poulin, 'La circulation', 46; Clancy, 'The Real St Ninian'; and see Chapter 4.

<sup>134</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.37–40, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 200–5.

expectation of a seventh-century Breton hagiographer that Irish scholars might be found in Wales and Welsh monks would travel to Ireland.<sup>135</sup>

No subsequent Breton saint's Life comes close to equalling *Vita I Samsonis* for range and precision of reference to religious sites and saints' cults in the Atlantic Archipelago. There is a perceptible difference in atmosphere between the seventh-century *Vita I Samsonis* and the ninth-century hagiography with which we are next concerned. The author of *Vita I Samsonis* wrote as a pioneer striving both to create the reputation of a new kind of holy man, and to hold together a far-flung family network of churches. He flaunted his research because his saint, and his church of Dol, needed every possible competitive advantage.<sup>136</sup> By comparison, the authors who wrote of Machutus, Winwaloe and Paul Aurelian were dealing with saints of a remoter past, whose successful cults were already the proof of their accepted sanctity, but whose Insular possessions were no longer – if they ever had been – an object of material concern.

In the case of *Vita Samsonis* we have two versions to compare – *Vita I* and the ninth-century *Vita II*. Richard Sowerby has shown how the author of *Vita II* edited the Insular episodes of the saint's life to emphasise Samson's dominance over the other saints he encountered in Britain, and to enhance the relative importance of his career at Dol and his election as archbishop. The stages of Samson's career in Britain were reproduced, but not elaborated, suggesting that the cult of Samson in Britain had ceased to develop or at least that any such development was not important or accessible to Samson's Breton promoters.<sup>137</sup> Samson's Irish connection, however, was foregrounded in *Vita II*.<sup>138</sup> This reflects the high profile of Irish scholars in the ninth century and chimes with the evidence of manuscripts and other Breton hagiography of the same period.

In *Vita II S. Samsonis* we see a wish to scale back the importance of the saint's British connections which is not evident in the ninth-century Lives of Machutus and (particularly) Paul Aurelian, whose British career occupies a full half of his Life. However, in these texts the Insular background has become perceptibly mythologised. The British Church that was described candidly in Samson's *Vitae* has become, again particularly in *Vita Pauli Aureliani*, a nursery of ancient saints, seen in the improving light of antiquity, and smoothed into well-practised hagiographical tropes – evidence of the lapse of time between the composition of *Vita*

<sup>135</sup> Ó Riain, 'Samson alias San(c)tán?'; Poulin, 'La circulation', 77–8.

<sup>136</sup> Brett, 'The Hare and the Tortoise?', 89–92. <sup>137</sup> Sowerby, 'The Lives'.

<sup>138</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis*, I.37–9, ed. Flobert, *La Vie ancienne*, 200–5; *Vita II S. Samsonis*, I.11, ed. Plaine, 101–3: *de quo monasterio multa bona facta audivimus et nunc usque in sancti Samsonis honore colitur*; II.4 (124): *divinis disciplinis in Scotia provincia cuidam magistro in opera religiosissimo traditus sum*. For discussion, see Merdrignac, 'Henoc', 173–4.



*I Samsonis* and the literary flowering of the ninth century; and, perhaps, evidence that the lost Lives of these other saints – if they existed at all – were more recent.

As an appendix to the Lives of Samson, the Life of Maglorius may be briefly discussed.<sup>139</sup> Maglorius was probably a local saint of the island of Sark: his *prima translatio* explains how the monks of the newly founded Benedictine monastery of Léhon, enjoined by Nominoe, the ruler of Brittany, to find themselves the relics of a proper saint, stole and installed his body. Interestingly, from the point of view of Breton overseas contacts, they were easily able to charter a ship to Sark and to claim plausibly, when they put in there, that they had arrived by accident while on a voyage to lands overseas, *transmarinas regiones*.<sup>140</sup> The *Vita* that they produced attached Maglorius to the family of Samson, holding that he was the son of Umbraphel, Samson's brother, and succeeded Samson as archbishop of Dol.<sup>141</sup> Despite the author's emphasis on the shared language of Insular and Continental Britons, he makes no use of Insular traditions.<sup>142</sup> Samson's transmarine origin is primarily an opportunity for an allegorical homily on the ocean crossing which, to the author, symbolises baptism in the Holy Spirit, before which the Gospel was preached to the Israelites (the insular Britons) and after which, to the Gentiles (the Bretons). This may be an example of direct influence on Breton hagiography of the Hiberno-Latin tradition of biblical exegesis: in particular, *Expositio IV Evangeliorum*, a text that was available in ninth-century Brittany (see Chapter 4), loses no opportunity to allegorise episodes in the Gospels in terms of the contrast between Jews and Gentiles, the synagogue and the Christian Church.<sup>143</sup> In its style, *Vita S. Maglorii* represents the Benedictine-Carolingian wing of the Breton Church, but it is thoroughly Breton in its intense localism and its implicit support of the archbishopric of Dol: a difficult stance which may reflect the 'dissensions and murmurings' that divided the monks, according to the author of *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*.<sup>144</sup>

#### *Bili and Anonymous, Vitae S. Machutis*

Machutus of Alet and Paul Aurelian of Léon were saintly bishops with some features in common. Their northern coastal dioceses shared

<sup>139</sup> *Vita S. Maglorii*, ed. Van Hecke, 'De S. Maglorio'.

<sup>140</sup> Merdrignac, 'Horizons insulaires', 158. <sup>141</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 211.

<sup>142</sup> 'He crossed the sea to preach to the people of his own language who dwelt in the west' (*ad praedicandum populo eiusdem linguae in occidente consistenti mare transfretavit*): *Vita S. Maglorii*, Paris, BnF lat. 15436, fol. 57v, digitised manuscript available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9066670j> (accessed 08 May 2019).

<sup>143</sup> Pseudo-Jerome, *Expositio IV Evangeliorum*, ed. Migne, 'Commentarii'.

<sup>144</sup> *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, III.3, ed. Brett, 194–7.

a boundary in the ninth century.<sup>145</sup> They may both have been ‘reconstituted’ by their hagiographers from disparate elements of tradition and perhaps from multiple cults.<sup>146</sup> (The name of Machutus varies considerably in the surviving texts – largely it seems through different attempts to Latinise an original *Machlouu* – and is susceptible to confusion with the names of several other saints.<sup>147</sup>) The impulse to create their Lives may have come from Carolingian reorganisation – or even initial organisation – of their dioceses; but André-Yves Bourguès has suggested that these Lives reflect a diocesan organisation that may go back to the period of the Breton migrations, each diocese showing a similar ‘bicephalous’ structure with episcopal and monastic centres, the former reusing Roman sites.<sup>148</sup>

Bili’s *Vita S. Machutis* has been held up as a ‘Carolingianised’ saint’s Life in contrast to the more Insular hagiography of Landévennec, on the grounds of its coded support for the archbishopric of Tours, its mainstream promotion of corporal relics and posthumous miracles, its relatively plain style and its numerous borrowings from Frankish hagiography.<sup>149</sup> However, Bili and his anonymous rewriters are unabashed about their saint’s Insular beginnings, and made more use of Welsh and (especially) Irish hagiographical material than of Frankish models. Bili’s Life, though sprawling in structure and chronologically chaotic, shows literary ambition in its length, its double preface, and its opening hymn which used items of ‘hisperic’ vocabulary: evidence in itself of the author’s Irish connections (see Chapter 4).

The Lives present Machutus as a pupil of the monastery of Llancarfan in Morgannwg<sup>150</sup> and as a disciple of Brendan, the famous Irish navigator-saint. They claim that Brendan was abbot of Llancarfan, and chose Machutus as the co-leader of his expedition to find the Island of Ima, an earthly paradise in mid-ocean. Here, we find an example of a recurring phenomenon in Celtic hagiography: traditions which are almost certainly original to Wales or Ireland make their first datable appearance in Brittany. The cult of Brendan, the founder-abbot of Clonfert in Munster, eventually spread throughout Europe, including Wales (although there is no other

<sup>145</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, II.18, ed. Lot, 428–9.

<sup>146</sup> For the possibly composite nature of St Machutus, see Lot, *Mélanges*, 163, 174–6; *WCD*, 446.

<sup>147</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 87; Lewis, ‘St Mechyll of Anglesey’, 29–30, 34–6.

<sup>148</sup> Bourguès, ‘Les origines diocésaines’.

<sup>149</sup> Dumville, ‘Writers, Scribes and Readers’, 53–4; Smith, ‘Oral and Written’, 331–4. See also Garault, ‘La *Vita Sancti Machutis*’.

<sup>150</sup> Charter-evidence suggests the presence of a monastic community at Llancarfan from the late seventh century: W. Davies, ‘Land and Power’, 13; *WAB*, 257; *LL*, 145, 147. For ninth- and tenth-century evidence, see Redknap and Lewis, *A Corpus ... I*, G35, 319–20; J. R. Davies, ‘The Saints’, 378.

evidence connecting him with Llancarfan).<sup>151</sup> But the dating of the hagiography directly concerned with him, *Vita S. Brendani* and *Navigatio S. Brendani*, has proved an intractable problem.<sup>152</sup> There is no agreement as to which of the two texts is anterior, and Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* provides one of the few fixed points in the tradition.<sup>153</sup> Even though no Irish saint's Life, or any of the Welsh hagiographical fragments that survive from before the Norman Conquest, mentions Breton saints or churches, Breton evidence – especially the Lives of Machutus – suggests a geographically wider and chronologically deeper literary continuum throughout the Celtic-speaking world than tends to be allowed for by scholars of Insular Celtic hagiography.<sup>154</sup>

What does *Vita S. Machutis* reveal about contact between the centre which produced it, and Machutus's alleged home in South Wales? The answer seems to be that if there had been any original connection between South Wales and the founder-patron of Saint-Malo, it had been forgotten; on the other hand, it was symbolically important to emphasise the saint's Insular origins, and any promising information discovered in the Welsh homeland could be used to embroider his image. In contrast to Samson and Paul Aurelian, Machutus is not said to have spent any of his adult lifetime in Britain; his early miracles at Llancarfan and on voyage are generic. There is little indication that Bili, or the author of his source-text if he had one, knew anything of substance about Machutus's family background. He is made a maternal relative of St Samson, showing that even the see of Alet, in rivalry and possible schism with Samson's see of

<sup>151</sup> He appears (for instance) in Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 39, ed. and transl. Sharpe, 'Rhygyfarch's Life', 134–7. The Cotton Vespasian A.XIV collection of Welsh saints' Lives of ca 1200, written at Monmouth, contains an incomplete copy of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* in the recension designated G15 by Guglielmetti and Orlandi, *Navigatio*, 284, which includes an interpolation mentioning Machutus as one of Brendan's companions. This information could conceivably have come from Llancarfan, but the provenance of the sub-group of manuscripts most akin to the Vespasian version suggests that the recension originated in England, perhaps at Winchester, where the cult of Machutus had arrived in the tenth century: Joshua Byron Smith, presentation to *Vitae Sanctorum Cambriae* conference, Cambridge, 26–27 September 2019.

<sup>152</sup> The question has been reviewed by Wooding, 'The Medieval and Early Modern Cult' (181–3), and 'The Date', 26: he suggests a ninth-century date for the *Navigatio* and a somewhat earlier one for the *Vita*. Dumville, 'Two Approaches', suggests a pre-786 date for the *Navigatio*, based on the genealogies it contains. For a summary discussion, see Wooding, 'Fasting', 161–2.

<sup>153</sup> For discussion of the relationships between *Vita Brendani*, *Navigatio S. Brendani* and the Lives of St Machutus, see Orlandi and Guglielmetti (eds.), *Navigatio*, XCIV–XCVI; Srijbosch, *The Seafaring Saint*, 125–65; Jankulak, 'Cross-Channel Intercourse', forthcoming. The arguments are summarised in Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 159–61.

<sup>154</sup> For example, Ó Riain, 'The Irish Element', 292, argues that mutual literary borrowing between Irish and Welsh hagiographers was a new phenomenon in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. *E contra*, Wooding, 'The Figure of David', 13.

Dol, needed to claim a relationship with the original and greatest Breton saint. Probably, as far as local memories went, Machutus was or had become a purely Continental saint, but a Hiberno-Welsh connection was found for him, perhaps to appeal to a section of the hagiographer's audience, or to acknowledge some kind of patronage or support – as witness Bili's Hiberno-Latin education. If the Welsh origin of Machutus was an invention, ninth-century contact between his Breton devotees and Lllancarfan seems real enough. Lllancarfan is said in Bili's *Vita* to be 'near the sea' – in fact, it is three miles from the coast: an evocative early scene shows the monastery's boy pupils going to the beach to play and rushing around until Machutus, tired out, falls asleep and is cut off by the tide. He is saved by an island miraculously rising under him, which can be seen to this day and is called 'Rore' (*proprio nomine Rore vocatur*). Ferdinand Lot, the text's editor, took this topographical legend to refer to Rhoose Point, a promontory rather than an island but in the correct location.<sup>155</sup> In a later passage, the author mentions a miraculous brier which Machutus gathered on his ocean voyage and planted at Lllancarfan: 'Many coming from our parts to that country have seen this flourishing plant, but no one knows what kind of tree it may be.'<sup>156</sup> The distance between Saint-Malo and Lllancarfan clearly allowed travellers some latitude in their tales, but visits were at least seen as a regular possibility.

Lllancarfan may have functioned as a relaying-point for saintly traditions passing between Ireland and Brittany. The late eleventh-century Life of Cadog, Lllancarfan's founder, by Lifris, claims multiple contacts between his monastery and Ireland, supported by episodes shared with the (not closely datable) Lives of Finnian of Clonard.<sup>157</sup> Gwenaël Le Duc suggested that Machutus may have been associated with Brendan's voyage through a misidentification with Mo-Chua, the name of one of Brendan's companions in *Vita S. Brendani*.<sup>158</sup> However, it is also worth pointing out that, according to Lifris's Life, Cadog studied under St Mo Chutu (or Carthach), the founder of Lismore (Lifris gives the name as *Muchutu*).<sup>159</sup> If Lllancarfan was a source of information for Bili's Life of

<sup>155</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.12, ed. Lot, 62, 360: if *Rore* is in the ablative the conjecture is stronger. Fleuriot, however, suggested that the word *Rore*, rendered *Korea* in one manuscript, disguises a Brittonic word for a curragh or coracle: *Les origines*, 211.

<sup>156</sup> *Quam validissimam multi ex nostris regionibus ad illam patriam venientes viderunt, sed nullus scit genus illius arboris*: Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.25, ed. Lot, 368.

<sup>157</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 10, 43, *VSB*, 48–9, 114–5; Hughes, 'The Historical Value', 76; Ó Riain, 'Hagiography Without Frontiers', 46. See also Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, 393; J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 378–9; and [Chapter 7](#).

<sup>158</sup> Le Duc (ed.), *Vie de Saint Malo*, xxviii; Le Duc, 'La Bretagne', 184–5.

<sup>159</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 10, *VSB*, 48–9.

Machutus, the forms in which he gives the saint's name might, at the least, have been influenced by that of the saint of Lismore.<sup>160</sup>

There is some further evidence for a cult of a similarly named saint in south-east Wales. A grant in the Book of Llandaf attributed to King Morgan Hen of Morgannwg (d. ca 974) concerns two churches near Monmouth named *Lann Liuit Machumur* and *Lann Vannar de Machumur* (*Machumur* = 'great Machu'?). At neither of these churches did the cult persist, but the adjacent church of St Maughans, which appears in several Llandaf charters as *Lann Mocha* or *Lann Bocha* and in a twelfth-century papal bull as 'St Mohan of Lanmohan', seems to be called *ecclesia de Sancto Machuto* in a thirteenth-century tithe record on the later pages of the Book of Llandaf.<sup>161</sup> It may be relevant that these churches were only a mile or two from *Llangatwg* Feibion Afel, dedicated to St Cadog (all four belonged to Monmouth Priory in the twelfth century: see Chapter 7). Is this an example of the supplanting of a local saint, *Mocha* or *Mohan*, by a more famous imported one, Machutus (created with Llancarfan help), or did *Machumur/Mocha/Mohan* himself form an original contributory element to the cult of Machutus?<sup>162</sup>

Although Cadog of Llancarfan himself is nowhere mentioned in the Lives of Machutus, these contain other noticeable prefigurings of Cadog's hagiography. The length and narrative recurrences of Bili's Life, the repeated far-flung journeys it contains, and its emphasis on the saint's failures, anger and cursing, are Cadog-like; so are some individual motifs. During the voyage-episode as told by Bili, the travellers discover a dead giant, called Milldu ('Black Warrior'), whom they bring back to life, and who helps them on their way in return for being baptised before he dies again. There is a very similar episode in the Life of Cadog (other examples occur in *Vita Brendani* and in the seventh-century *Collectanea* of Tirechán of Armagh, relating to St Patrick).<sup>163</sup> In the anonymous Lives of Machutus, an episode in which the saint, as a novice monk at Llancarfan, miraculously carries burning coals in his garments, likewise recalls the

<sup>160</sup> Mo Chutu has an extensive hagiographical tradition in Ireland and is mentioned in the Irish annals under the years 636 and 637: Charles-Edwards (transl.), *The Chronicle of Ireland*, 140–1; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 470–3; Loth, *Les noms*, 87; Harvey, 'Some Observations', 58–9.

<sup>161</sup> *LL*, 240–1, 74, 171–2, 264–5, 272, 320; Round, *Calendar*, no. 1129, p. 404; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 48 note 19, 171–2; Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf*, 94; *LBS*, III.433; Wade-Evans, 'Parochiale', 73.

<sup>162</sup> To add one more complication, a virgin martyr Maches or Machuta of Merthyr Maches (*LL*, 201) is mentioned in *Vita S. Tathei*, 13, *VSB*, 280–3; *LBS*, III. 392.

<sup>163</sup> Tirechán, *Collectanea*, 40, ed. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 154–5; Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 26, *VSB*, 82–5.

Life of Cadog.<sup>164</sup> The miracle of immunity to fire is common in Irish hagiography, but the usual scenario is that a monastic superior directs a lesser member of the community to touch or carry burning objects, and the episode is a test of faith and obedience: sometimes the miracle is attributed to the superior rather than to the monk who actually shows himself flameproof.<sup>165</sup> A variant in which burning coals carried in the bosom are a test of chastity is found in Gregory of Tours and in the ninth-century Irish martyrology, *Féilre Óengusso*.<sup>166</sup> In the Lives of Machutus and Cadog we find still another version, in which the instruction comes not from a superior but from a scoffing servant: the story highlights the uneasy relationship between the monastic life and the secular world, in which the saint must appear to humbly yield, but expects divine vindication.<sup>167</sup> (A line of verse in Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloiei* alludes to a similar miracle by St Tugdual, unfortunately too briefly to tell us into which category this miracle would have fallen.<sup>168</sup>) None of these correspondences necessarily implies that either Bili or Lifris had access to textual information about each other's saints, but it may suggest long-term or frequently revived contact between their institutions, during which hagiographical motifs and information were shared. In the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, as will be seen in Chapter 7, there is evidence for scholarly correspondence between Llancarfan and Brittany, specifically Quimperlé; but in view of the fact that the cult of Cadog was established in Brittany in the ninth century, to the extent that *Plebs Catoc/Cadoc* (Pleucadeuc, M) was named after him, as well as his appearing in a Breton litany of ca 900, such contact may have been long-lasting.<sup>169</sup>

It is clear from comparison between Bili's *Vita Machutis* and the anonymous Lives that all their authors – unlike the author of *Vita II Samsonis* – were in touch with a fluid and evolving Insular hagiographical tradition, whether oral or written. Bili wholeheartedly endorsed the ideal of the ascetic and contemplative voyage, even though, by the time he

<sup>164</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 7, *VSB*, 36–9; *Vita anonyma longior*, 6, ed. Lot, 'La plus ancienne Vie', 301–2.

<sup>165</sup> Instances are listed in Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, I.cxxxviii, note 6.

<sup>166</sup> *LHD*, II.1 (37–8); Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Gloria Confessorum*, 75, ed. Krusch, 342–3; *Féilre Óengusso*, notes to January 2, ed. Stokes, *The Martyrology*, 41. For the dating, see Dumville, 'Féilre Óengusso'.

<sup>167</sup> In the twelfth-century Life of St Kentigern by Jocelin of Furness, the story is told of St Asaph in the same form as in the Lives of Cadog and Machutus, supporting evidence that Jocelin's Life made use of a Llancarfan source: Jocelin, *Vita S. Kentigerni*, 25, ed. Forbes, *Lives*, 206. See also Chapter 7.

<sup>168</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloiei*, II.19, ed. De Smedt, 231.

<sup>169</sup> Tanguy, 'De la vie'; Tanguy, 'Index generalis', 106; Lapidge (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, 288–95; and see Chapter 6.

wrote, monastic voyaging was past its peak.<sup>170</sup> This is considerably toned down in the two anonymous Lives.<sup>171</sup> However, in altering the voyage narrative the anonymous authors may have referred independently to Irish traditions. Their voyaging episodes seem closer to *Vita Brendani* than does Bili's Life, since like *Vita Brendani* they include a first, failed voyage before the successful one. The actual events of the first voyage seem to draw rather on traditions relating to St Columba of Iona, since the voyagers, as well as setting out twice, pass the Orkneys and other northern islands as does Cormac ua Liatháin in Adomnán's *Vita S. Columbae*.<sup>172</sup> The anonymous Lives also include unique material on the miraculous birth of Machutus: his mother's fifty attendants all gave birth on the same night as her, and their children were his companions in monastic training. Thus the rewritten Lives of Machutus, although abridged, do not show the 'ossification' of Insular traditions that we see in *Vita II S. Samsonis*: contact with Welsh and, perhaps more particularly, with Irish hagiographical traditions could be renewed even, apparently, after the relics of Machutus were removed to Paris. The material edited out by the anonymous rewriters was material local to the Saint-Malo region, rather than Insular material.

The later fortunes of the cult of Machutus raise yet more tantalising possibilities about the Insular contacts available to its guardians. Later in the Middle Ages, several other saints were identified with Machutus. St Mechyll, patron of Llanfechell, Môn, was the subject of a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century poem in Welsh which borrowed episodes from the anonymous Lives of Machutus; the poet's reference to the *ystoria* of St Mechyll implies that this borrowing took place in an earlier text.<sup>173</sup> Maughold of Man was named *Machutus* in the thirteenth-century Chronicle of Man and the Isles. The patron saint of Lesmahagow church in Lanarkshire was named *Machutus* in an 1144 charter, although the original saint was probably Féchín of Fore, Westmeath.<sup>174</sup> Clearly, Machutus was known in the northern Irish Sea zone by the central Middle Ages, and it must remain an open question whether this evidence suggests earlier two-way traffic, and whether nascent traditions about

<sup>170</sup> Mac Mathúna, 'Contributions', 45–52; Merdrignac, 'Un bon géant', 110–12. For general discussion of the chronology and social background of monastic voyage literature, see Hughes, 'The Changing Theory'; Charles-Edwards, 'The Social Background'; Wooding, 'Monastic Voyaging'.

<sup>171</sup> Merdrignac, 'Un bon géant', 110–11.

<sup>172</sup> Mac Mathúna, 'Contributions', 43; Merdrignac, 'Un bon géant', 105; Tipp and Wooding, 'Adomnán's Voyaging Saint'; Adomnán, *Vita S. Columbae*, II.42, transl. Sharpe, 196–8.

<sup>173</sup> 'St Mechyll', in Lewis (ed.), *Medieval Welsh Poems*, 70–2, 132–9.

<sup>174</sup> Lewis, 'St Mechyll', 30–4.



these saints – and perhaps others – may have fed into the original construction of the cult of Machutus.

The successive versions of *Vita S. Machutis* suggest that ninth-century hagiographers did not perceive a conflict between Insular, especially Irish, traditions and the values of the Carolingian Renaissance. The role of Columbanus in Bili's *Vita* underlines this: the sanctity of Machutus is guaranteed by his having spent time at Columbanus's foundation of Luxeuil, a name-check that may equally indicate a pre-existing cult of Columbanus in the Saint-Malo area, and the high esteem in which the Rule of Columbanus was held by Carolingian monastic reformers.<sup>175</sup> The popularity of Machutus as a saint in the tenth century and after, as his cult and hagiography bifurcated – the anonymous Lives going to the île de France, and Bili's to Winchester – is indicative of their success.<sup>176</sup> Here, we look forward to the increasing connection between Brittany and Wessex from the late ninth century onwards.

#### *Wrmonoc, Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*

Wrmonoc's *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani* is the most Welsh-oriented of ninth-century Breton *Vitae*. It is also the most precisely dated of Breton saints' Lives – with the author obligingly providing an AD date of 884 in his preface – yet no hagiographer is more tantalising about his saint's Insular background.<sup>177</sup> Several of his items of information about people and places in south Wales and south-west Britain reappear in Welsh hagiography of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries; this has led some historians to suggest that Wrmonoc must have been drawing on earlier written sources and traditions from Wales that were already old in his time, yet the Welsh hagiography that supposedly reflects these 'earlier' sources more accurately is, as it stands, at least two centuries later.

There is an initial uncertainty about Paul's name itself. In the *Vita* he is always called *Paulus* (sometimes *Aurelianus*, sometimes *Aurelius*), but in some liturgical sources, he is called *Paulinnanus* or *Paulennanus*; in Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* he is called both *Paulinmanus* and *Paulus*.<sup>178</sup> G. H. Doble suggested that Wrmonoc had incorporated traditions relating to two Welsh characters with similar names: as 'Paul', from the region of *Penn*

<sup>175</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.46, ed. Lot, 381. Merdrignac, 'Bretons et Irlandais', 123; Diem, 'The Carolingians'.

<sup>176</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 147–54, 170, 177–9. For the liturgy of Machutus at Marmoutier and elsewhere, see Deuffic, 'Marmoutier' (accessed 03 June 2020).

<sup>177</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, Preface, ed. Cuissard, 418. For an introduction to the text, see Kerlouégan, 'La Vita'.

<sup>178</sup> For the various forms and their possible significance, see Merdrignac, 'Des origines insulaires', 71–2; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 283.

*Ohen*, the saint is taking on the identity of Poul of Penychen, a king who appears in Lifris's Life of Cadog and in *Vita Illuti*; as 'Paulinanus', he is influenced by Paulens or Paulinus, the teacher of St David in Rhygyfarch's Life of that saint, who also appears in the Life of Teilo.<sup>179</sup> This fits with evidence cited below that Wrmonoc knew of traditions relating to David. David's teacher Paulinus was located in Caerfyrddin, and, like Illtud, was supposed to have been one of the first generation of Welsh monastic saints, educated by St Germanus.

There are grounds for arguing that Wrmonoc had a written source of information about the 'Paulinus' component of Paul Aurelian.<sup>180</sup> In the opening chapter of his Life, he states: 'We read [italics added] that [Paul] had eight brothers ... in the same region which in their language is called *Brehant Dincat*'.<sup>181</sup> Wrmonoc knows the names of only three of the siblings: Paul's brothers Notolius and Potolius, and his sister Sitofolla (incidentally, the family pattern of two brothers and a sister recurs in *Vita S. Winwaloei*, in the Rhuys Life of Gildas, and in a sub-group of 'Letavian' saints in *ByS*).<sup>182</sup> His sources of knowledge about them seem otherwise to be personal and oral. He claims that a monastery dedicated to Paul's two brothers is in existence in his own day, 'adjacent to his paternal lands', 'which is said to be decorated with many buildings'.<sup>183</sup> This may be identifiable with Llanddeusant, 'the church of the two saints', adjacent to Llandingad in north-eastern Caerfyrddin, and close to three sites dedicated to Paulinus of Caerfyrddin.<sup>184</sup> At a monastery founded by Sitofolla, Paul's sister, 'on the furthest frontiers of that country ... on the shore of the British sea' (in Cornwall?), a row of standing stones set miraculously in place by St Paul may be seen 'to this day', and the path leading between them 'is called St Paul's path by the people across the sea'.<sup>185</sup> This seems to imply that

<sup>179</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, I.31–6; Merdrignac, 'Des origines insulaires', 68; Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 153; Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, Preface, 8 and 19, *VS*B, 24–5, 40–5, 62–5; *Vita S. Illuti*, 2–3, *VS*B, 196–9; Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 10–12, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 118–9.

<sup>180</sup> This was most fully argued by Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 146–56.

<sup>181</sup> *Hunc autem ... octo fratres ... in una eademque regione quae lingua eorum Brehant dincat, latina autem guttur receptaculi pugnae dicitur*. Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.1, ed. Cuissard, 418.

<sup>182</sup> Merdrignac, 'Des origines insulaires', 70; *Vita Gildae*, 2, transl. Williams, 16–17; *ByS*, 26, *EWGT*, 58.

<sup>183</sup> *Cuiusdam loci deserti qui paternis finibus adhaerebat secessum petiit. Ibi quaedam habitacula et parvum oratorium quod nunc sub nomine suorum ... fratrum multis decoratum aedificiis dicunt, fabricavit*. Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.7, ed. Cuissard, 430.

<sup>184</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, 33–5; Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 150–3; Merdrignac, 'Des origines insulaires', 70.

<sup>185</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.9–10, ed. Cuissard, 433, 436: *suae germanae ... quae in illius patriae extremis finibus, id est in litore maris Britannici degebat, domum prospero cursu pervenit; ... nec ulla usque in hodiernum diem fracti foederis irruptione violaret ... quae usque*

Wrmonoc – or the author of his immediate source-text – had some contact with British cult centres of his saint’s reputed family. However, it seems unlikely that Paul of Brittany was genuinely identical with either of his Welsh prototypes – or, if by chance he was, then his cult had diverged from theirs beyond recognition before Wrmonoc artificially knitted them together.

As well as giving details of Paul’s supposed Welsh family, Wrmonoc was interested in other Welsh saints: Illtud, Gildas and David. All three, along with Samson and Paul himself, are introduced in a famous passage in which he describes the school of Illtud in Gwent and its pupils.<sup>186</sup> The eulogy was partly derived from *Vita I S. Samsonis*, a model which apparently overrode the identification of Paul Aurelian with the Paulinus who was of the same generation as Illtud. Wrmonoc adds a story about how Paul prayed for the sea to be driven back to create more land for Illtud’s monastery, and how he miraculously locked a flock of marauding birds into a barn until they repented. These same stories, with different wording, occur in the twelfth-century *Vita S. Illuti* (and the bird episode also in the Life of Samson from the Book of Llandaf, and the eleventh-century Life of Gildas from Rhuy’s).<sup>187</sup> Given that we know (from *Vita I S. Samsonis* and from *HB*) that miracle-stories about Illtud were circulating in oral and written form as early as the seventh century, it is not impossible that here, too, Wrmonoc was drawing on a written source about Illtud that was also used much later by the author of Illtud’s own Life in Wales. But Wrmonoc may equally well have been creatively adapting a similar story that occurs in *Vita II S. Samsonis*, composed in the 850s or 860s, and the authors of the other Lives may in turn have borrowed from him.<sup>188</sup> A Welsh source for this section remains hypothetical.

The idea that Gildas and David were Illtud’s pupils contradicts the later Welsh hagiography of these two saints. The claim of acquaintance between Paul and Gildas is explicable given the availability of *De Excidio Britanniae* as a respected literary model at Landévennec. Wrmonoc, from the account he gives of the text, seems actually to have read it, and even develops Gildas’s animal-imagery (in their morals the British were

*hodie in testimonium eius virtutis sic remanserunt . . . via autem ubi per ambitum eiusdem litoris peragravit inter columnas praedictas media incedens semita Pauli a transmarinis vocitatur.*

<sup>186</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.3, ed. Cuissard, 421.

<sup>187</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.4, ed. Cuissard, 423–4; *LL*, 9–10; *Vita S. Illuti*, 13–14, *VSB*, 210–15; *Vita Gildae*, 5, ed. Lot, 437–8; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 133. See [Chapters 6 and 7](#).

<sup>188</sup> J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 128–30; Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 94–100 and 122–3; *Vita II S. Samsonis*, II. 12, ed. Plaine, p. 133. A similar miracle is widespread in Frankish hagiography, as discussed by Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 85–112.

‘spotted like the leopard’, *more pardi discoloribus*). More surprising is the inclusion of David. This is the earliest definite attestation of the cult of the patron saint of Wales, and it singles out what was to remain his defining characteristic, his abstinence from alcohol. The nickname *Aquaticus*, ‘the watery’, in *Vita Pauli* resurfaces in Rhygyfarch’s *Vita S. David* in the late eleventh century: ‘Rejecting wine and liquor and everything that can inebriate, he has led a blessed life for God on just bread and water: because of this he is surnamed David “of the watery life” . . . David *Aquilentus*.’<sup>189</sup> There is evidence to suggest that in reality Gildas and David, rather than being friends and fellow-students, had been in opposite camps of the sixth-century monastic movement, Gildas opposing the extreme ascetics of whom David was a representative.<sup>190</sup> The story in Rhygyfarch’s *Vita* relating that Gildas found himself unable to preach in the presence of David’s pregnant mother, and so departed to Ireland to leave Britain free for David, seems to indicate a need to find a divine solution for the disagreement between the two saints.<sup>191</sup> In *Vita Pauli*, however, it is as if the problem had never existed. Possibly, a recent connection with St Davids lay behind Wrmonoc’s inclusion of David in his *Vita*. Asser, the cleric of St Davids who became the biographer of King Alfred and bishop of Sherborne, tells us in his *Life of King Alfred* (completed *ca* 893) that the king gave regular alms to monasteries and churches in Brittany (*Armorica*).<sup>192</sup> It is more than likely, given their importance, that these churches included Landévennec and Saint-Pol-de-Léon: had Asser in fact acted as an intermediary? As noted earlier in relation to *Vita S. Machutis*, the connection reminds us that before the end of the ninth century, the circle of contacts reaching from Ireland through Wales and Brittany to Francia was being completed by links to Anglo-Saxon Wessex.<sup>193</sup>

The most tantalising information in Wrmonoc’s *Life* is that which is presumed to relate to south-west Britain: the episodes that take place on Paul’s journey from south Wales to Brittany. The geography of this section of the text is extremely vague. Scholarship has as yet failed to identify a location for the monastery of Paul’s sister Sitofolla, if it is a real

<sup>189</sup> *Iste, vinum et siceram et omne quod inebriare potest respuens, beatam Deo vitam in pane tantum et aqua duxit; inde etiam David aquaticae vitae cognominatur. . . . David Aquilentus.* Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 1, 42, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 108–9, 136–7.

<sup>190</sup> Morris, ‘The Dates’, 349–50, 384–5; Dumville, ‘Saint David’, 44–54; Wooding, ‘The Figure’, 15–16.

<sup>191</sup> Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 5, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 112–5.

<sup>192</sup> Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, 102, ed. Stevenson, 88–9; for the dating, see Keynes and Lapidge (transl.), *Alfred the Great*, 53.

<sup>193</sup> For evidence that Asser’s *Life of King Alfred* circulated in Wales in the tenth century, see Thomas and Callander, ‘Reading Asser’.

place at all.<sup>194</sup> The same is true of the ruler whom Paul previously encounters, ‘King Mark, whom they call by another name Quonomorius, who at that time had extended the limits of his rule most widely and was considered a great and powerful man of imperial powers, such that four languages of diverse peoples fell under his sole rule.’<sup>195</sup> King Mark calls Paul to meet him at *Villa Banhedos*, ‘where the bones of the said king now rest awaiting the day of resurrection’.<sup>196</sup>

The possible identification of this Insular ‘Quonomorius’ with the ‘Commorus’ of Breton Domnonia depicted in *Vita I Samsonis* is a leading argument in favour of the existence of ‘double kingdoms’ linking Brittany and south-west Britain in the sixth century (see Chapter 2). While ‘Commorus’ is the villain in the Lives of Samson, in *Vita Pauli* ‘Quonomorius’ plays a more positive role. Perhaps the hagiographers of Samson and Paul have preserved two alternative, regionally based versions of the history of sixth-century Domnonia, one from the north-east supporting the family of Jonas and Judual, the other, from Léon, that of Conomor. However, if such a political scenario existed, it has sunk far into the background of Wrmonoc’s account. The characterisation of Quonomorius as a ruler over ‘four languages’ is of literary derivation, reminiscent of Bede’s list of the four languages used in Britain. His identification with King Mark, ‘a pan-Brittonic character of folklore’, does not inspire confidence in his historicity.<sup>197</sup> Even the apparent precision of his burial-site at *Villa Banhedos* (unidentified) might be an example of topographical storytelling. Nevertheless, by Wrmonoc’s time, the assertion by a Breton author of knowledge of a south-western British king, real or mythical, is significant for Breton-Cornish contact. By 884, the Insular kingdom of Dumnonia and its successor-kingdom of Cornwall had both been absorbed into the West Saxon kingdom; Breton churches such as Dol, Alet and Landévennec may already have

<sup>194</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 234–5 and Olson, *Early Monasteries*, 20–6, dismiss as unlikely the possibility that Sitofolla should be identified with St Sidwell, venerated at Exeter in the late Anglo-Saxon period.

<sup>195</sup> ... fama eius regis Marci pervolat ad aures quem alio nomine Quonomorium vocant. Qui eo tempore amplissime producto sub limite regendo moenia scepri, vir magnus imperiali potentiae atque potentissimus habebatur, ita ut quatuor linguae diversarum gentium uno eius subiacerent imperio. Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.8, ed. Cuissard, 431. The name-form Quonomorius retains a composition vowel (the second o) which was normally lost in spoken Brittonic during the sixth century. For the implications of this archaism, commonly found in Brittonic names recorded in a Latin context, see Russell, ‘Old Welsh Dinacat’. The occasional substitution of Qu for C in names is a peculiarity of Wrmonoc.

<sup>196</sup> Venit ad locum qui lingua eorum Villa Bannhedos nuncupatur, ubi nunc eiusdem regis ossa diem resurrectionis expectantia pausant. Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.8, ed. Cuissard, 432.

<sup>197</sup> Padel, ‘The Cornish Background’, 72–3; Padel, ‘Some South-Western Sites’, 240.

been cultivating the links with the West Saxon dynasty that would lead to the accommodation of some of their members – and their manuscripts and relics – within the Church of Wessex in the next generation. The cult centres of many Brittonic saints in Cornwall, though not in Devon, survived and kept at least some of their property and privileges.<sup>198</sup> Wrmonoc's commemoration of a British king of the south-west and his resting-place, and of a holy woman in the same region, may have been a gambit in this process, aimed at staking a claim for continued commemoration of Paul and his contacts – and possibly property-rights – during a period of rapid political change in Cornwall. If Paul Aurelian is the patron of Paul parish in Penwith, Cornwall, perhaps the claim was effective.<sup>199</sup>

#### *Wrdisten, Vita S. Winwaloei*

For all its interest in Breton origins, Wrdisten's longer *Life of Winwaloe* does not make a feature of continued contact, either oral or textual, between his monastery and Britain. This may be partly because Winwaloe, unlike the others, was reputed to be a Breton-born saint; and also, perhaps, because there was a tradition of his family's origin in Insular Dumnonia (if the reference to his relative Catovius, *rex Nomniae*, can be so interpreted), but it was no longer possible to renew British contacts in this location because the area had long been anglicised, so the details of the tradition were gradually being forgotten.<sup>200</sup> Perhaps making a virtue of necessity, Wrdisten characterised Britain in Gildasian terms as a place of sin, disaster and plague, and hence one with which continued ecclesiastical contact was unimportant. This does not necessarily mean that Landévennec had no contact with monasteries in Celtic Britain in the ninth century: but various aspects of *Vita S. Winwaloei* suggest that at least some beliefs about Winwaloe were early and comparatively fixed rather than being invented or adjusted retrospectively in the light of his ninth-century cult. For instance, in the ninth century his cult was clearly centred on Landévennec in Cornouaille, so why the determination to emphasise his background in Breton Domnonia, and why was it important to identify Ploufragan, which did not belong to Landévennec and had no cult of Winwaloe, as the eponymous dwelling-place of the saint's father?

<sup>198</sup> Insley, 'Aethelstan'. <sup>199</sup> Olson, *Early Monasteries*, 26.

<sup>200</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.2, ed. De Smedt, 176; for discussion of the manuscript-readings, see DUBALA, 134–41.

There is no indication that Winwaloe himself had an early cult in Wales.<sup>201</sup> Catovius, Cato or Cadwy, to whom this *Vita* gives the earliest datable reference, was to appear in later Welsh hagiography, genealogy and vernacular tale, with a floating, geographically unfixed identity as king, hero or even saint.<sup>202</sup> Winwaloe's mother, *Alba Trimammis*, 'of the three breasts', *Gwen Teir Bronn* in later Welsh genealogy, reappears in the collection of saints' genealogies from thirteenth-century Wales, *Bonedd y Saint*, where her husband is named as *Eneas Ledewic Llydaw* – 'Aeneas the Breton from Brittany' (or perhaps 'the Latin from *Latium*')<sup>203</sup> – and her son is Cadfan, the senior of a group of interrelated saints from Brittany. There is no mention of Winwaloe, his twin brothers Wethinoc (*Guethenocus* in the Cartulary of Landévennec, *Weithnocus* in Paris BnF Lat. 5610A) and Jacob, and their sister Chreirbia, who were her children in *Vita S. Winwaloei*.<sup>204</sup> It is possible that Gwen's appearance in *ByS* was a mere literary borrowing from *Vita S. Winwaloei*, and that the Welsh Cadfan was thought a suitable substitution for the Breton Wethinoc: both names mean 'the warlike one' (see Chapter 7).<sup>205</sup> However, it is also possible that Gwen, her Breton husband and her warrior/saint son had a long-lasting existence in tradition beyond the surviving texts.<sup>206</sup> This is suggested by the apparent reluctance with which Wrdisten mentions her and her daughter, adding incorrectly that 'it is not the custom to embroider the genealogy of women in the Scriptures'.<sup>207</sup> For Bernard Merdrignac, Wrdisten's vagueness about Breton ancestry is an indication that traditions of Breton origins were too well-known to need stating explicitly.<sup>208</sup> Other inferences are possible, however: perhaps they were hotly disputed.

More important from a monastic point of view was the saint's Irish inspiration. The *Vita* incorporates the text of a letter of 818 from the Emperor Louis the Pious, requiring the monks of Landévennec to give up

<sup>201</sup> He is unlikely to have been the eponym of Llanwynell (Wolvesnewton, Myn.) or of St Twinnells (Penf.): Orme, *The Saints*, 259; Charles, *The Place-Names*, II.734. See also Chapter 7.

<sup>202</sup> *DUBALA*, 173–5; *WCD*, 86; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 447.

<sup>203</sup> Koch, 'New Thoughts', 19.

<sup>204</sup> *EWGT*, 57; Miller, *The Saints*, 90. For Cadfan and Emyr Llydaw see also Jones and Owen, 'Twelfth-Century Welsh Hagiography', 46–8.

<sup>205</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 50–1; Merdrignac, 'L'Enéide', 203.

<sup>206</sup> See the remarks of Jankulak, 'Cross-Channel Intercourse'.

<sup>207</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.2, ed. De Smedt, 176: *quia feminarum non est moris genealogiam in scripturis texere*. The statement may have been theologically controversial: the Hiberno-Irish exegetical tract *Expositio IV Evangeliorum* (see Chapter 4) emphasises that 'women are in the genealogy of Christ because they come to eternal life as men do' (*Ideo mulieres in genealogia Christi sunt, quia ipsae ad vitam aeternam veniunt ut viri*): Pseudo-Jerome, *Expositio IV Evangeliorum*, ed. Migne, 'Commentarii', col. 534.

<sup>208</sup> Merdrignac, 'Les origines antiques', 50–1.



the ‘way of life and the tonsure they had received from the *Scotti*’ and adopt the Rule of St Benedict.<sup>209</sup> At this time, while the Carolingian church reform was in progress, the Rule of Columbanus had attained an almost legendary status, and the fact that the emperor believed that the rule followed at Landévennec was Irish does not prove that it was derived from direct contact with Ireland.<sup>210</sup> But that Wrdisten did recognise Irish influence at Landévennec is more strongly implied in an episode dealing with Winwaloe’s early life, when he considers travelling to Ireland ‘to visit the holy places where St Patrick dwelt’, and is about to take ship with some merchants when Patrick appears to him in a vision and commands him to remain in Brittany. A line of a hymn incorporated in a different part of the text calls Winwaloe ‘disciple of St Patrick’, suggesting that there may have been an alternative tradition in which Winwaloe did indeed visit Ireland and meet the saint.<sup>211</sup> Wrdisten may have known Muirchú’s Life of Patrick: the textual parallel is not exact, but his statement about Patrick overcoming the ‘magicians and soothsayers’ (*magos et ariolos*) of Ireland shows that he knew something of Patrick’s hagiographical traditions.<sup>212</sup> The cult of Patrick was known elsewhere in continental Europe by ca 700 and Muirchú’s Life was copied at a Continental centre using Anglo-Saxon script in ca 780–820; however, the place given to Patrick in Landévennec hagiography attests to his special importance there.<sup>213</sup> This may fit into a context of British devotion to the apostle of the Irish who was one of their own. *HB* devotes a lengthy section to Patrick – the earliest text about him to have been composed outside Ireland; and the ‘Second Latin Life of Patrick’, known from English and central European manuscripts from the twelfth century onwards, descends from an archetypal manuscript with Insular palaeographical features that contained incorporated glosses in a Brittonic language.<sup>214</sup> Brigit, the second great saint of Ireland with a European cult, was also known at Landévennec. Wrdisten’s *Vita S. Winwaloei* includes a brief

<sup>209</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, II.13, ed. De Smedt, 227: *cognoscentes quomodo ab Scottis siue de conuersatione siue de tonsione capitum accepissent*.

<sup>210</sup> For the reputation of Columbanus and the Irish in the Carolingian Church, see Diem, ‘The Carolingians’, 259–61.

<sup>211</sup> Wrdisten *Vita Sancti Winwaloei*, I.19, I.11, ed. De Smedt, 205–6, 190.

<sup>212</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita Sancti Winwaloei*, I.19, ed. De Smedt, 205–6; Kerlouégan, ‘Les citations’, 227; Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 421, finds the parallel unconvincing (‘peu convaincant’).

<sup>213</sup> Gougau, *Les saints irlandais*, 147. The fragmentary manuscript is Vienna Nationalbibliothek Lat. Ser. Nov. 3642: Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 3–4; Lowe, *CLA*, X. 22 (no. 1514); <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/catalogue/237> (accessed 19 February 2020). For a relic-cult of Patrick at Péronne, see Smith, *Relics and the Insular World*, 14–15.

<sup>214</sup> Dumville, ‘St Patrick’. For the North British cult of Patrick and its connection with Brittany, see Chapter 5.

borrowing from her Life by Cogitosus, and her name appears in the calendar of an early ninth-century gospel book from Landévennec, New York Public Library 115.<sup>215</sup> The impression of Irish influence in Brittany is reinforced by manuscript-evidence; and later, the compilers of the Cartulary of Landévennec may have used Tirechán's *Collectanea* on Patrick as a model (see [Chapters 4 and 5](#)).<sup>216</sup>

The Breton-Latin literature of the ninth century makes it clear that, culturally and in terms of their ecclesiastical history, Breton churchmen looked to southern Celtic Britain for their origins and to Ireland for models of learning and sanctity, and that they cultivated contacts to maintain these traditions. The contrast between *Vita I S. Samsonis* and the later hagiography in general implies that these contacts had changed in nature between the late seventh century and the mid-ninth, from familial and institutional relationships to looser scholarly exchanges. The question arises as to whether this loosening had in any way been brought about by the new acceptance of Britons and Bretons by the English and Continental Churches, diluting an earlier sense of solidarity. The Bretons' perception that Wales was the homeland of Brittany's great saints was firmly fixed, and was upheld in the Breton hagiography of the Carolingian era. However, the saints chosen for the most elaborate commemoration were the founding bishops of sees recognised by the Carolingians (Samson, Paul Aurelian and Machutus), and the patrons of abbeys that promoted reformed Benedictinism (Winwaloe and Maglorius), and in no case except Samson's was anything definite known about the saint's claimed British origins. In the apparently effortless fusion between Continental and Insular influences, sacrifices will have been made. The Viking era that was to follow would cause more losses and broken connections, even if it did result in other, further-flung items of British tradition making their way into Breton texts.

<sup>215</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita Sancti Winwaloei*, I.14, ed. De Smedt, 228: Kerlouégan, 'Les citations', 226; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 420.

<sup>216</sup> For Irish influence at Landévennec, see also Kerlouégan, 'Landévennec à l'école', 321–2.

## 4 Insular Contact and the Manuscript-Culture of Brittany in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries

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For the period between *ca* 800 and 950, literary evidence for Brittany's Atlantic links is augmented by the physical evidence of surviving manuscripts. For the earlier period, no Breton manuscripts survive; from the late tenth century onwards, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify manuscripts as Breton, except those such as cartularies whose content has a clear link to a specific locality. For a limited time only, the stimulus of the Carolingian Renaissance acting on a pre-existing, identifiably Insular literary culture – including an established tradition of glossing in the vernacular – produced a local flowering of manuscript-production, the fruits of which were then scattered to many parts of France and England during the Viking Age.<sup>1</sup>

Manuscripts connected with Brittany may be distinguished by their inclusion of glosses (annotations) in Old Breton, by their script (the earliest are in Insular script, those from after about 850 in Continental Caroline minuscule, but retaining at least some Insular abbreviations) and some by overt indicators such as Breton names in scribal colophons or the inclusion of local Breton saints in calendars. In 1985, Jean-Luc Deuffic counted 150 definitely or possibly Breton manuscripts of the ninth to the eleventh centuries.<sup>2</sup> Since then, Bernhard Bischoff's research has brought the numbers up to a possible maximum of 200 for the ninth and early tenth centuries alone.<sup>3</sup> There are likely to be more identifications in future, although this is balanced by the realisation that Breton glosses, colophons and other content are not always proof that manuscripts containing them were physically written in Brittany: Breton scribes might work outside the province, or such content could be mechanically reproduced by non-Breton scribes copying Breton exemplars. On the

<sup>1</sup> For vernacular glossing as an Insular phenomenon, see Orchard, 'Latin'.

<sup>2</sup> Deuffic, 'La production manuscrite'.

<sup>3</sup> D. N. Dumville, 'Brittonic Scripts in the Earlier Middle Ages: Questions Not Asked, Asked and Inadequately Answered', unpublished lecture delivered at the conference 'Scripts and Manuscripts from Wales, A.D. 800–1250', at King's College, London, 24/05/2016.

other hand, it is possible that some manuscripts written in Brittany were so normalised either to Insular or Carolingian standards that they evade identification.<sup>4</sup> Firm palaeographical criteria for identifying script, as such, as Breton have not been established: Breton Caroline script is quite varied, 'conspicuous either for its angular forms or for particularly developed rounding'.<sup>5</sup> Within Brittany, specific attributions to particular places of production can rarely be made. There is a growing group of manuscripts that can be convincingly attributed to Landévennec,<sup>6</sup> but the only manuscript other than these with a clear provenance is a ninth-century gospel book at Notre-Dame de Tongres, Tongeren Basiliek Onze-Lieve-Vrouw 17, which contains a colophon stating that it belonged to the monastery of Saint-Pern in the diocese of St Machutus. Guillotel tentatively suggests Saint-Méen as its place of origin.<sup>7</sup>

One reason for these difficulties of identification is that Brittany's early manuscripts, like those of Wales, have been preserved only outside the region itself. Each of them is thus a tangible witness to Brittany's connections with the wider world, but as a rule the original context of its production is disguised. The exclusive survival of Breton manuscripts outside Brittany is often attributed to the Viking crisis of the tenth century, with the implication that the only manuscripts to survive Viking destruction were those taken into exile by fleeing Breton clergy. However, it is likely that many manuscripts left Brittany for reasons unrelated to Viking attack, in the course of regular cultural exchange; and that the failure of manuscripts to survive on the spot was due to changing fashion and a lack of institutional continuity, as much as ravaging and burning.<sup>8</sup> The final section of this chapter will deal with the 'diaspora' of Breton manuscripts, especially to the English kingdom, and the contacts revealed thereby. The rest of the chapter is concerned mainly with the contents of the manuscripts as evidence for the sources drawn on by Breton scribes and scholars as they created Brittany's visible manuscript culture during the ninth and tenth centuries, and thus for contact with the Insular world. The choice of texts for copying; script and

<sup>4</sup> Bischoff, *Katalog*; Lambert, *Manuscripts*, 15; Lemoine, 'Paléographie'. Dr Colleen Curran is engaged in a research project to establish more palaeographical criteria for identifying and localising Breton manuscripts. The Breton contribution to the Carolingian study of computus, as shown in manuscripts, is currently the subject of a research project led by Jacopo Bisagni with Sarah Corrigan and Paula Harrison, Ireland and Carolingian Brittany: Texts and Transmission (IRCABRITT): [mooreinstitute.ie/projects/Ireland-and-carolingian-brittany-texts-and-transmission/](http://mooreinstitute.ie/projects/Ireland-and-carolingian-brittany-texts-and-transmission/)

<sup>5</sup> Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Guillotel, 'Recherches', 12–24; Deuffic, 'Les manuscrits de Landévennec'; Kerlouégan, 'Landévennec à l'école', 317–8.

<sup>7</sup> Guillotel, 'Recherches', 26–9. <sup>8</sup> *WAB*, 635–6.

decoration; the languages used in glossing, and the ‘layering’ and inter-relationship of glosses in various languages: all these features are potentially revealing, although exactly what they reveal can be hotly disputed.

### The Beginnings of Manuscript Culture in Brittany

The history of medieval manuscripts in Brittany begins with a puzzle. No manuscript identifiably from Brittany earlier than *ca* 800 survives. It could be argued that between the fifth century and the ninth, manuscript use in Brittany was purely passive: that books were used, for Christian instruction and ritual if nothing else, but were not produced locally. However, there are several convincing arguments against this idea. Brittany during this period produced at least one literary text, the *First Life of Samson*.<sup>9</sup> The full hierarchy of Insular script that had been developed in Britain and Ireland during the seventh century, from the most formal (half-uncial) to the least (cursive minuscule), is seen in the earliest Breton manuscripts, before it is replaced (within a generation) by Continental Caroline minuscule script.<sup>10</sup> Inscriptions on stone, although relatively few in number, show the same development as is seen in Wales and Cornwall, from the use of a specialised script for engraving – Roman square capitals – in the fifth and sixth centuries, to the use of lettering derived from book-scripts in the eighth century and after.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, a few of the charters of the Redon and Landévennec collections are formulated in a style that has parallels in early land records from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and which seems to be traceable to a common post-Roman origin. All this is evidence both for long-lasting contact between Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago, and for a continuous tradition of manuscript-production in Brittany.<sup>12</sup> An additional point is that the Redon charter-collection – although it contains no document earlier than 799 – shows such a wide range of wording, by such a large number of local scribes, that it seems most unlikely that the writing of property documents was a recent introduction.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *WAB*, 239; Sowerby, ‘The Lives’.

<sup>10</sup> Dumville, ‘Writers, Scribes and Readers’, 51–2; Dumville, *A Palaeographer’s Review*, 111–13.

<sup>11</sup> W. Davies et al., *The Inscriptions*; *WAB*, 169–73. See [Chapter 1](#).

<sup>12</sup> W. Davies, ‘The Latin Charter-Tradition’; Davies argued that the wide geographical spread of the shared charter styles implied an origin as early as the late Roman period, but Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf*, 11–12, suggests that close contact between the Brittonic-speaking and Gaelic-speaking Churches lasted long enough for such formulae to have originated as late as, say, the seventh century, the date of the earliest charters from Llandaf. See also Jordan, ‘Kein “Urkundenterritorium”’.

<sup>13</sup> W. Davies, ‘The Composition’, 71–80; pers. comm. 1/12/2017.

Why then do no earlier manuscripts survive, given that the survival rate from 800 onwards is much better than that for Wales, and immeasurably better than that for Scotland?<sup>14</sup> One possible answer lies in the apparent poverty and relative isolation of the Breton Church before the Carolingian conquest of Brittany. Perhaps most pre-800 manuscripts were 'economy' products that were felt to be in urgent need of an 'upgrade' once the Breton Church was brought into the ambit of the Carolingian Church in the late eighth century. (The clumsy scribal performances that have been noted in some of the earliest ninth-century Breton manuscripts suggest as much.<sup>15</sup>) Furthermore, once Caroline minuscule was accepted as the 'normal' book-script, the increasing perceived illegibility of earlier manuscripts would reduce their chances of survival, as it did in other Continental centres where Insular script had been in use: already in the ninth century, Insular manuscripts were being recycled as bindings for manuscripts written in Caroline minuscule, and many survive only in fragments.<sup>16</sup> If the opening-up of the Breton Church to Continental influence had a doctrinal as well as an organisational element – for instance, if the Carolingian conquest coincided with the Bretons' acceptance of the Roman date of Easter, as it may well have done – this would have added to the perceived need for a *renovatio*, for the Church literally to turn over a new leaf in its organisation and transmission of knowledge. This clearly did not mean that its earlier, Insular traditions were all abandoned. But it may have meant that they had to pass through a process of scrutiny to be deemed fit for the new era – and that, having passed it, they too were found worthy of a new, updated presentation. Consider, for instance, the mention of *duos antiphonarios bretonicos et unum novum*, 'two British [or Breton] antiphonaries and one new one', in a fragmentary list in Caroline script of books from the library of 'St Gildas', perhaps listing the contents of the library of Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys before the monks fled from the Vikings in the early tenth century.<sup>17</sup> Either liturgically or in terms of their script, these 'British' monastic service-books had needed supplementing by a 'new' one at some point before the list was written.

Just as signs of scholarly revival and renewed connections with the outside world appear in ninth-century Wales in the generations following the acceptance of the Roman Easter in 768, so they also appear in Brittany,

<sup>14</sup> For the conditions for manuscript-survival in the Celtic world compared to early medieval Europe in general, see Sims-Williams, 'The Uses of Writing'; Sharpe, 'Books from Ireland'; Huws, 'Five Ancient Books of Wales', 67–8.

<sup>15</sup> For some examples, see McKee, 'Breton Manuscripts'.

<sup>16</sup> Mostert, 'Celtic, Anglo-Saxon or Insular?', 96. For a similar argument regarding the disappearance of Welsh vernacular manuscripts dating from before about 1250, see Huws, 'Five Ancient Books', 68; Huws, 'The Welsh Book', 390–1.

<sup>17</sup> Valéry, 'La bibliothèque', 82.

perhaps as part of a consciously connected process. This process allows the pre-existing connections between Wales and Brittany – and also with Ireland – to emerge into greater visibility in the written record. But in fact it is difficult to substantiate those ‘pre-existing’, that is, pre-*ca* 800, connections on the basis of manuscripts and their contents: the vast majority, if not all, of the texts found in ninth-century manuscripts fit into a continuum of Carolingian learning in which originally Insular texts and Continental ones both had an accepted place. This was Julia M. H. Smith’s conclusion in her 1992 survey of the manuscript-culture of ninth-century Brittany, which remains largely valid.<sup>18</sup> She pointed out that a high proportion of identified Breton manuscripts, other than gospel books and psalters, contain works by authors of the Carolingian Renaissance, such as Alcuin, Smaragdus and Amalarius, or classical and Christian works that were staples of the Carolingian classroom, such as the poetry of Vergil and Sedulius, the grammars of Priscian and Eutyches, Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, and Bede’s scientific works. However, there remains a substantial minority of manuscripts containing texts with possible Insular affiliations, which may be revealing of the special contacts, aims and interests of scholars in Brittany, in the ninth century and perhaps earlier. Manuscripts with vernacular glosses, too, reveal a (preferential?) level of collaboration between scribes whose native languages were Breton, Irish and Welsh; manuscripts with ninth-century glosses in both Breton and Germanic languages exist but they are a small minority.<sup>19</sup> The manuscript-evidence, skewed as it is towards manuscripts that were found useful and survived outside the Celtic world, can rarely if ever prove that texts, or scholars, travelled directly between Ireland, Celtic Britain and Brittany. It is conceivable that encounters between Breton and Irish scholars took place entirely, and between Bretons and Welsh mainly, at Continental centres outside Brittany. However, the manuscript-evidence taken as a whole does suggest that Insular Celtic scholarship played an important, perhaps a predominant part in Breton literate culture in the ninth and tenth centuries. Glossed manuscripts reveal that even ‘mainstream’ texts might reach Bretons via fellow Celtic-speakers rather than through the most obvious conduits of Carolingian influence. British and Breton scholars, very rarely mentioned in written sources, must have been present in the Frankish kingdoms in considerable numbers.

Early medieval Breton writers cannot be shown to have made any groundbreaking innovations in scholarship. In keeping with its relative poverty, Brittany appears in the role of recipient, or sometimes conduit, of

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 167–77.

<sup>19</sup> Dumville, ‘Writers, Scribes and Readers’, 58.



ideas produced elsewhere. Symptomatic of this is manuscript-art. The only decorated manuscripts produced in Brittany were gospel books, of which about thirty survive.<sup>20</sup> Some of these contain 'anthropo-zoomorphic' (animal-headed) portraits of the Evangelists that may derive from Insular art of the seventh and eighth centuries; another group has classically inspired human portraits derived from Carolingian models, but simplified and deprived of perspective.<sup>21</sup> Patrick McGurk suggested that the defining feature of this art is its 'provincialism', and stated roundly that 'none of these books allow a distinctive Celtic Breton past to be recovered'.<sup>22</sup> However, as will be seen, Breton scholarship may have been less passive and more proactive than this suggests. The very fact that numerous Breton scribes succeeded in learning Caroline script within a generation, while deliberately maintaining the Insular system of abbreviations, implies active co-operation with Frankish centres and not mere acquiescence in conquest. The date and distribution of manuscripts using the so-called 'Breton' style of musical notation is a similar pointer. This notation seems to have originated in the ninth century, and to have been used all over north-western Francia: the surviving examples from Brittany are as early as any others, suggesting that even if Bretons were not responsible for the invention of the style, they were 'early adopters' well-connected with a regional scholarly network.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> McKee, 'Breton Manuscripts'; Fleuriot, 'Les évangélistes'. The group with anthropo-zoomorphic decoration includes London BL Egerton 609 ('Marmoutier Gospels'); New York Public Library 115 ('Harkness Gospels'); Berne Burgerbibliothek 85; Oxford, Bodleian Library Auct. D.2.16 ('Leofric Gospels'); Troyes BM 960; Boulogne-sur-Mer BM 8. Linked textually to this group are Angers BM 24 and Paris BnF nouv. acq. lat. 1587 ('Saint-Gatien Gospels'). The 'Harkness Gospels' and 'Leofric Gospels' are shown by their calendars to be Landévennec manuscripts, and the second was almost certainly copied from the first: Simpson McKee, 'Breton Manuscripts', 289; Crozet, 'Les premières représentations'; Crozet, 'Les représentations'; Guillotel, 'Recherches', 10–17. Louis Lemoine has argued that Berne Burgerbibliothek 85, BL Add. 9381 (the 'Bodmin Gospels'), and BL Add. 40000 (the 'Thorney Gospels') are also Landévennec manuscripts: Lemoine, 'Autour du *scriptorium*', 156, 162. The 'classical' group consists of Alençon BM 84; Tongeren Basiliek Onze-Lieve-Vrouw 17 ('Saint-Pern Gospels'); Oxford Bodleian Library Laud Lat. 26 ('Laud Gospels'); Baltimore Walters Art Gallery W.1; Vatican City BAV San Pietro D. 154 ('San Pietro Gospels'); Paris Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 17; Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum 45–1980 ('Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels'). See McKee, 'Breton Manuscripts', 289; Alexander, 'La résistance'. Another gospel book identified as Breton by its colophon, perhaps written in the Dol area, textually related to the Bradfer-Lawrence Gospels, is Douai BM 13: Guillotel, 'Recherches', 30–6.

<sup>21</sup> For Continental as well as Insular examples of 'zoomorphic' portraits, see Gallet, 'Art et architecture', and references.

<sup>22</sup> McGurk, 'The Gospel Book', 189. However, for arguments that manuscript-art reflected a specifically Breton ecclesiastical culture, see Kitzinger, 'Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, 960'.

<sup>23</sup> Rankin, *Writing Sounds*, 95–101 and table 3.

A variety of genres is present in the manuscript-record of ninth- and tenth-century Brittany. As well as biblical texts, these include biblical commentary and homilies; ecclesiastical and secular law texts; grammar and scientific texts, particularly computus; poetry and literary *jeux d'esprit*; philosophy; and history. The texts chosen are revealing of the needs and priorities of the Breton Church in the aftermath of the Carolingian conquest.

### Legal Texts and Biblical Commentary

Outside Scripture, the most heavily represented genre is ecclesiastical legislation. Brittany played a particularly important part in the manuscript transmission of the great Irish work of ecclesiastical law, *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* (*CCH*), and a number of shorter canonistic and penitential texts associated with it. *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* itself is a methodically arranged collection of authoritative pronouncements on ecclesiastical matters, some of them drawn from the records of early church councils, others from the writings of Church Fathers. Compiled in the eighth century, apparently attributed in a colophon to the scholars Ruben of Dairinis (d. 725) and Cú Chuimne of Iona (d. 747), it was quickly and extensively diffused on the Continent, first of all in places where Insular scholars were active – north-east France and southern Germany – and then in the Loire Valley, and especially in Brittany. Five complete manuscripts of *CCH*, an abridgement, a collection of excerpts, and a fragment – about half the total of the surviving manuscripts – were written by Breton scribes or copied from Breton exemplars.<sup>24</sup> They include manuscripts of both major versions of the text (A and B), and also of some unique adaptations, and most of them were glossed in Old Breton, suggesting that different editions of *CCH* were being actively collected, read with attention and put to practical use.<sup>25</sup>

Roy Flechner has argued that there is independent evidence for the application of *CCH* in ninth-century Brittany. In 848 or 849 a *cause célèbre* began when Nominoe, the ruler of Brittany, illegally deposed all the region's bishops. A letter of Pope Leo IV (847–55), denouncing Nominoe's actions, made reference to the misuse of *libelli et commentarii aliorum* ('booklets and commentaries by certain people'), the sources of which, briefly described in the letter, fit with those of *CCH*. Flechner

<sup>24</sup> Kéry, *Canonical Collections*, 73–8; Flechner (ed.), *The Hibernensis*, I.125–47. More fragments may await discovery. Barbet-Massin, 'Le manuscrit 477 (461) d'Angers', 27–8, draws attention to brief excerpts from *CCH* in a late ninth- or tenth-century Breton hand on fols. 97v–98r of the computistical manuscript Angers BM 477.

<sup>25</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 89–90.

suggests that the dissemination of *CCH* in Brittany was specifically aimed at giving the Breton Church a kind of blueprint for independence, a source of authoritative legal guidance other than that promulgated by the Frankish Church and the papacy.<sup>26</sup> Its introduction may even have been a publicly decided, political act. All the complete Breton copies of the 'A'-version, Flechner argues, derive from a single archetype, and one of them contains a scribal colophon that can be reconstructed as *Iunobrus scripsit haec sancta sinodo dicente* [or *dictante*]: 'Iunobrus wrote these things at the behest of the holy synod'.<sup>27</sup> It is in fact unlikely that *CCH* was first introduced specifically to deal with the crisis in the late 840s, since some of the Breton manuscripts (Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42, containing the 'B'-version, and perhaps Orléans BM 221) are earlier. However, its important place in the corpus of manuscripts from Brittany does suggest a concerted attempt by the Breton Church to compensate for what may have seemed a dangerous lack of properly constituted authority, and mechanisms with which to enforce it, in the context of Carolingian dominance.

From where did Brittany derive its texts of *CCH*? The work did not necessarily reach Brittany directly from Ireland or Celtic Britain, but may have arrived there from other regions that were under Insular influence: northern Francia, the Loire Valley or south Germany.<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that *CCH* was available in all these regions from the mid-eighth century onwards.<sup>29</sup> Excerpts are also found in a great variety of ninth-century and later canon-law collections and liturgical treatises from everywhere in the Carolingian orbit, indicating that the text – or derivatives of it – circulated widely. However, considering that five of the seven surviving *complete* manuscripts of *CCH* were either written by Breton scribes or clearly derived from Breton exemplars, it seems reasonable to infer that Brittany was in direct and early receipt of the text from sources close to the original compilers, whether in Ireland or on the Continent. In most of Europe, *CCH* was rapidly snipped up and anonymised in a kaleidoscope of other texts.<sup>30</sup> In Brittany, unusually, it was used and copied whole, accompanied by 'satellite' texts of earlier Irish or British origin which are found only in the Breton or Breton-derived manuscripts.

<sup>26</sup> Flechner, 'Libelli'. <sup>27</sup> Flechner, 'Aspects', 40–1.

<sup>28</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 88–9.

<sup>29</sup> Kéry, *Canonical Collections*, 74; Mordek, *Kirchenrecht*, 86–94, 287; Ganz, *Corbie*, 20, 72; Meens, 'The Oldest Manuscript Witness'.

<sup>30</sup> For an account of the process, see Reynolds, 'Unity and Diversity'; Reynolds, 'Transmission', 22–3. For a thorough but not exhaustive list of manuscripts containing derivatives of *CCH*, see Kéry, *Canonical Collections*, 73–8.

One of these texts is *Liber ex lege Moysi* (*LELM*), a selection of excerpts from the Mosaic Law in the Old Testament, in which the biblical texts are treated literally as normative law.<sup>31</sup> It appears before *CCH*, as a kind of biblical-legal prologue, and may have been conceived as such by *CCH*'s compilers or scholars working in the same milieu; many of the passages discussed are also treated in *CCH*, and share non-Vulgate readings of certain Bible verses.<sup>32</sup> Two different sequences of sixth- to eighth-century Insular canons and penitentials, some of which are cited as source-texts in *CCH*, are likewise found exclusively in Breton and Breton-derived manuscripts (although excerpts from them appear elsewhere). Both sequences occur in Paris BnF Lat. 3182, one of them also in BnF Lat. 12021, the other in Cambrai BM 625 (a Breton manuscript of the late ninth century which does not contain *CCH*).<sup>33</sup> It has been suggested that some of these items were transmitted to Brittany separately earlier than *CCH*, or even (in the case of the 'Synod of North Britain', one of four British-Latin texts in BnF Lat. 3182 and Cambrai BM 625) composed in Brittany.<sup>34</sup> Given the textual co-dependency between these 'packages' of texts and *CCH*, it seems more likely that they were assembled by the Irish authors of *CCH*, and arrived in Brittany already associated with *CCH*. Yet the ability of Breton scholars to access these preparatory compilations does testify to a particularly close association with Irish canonists. The same is implied by a sequence of texts in Cambridge Corpus Christi College 279, a manuscript that was probably written at Tours in the mid-ninth century, but is shown by incorporated Old Irish glosses and one gloss in Old Breton to have been derived from an Irish (or Continental-Irish) original that had also been used by Breton scholars.<sup>35</sup> This manuscript opens with the only surviving copy of the (perhaps) sixth-century 'First Synod of St Patrick'. Next it has another unique text, a canon collection containing, among other things, the fullest surviving version of the *Fragmenta Gildae*, a collection of 'sayings' attributed to Gildas, which are quoted in the letters of Columbanus. Richard Sharpe designated this text C<sup>1</sup> and noted that it

<sup>31</sup> Meeder (ed.), 'The *Liber ex lege Moysi*'.

<sup>32</sup> The manuscripts are Orléans BM 221, Paris BnF Lat. 3182 and BL Cotton Otho E. XIII, all from Brittany, and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 279, from Tours, copied from a Breton exemplar. In all the manuscripts a series of brief exegetical, computistical and canon-law texts intervenes between *LELM* and *CCH*.

<sup>33</sup> A useful tabulated presentation of a number of these texts is given in Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 21–2. For Cambrai BM 625, see also Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.177 (805).

<sup>34</sup> Le Duc, 'Les premiers temps', 87–111; Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 3, 23, 66–7, 285–6; Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential', 144.

<sup>35</sup> Simpson, 'Ireland, Tours and Brittany', 114–6, considers on the basis of the content of the manuscript and its glosses that it is a copy made at Tours of a Breton manuscript copied from an Irish original with Old Irish glosses.

appears to be yet another of the source-texts for *CCH*.<sup>36</sup> Again, Bretons had privileged access to this material – or valued it more highly than did most Continental scholars. Overall, the variety of canonistic texts and versions recorded suggests that there was more than one simple event of transmission of canon material to Brittany, and that Breton scholars actively collected and redacted such material over a period of time.<sup>37</sup> One text in the BnF Lat. 3281/Cambrai BM 625 sequence, the ‘Bigotian Penitential’, based on the mid-seventh-century Irish ‘Penitential of Cumminian’ and apparently replacing it in this pair of manuscripts, may have been composed in Brittany.<sup>38</sup>

A notorious problem in early Breton history is the nature and status of the secular law-code, *Excerpta de Libris Romanorum et Francorum* (*ELRF*), which is found (uniquely) in a number of the Breton manuscripts of *CCH*.<sup>39</sup> Léon Fleuriot assembled ‘a useful circumstantial case’, on internal evidence, that this code was composed in and for Brittany.<sup>40</sup> Its intimate association in manuscript with a comprehensive canon-law collection, most often following that text directly, suggests that for its copyists it had a high symbolic status, as a correspondingly representative and authoritative secular law-text. However, its date of composition and route of transmission are problematic. The only certain dating termini for *ELRF* are provided, at one end, by its extensive dependence on the Frankish *Lex Salica* (usually supposed to date from the years 508–11, but possibly up to a century earlier) and, at the other, by the date of the manuscripts, none of which is earlier than 800.<sup>41</sup> Fleuriot thought that the borrowings from Frankish law, combined with the ‘archaic’ nature of much of the content, suggested a date in the sixth century. Soazick Kerneis argued for a still earlier date (in line with her belief in a fourth-century origin for *Lex Salica*), suggesting that *ELRF* was a law-code issued by the consul Aëtius in 445 for British military auxiliary forces

<sup>36</sup> Sharpe, ‘Gildas’, 194–6. <sup>37</sup> Dumville, ‘Ireland, Brittany and England’, 89.

<sup>38</sup> Dumville, ‘Ireland, Brittany and England’, 88; Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 10. Rob Meens, however, suggests the text should be associated with the Irish *Céli Dé* movement of the second half of the eighth century: Meens, *Penance*, 61–2.

<sup>39</sup> For the manuscript-tradition, see Owen, ‘The *Excerpta*’, 171–6. The ‘A’-text is found in Orléans BM 221 (A), Paris BnF Lat. 3182 (B), Cambridge Corpus Christi College 265 (X) (a Worcester manuscript, but deriving in this section from a Breton source), Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42 (H), and London BL Cotton Otho E.XIII. The ‘P’-text is found only in Paris BnF Lat. 12021. The two versions are edited as ‘*Canones Wallici*’ by Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 136–59.

<sup>40</sup> Fleuriot, ‘Un fragment’, 615–17; Dumville, ‘On the Dating’, 210. Coumert, ‘Des lois bretonnes’, 114–6 is perhaps excessively sceptical.

<sup>41</sup> For references to the foundational scholarship on *Lex Salica* see Renard, ‘*Le Pactus Legis Salicae*’, 323–4. For the dating, see Charles-Edwards, ‘Law’, 271–5.

settled in Brittany.<sup>42</sup> But *ELRF* also shares a small amount of material with *CCH*, leading David Dumville to argue that its surviving versions are unlikely to pre-date the eighth century.<sup>43</sup> If it was a 'living' text, susceptible to revision, this argument is inconclusive for dating the original composition of the text. But the possibility remains that *ELRF*, rather than belonging to the early sixth-century wave of legislation for the ethnic successor-states to the Western Roman Empire, was a response to Carolingian expansion and the efforts of the Frankish kings from the mid-eighth century onwards to compile or revise the laws of their subject peoples, analogous to the *Lex Baiuvariorum* of the 740s, and the *leges* drawn up for the Saxons, Thuringians and Frisians in or soon after 802/3.<sup>44</sup> BnF Lat. 3182 and Cambrai BM 625 contain, as well as *ELRF*, copies of *Lex Salica*; Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42 contains excerpts from the Epitome of Gaius's *Institutes*, which circulated widely in Merovingian and Carolingian Francia as part of the early sixth-century legal compilation, the Breviary of Alaric.<sup>45</sup> Thus, *ELRF* was deemed fit for copying and study alongside foundational texts of secular as well as ecclesiastical law; but who actually compiled it, and whether and how it was applied, remains unknown.

Both in Ireland and in Carolingian Europe, study of the law was intimately connected with the search for authoritative meaning in Scripture, and Breton canon-law manuscripts are far from exceptional in containing fragments of biblical commentary among the legal texts.<sup>46</sup> These fragments, relatively neglected in modern scholarship, may provide clues to the contacts through which the Bretons received their canonistic texts. Some of them were widely disseminated in Europe, for example, the seventh-century Hiberno-Latin tract *Expositio IV Evangeliorum*, versions of which are found in the Breton manuscript Paris BnF Lat. 12021, and the possibly Breton Cambridge University Library Dd.10.16.<sup>47</sup> Others are rarer. For example, a text beginning *Virtutes quas Dominus dominica die fecit*,<sup>48</sup> a short tract on the theological

<sup>42</sup> Kerneis, 'L'ancienne loi', strongly disputed by Coumert, 'Des lois bretonnes', 112–3.

<sup>43</sup> Dumville, 'On the Dating'. <sup>44</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 69 and references.

<sup>45</sup> Wood, 'The Code', 165–6.

<sup>46</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Celtic Britain', 150–1, credits Gildas with founding the legal approach to biblical texts; see also Meens, 'The Uses'.

<sup>47</sup> Bischoff, *Katalog*, III.181 (4723–4); Kavanagh, 'The Ps.-Jerome's *Expositio*'; Pseudo-Jerome, *Expositio*, ed. Kavanagh; McNamara, 'The Newly-Identified Cambridge Apocalypse Commentary', 256–8.

<sup>48</sup> *Dies Dominica*, ed. McNally; Biggs et al. (eds.), *Sources*, 93–4; Lapidge and Sharpe, *A Bibliography*, no. 903. McNally somewhat obscured the nature of this text by extracting and publishing the 'Sunday' portion but not the 'Creation' section, which remains unedited. He implied, also ('*Dies Dominica*', 175–7), that the text was a variant of the 'Letter of Christ from Heaven' or 'Sunday Letter', on the observance of Sunday, which



significance of Sunday, together with an account of the creation of the world, is found uniquely in two of the Breton *CCH*-manuscripts, Orléans BM 221 and Paris BnF Lat. 3182, sandwiched with other short texts between *LELM* and *CCH*.<sup>49</sup> A longer version of the 'Sunday' portion of the text is found in three ninth-century manuscripts from the upper Rhine: Vatican City BAV Vat. Pal. Lat. 220 (homily collection, early ninth century, at Lorsch by 900), Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 255 (*Quaestiones de evangelio*, Bede, penitentials, ninth century) and St Gall Stiftsbibliothek 682 (Capitulary of St Martin of Braga, homilies, penitentials of Bede and Egbert, Isidore, second quarter of the ninth century, at St Gall after 850).<sup>50</sup> Thus, like *CCH*, this homiletic fragment shows early dissemination both in Brittany and in the Rhineland mission field where Irish and Anglo-Saxons worked together. How did it come to be associated with *CCH*, and was its original composition Irish – or might it have been Breton?<sup>51</sup> One piece of circumstantial evidence points to this possibility: the 'creation' section draws on the Book of Enoch, a scripture of the third to first centuries BC, the complete text of which survives only in the Ge'ez (Ethiopian) language. There is considerable literary evidence for knowledge of the Book of Enoch in early medieval Europe, but the only extant Western Latin manuscript of part of the text itself is another (probably) Breton manuscript, London BL Royal 5.E.XIII.<sup>52</sup>

The manuscript just mentioned, BL Royal 5.E.XIII, contains several unusual texts, as well as more standard ones, flanking excerpts from Recension A of *CCH*.<sup>53</sup> It opens with the Hiberno-Latin biblical

was widely diffused throughout Europe in the early Middle Ages (including an Irish version entitled *Epistil Ísu*) but it is in fact a separate text. See also Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 96, note 169; Lees, 'The Sunday Letter', 146.

<sup>49</sup> These fragments include a computus beginning *Ex Adam in diluuium*, a text beginning *Narcisus Hierosolimorum episcopus*, John Cassian, Collat. 20.8 (*Conlatio abbatis Pinufii de paenitentiae fine*), a computus beginning *Ab Adam usque ad Ninum*, some patristic quotations on divorce, the text *Virtutes quas Dominus die dominica fecit*, an embedded scribal colophon, and commentary on Matthew 11.29: see Flechner (ed.), *The Hibernensis*, I.125–9, 135–41. The sequence as a whole has never been analysed.

<sup>50</sup> For descriptions, see [https://bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/bav/bav\\_pal\\_lat\\_220?ui\\_lang=eng](https://bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/bav/bav_pal_lat_220?ui_lang=eng); Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.364 (1736); [www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0682](http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0682) (accessed 07 November 2019).

<sup>51</sup> McNally (ed.), 'Dies Dominica', 177, allows for both possibilities.

<sup>52</sup> The Enoch fragment from BL Royal 5.E.XIII was edited by James, *Apocrypha Anecdota*, 146–50.

<sup>53</sup> For description of BL Royal 5.E.XIII and its contents, see the British Library online catalogue, [www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal\\_MS\\_5\\_E\\_XIII](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_5_E_XIII); Ambrose, 'The Codicology'; Gneuss and Lapidge, no. 459, pp. 378–9; Petitmengin, 'La compilation', 625. It contains two Breton glosses: Evans and Fleuriot, *A Dictionary*, II, 445, 452. Its Breton origin is accepted by Dumville, 'Some British Aspects', 22, but Bischoff, *Katalog*, II.124 (2493), assigns it to northern coastal France 'under Breton influence'.



commentary *Canon in Ebraica* and two other short texts which assemble biblical passages on tithes and on the symbolism of pearls.<sup>54</sup> The only other known manuscript-source for these three texts is a late eighth- or early ninth-century Swiss or north Italian manuscript, Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 254 (containing Isidore's *De Officiis Ecclesiasticis*, homilies and other theological texts) which has a ninth-century Reichenau provenance.<sup>55</sup> This manuscript concludes with a series of litanies in which one of the saints listed is the Breton Samson, immediately following Patrick – reminding us that the Rhaetian monastery of Pfäfers in 820–30 possessed relics of Samson.<sup>56</sup> In the case of *Canon in Ebraica* the Karlsruhe manuscript gives extracts only. Nevertheless, it seems that the Continental Irish textual tradition of these works was primary, and the Breton manuscript derivative of it: according to Dumville, 'the Breton copy contains palaeographical features showing that it was copied from a central European exemplar'.<sup>57</sup> Some other texts in Royal 5.E.XIII can likewise be associated with the Anglo-Irish mission field in south Germany: Book III of Cyprian's *Ad Quirinum Testimonia*,<sup>58</sup> a penitential attributed to Bede,<sup>59</sup> and an *Edictio* of Boniface.<sup>60</sup>

Rhaetia and the southern Rhineland, and Reichenau in particular, emerge as likely points of contact for Bretons to obtain Irish canon texts and biblical commentaries. It must be noted that the earliest manuscript of the *Vita I* of Melanius of Rennes, Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 84 (s.x<sup>2</sup>–s.xi), is attributed to Reichenau, and that a ninth-century Breton gospel book is found there (Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 211).<sup>61</sup> In Chapter 3 it was noted, moreover, that Reichenau was the home of a manuscript of the 'Frankish Table of Nations' of the type that was used by the Welsh author of *HB*. Despite the silence of other sources (in particular the voluminous Reichenau confraternity book), should we deduce that Britons and Bretons were putting in an appearance on the

<sup>54</sup> Ambrose, 'A New Assessment'.

<sup>55</sup> Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.364 (1735); Bischoff, 'Turning-Points', 95, 159 note 126; Dumville, 'Biblical Apocrypha', 325–8; Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 88.

<sup>56</sup> Holder, *Die Reichenauer Handschriften*, 578; DUBALA, 102–3.

<sup>57</sup> Dumville, 'Some British Aspects', 22.

<sup>58</sup> Weber and Bévenot (eds.), *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi Opera*, LV–LVIII.

<sup>59</sup> Bouhot, 'Les pénitentiels', considered the penitentials attributed to Bede and Egbert in eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts to be derived from authentic works, perhaps composed to suit the needs of the Anglo-Saxon mission in southern Germany. The manuscript-tradition is centred on this region. The text in Royal 5.E.XIII is a conflated version of the two which Bouhot (p. 164) designates 'dérivé 3'.

<sup>60</sup> For references, see Ambrose, 'The Codicology', 2.

<sup>61</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 240; Fischer, *Die lateinischen Evangelien*, I.203; Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.357 (1702).

south-eastern frontier of the Frankish kingdom, at some time after the mid-eighth century? Was it from the Irish of this region, perhaps from St Gall, that the Bretons obtained some or all of their texts of *CCH*? Did the Bretons merely receive or did they contribute as well, in more substantial ways than by glossing, rearranging, abbreviating and expanding?<sup>62</sup> In either case, we are likely to remain ignorant of the personal and institutional contacts through which this was achieved. When Shannon Ambrose writes of the manuscript London BL Royal 5.E.XIII being written for the purpose of 'advancing the Irish mission' and 'to aid the activities of the Irish *peregrini* in that region [Brittany]', this begs many questions.<sup>63</sup> Unlike in north-east Francia or central Europe, the Irish influence in Brittany was unsung, anonymous, and may have operated largely remotely, through the travels of Bretons rather than the presence of Irish scholars. Moreover, by the late ninth and early tenth centuries, surviving manuscripts with Breton features may stand at the end of such complex chains of transmission that the relative 'Insular' and 'Continental' contributions to their content have become thoroughly entwined.

### Scientific, Grammatical and Educational Texts

Grammatical, educational and scientific texts form a high proportion of the surviving books of ninth- and tenth-century Brittany. If this bias were a reflection of the original numbers, it would imply a Breton church-establishment well stocked with basic textbooks, with a particular effort being made in the direction of Latin grammar and also computus, the science of the calendar which was important in calculating the correct date of Easter. Was this a measure of the particular reforming concerns of the Carolingian Church – reflecting the possibility that pre-Carolingian Brittany had kept to the old method of dating Easter, favoured by the Britons but not Rome, as well as letting standards of Latinity deteriorate?<sup>64</sup> The grammatical and computistical manuscripts are of particular interest because they are heavily glossed, in Old Breton and in some cases in Old Irish as well as in Latin, and the texts which they contain also show other evidence of Irish origins.

#### *Computus*

The role of Bretons in the study and dissemination of pre-Bedan Irish computistical science has recently been recognised. The most interesting

<sup>62</sup> Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 89–90.

<sup>63</sup> Ambrose, 'The *De Vindictis*', 46, 49. <sup>64</sup> Merdrignac, 'Le glaive', 198–207.

and best-studied computus-manuscript with Breton connections is Angers BM 477, containing works by Bede: his *De Natura Rerum*, *De Temporibus* (chapters 1–25 only), and *De Temporum Ratione*. It also includes computational tables, a calendar of ecclesiastical feast-days and other short pieces.<sup>65</sup> On the basis of its script and its probable models, it seems the manuscript was written at the end of the ninth century or early in the tenth, at a centre in northern France with Irish contacts, perhaps Laon, Soissons, Amiens or Corbie, but probably by a Breton scribe.<sup>66</sup> Its later provenance is the abbey of Saint-Aubin, Angers, where there is considerable evidence for Breton contacts from the ninth century to the eleventh; the calendar of saints it includes suggests that in the tenth century its home may have been Fleury (see Chapter 5).<sup>67</sup> Wherever it was written, the manuscript was copiously annotated by Breton-speakers. It has some 400 Old Breton glosses, including not only single words but whole phrases, belonging to two distinct phases of glossing: phase ‘A’ (in two hands contemporary with that of the main scribe), and phase ‘B’ (somewhat later, perhaps later tenth or early eleventh century, in a paler ink).<sup>68</sup> These have been extensively studied for their contribution to Breton philology, but they also have Irish antecedents. They are closely paralleled by Old Irish glosses in a mid-ninth-century manuscript of Bede in Irish script written possibly in Ireland or at Soissons, but that has a Reichenau provenance as early as the mid-ninth century, Karlsruhe Badische Landesbibliothek Aug. 167.<sup>69</sup> That the Breton glossator drew directly on Irish glosses is suggested by a few garbled words that appear to be Brittonic calques on Old Irish: *blangas* for Irish *bán-glas* ‘pallid’;

<sup>65</sup> Barbet-Massin, ‘Le manuscrit 477 (461) d’Angers’; Lambert, ‘Les gloses en vieux-breton’, 309.

<sup>66</sup> Barbet-Massin, ‘The Rite’, 22, places the creation of the manuscript in ‘the north of France (Laon or Amiens) as it shares many points in common with manuscripts written there’; however, in ‘Le manuscrit 477 (461) d’Angers’, 24, 33–4, she notes that the script contains a number of ‘Breton’ abbreviations. Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.22 (69), gives ‘Bretagne (Léon)’ as the manuscript’s place of origin. It was thought until recently that the writing of the main portion of the manuscript could be dated precisely to 897 on the basis of the computus, but Barbet-Massin has shown that this dating is insecure: Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, 9; Lambert, ‘Les commentaires celtiques (1)’, 120; Deuffic, ‘La production manuscrite’, 293 (no. 7); Barbet-Massin, ‘Le manuscrit 477 (461) d’Angers’, 32–4.

<sup>67</sup> For Breton contact with Angers, see Jarousseau, ‘L’ermite Gerfred’; Tanguy, ‘Autour de l’adoption’.

<sup>68</sup> The Breton glosses in Angers BM 477 were first published by Fleuriot, ‘Dictionnaire’, 8–11. They were more fully analysed in a series of articles by Lambert, ‘Les commentaires celtiques (1)’, ‘Les commentaires celtiques (2)’ and ‘Les gloses en vieux-breton’, and by Bauer, ‘The Celtic Parallel Glosses’. For the successive hands, see also Barbet-Massin, ‘Le manuscrit 477 (461) d’Angers’, 16. There is also one gloss in Old English, in an Insular hand, itself glossed in Breton in Caroline minuscule: Le Duc, ‘Une glose’; Dumville, ‘Writers, Scribes and Readers’, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Schneiders, ‘The Irish Calendar’, 33–5.

*uschuidou* glossing *vapores*, based on Old Irish *uisce* ‘water’ with a Breton plural ending.<sup>70</sup>

There is also a Welsh dimension to the vernacular glosses. If a handful of them appear to be ‘Bretonised Irish’, many more show Old Welsh linguistic characteristics that have been only sporadically ‘Bretonised’ by the glossator. Some glosses of phase ‘B’ are in a later linguistic stage of Old Welsh than those of phase ‘A’.<sup>71</sup> Their presence is likely to indicate the use of more than one Welsh exemplar, or the presence of more than one Welsh annotator, among those who worked on Angers BM 477 during the tenth century.

In addition to the vernacular glosses, there are Latin marginal annotations to the Bedan works which, according to Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, derive originally from an Irish computistical tract of *ca* AD 658 which was one of the sources for Bede’s computus.<sup>72</sup> Immo Warntjes has been able to identify some passages of the glosses of Angers 477 as direct quotations from two other known Hiberno-Carolingian tracts, the ‘Munich Computus’ and the related *De Ratione Computandi*.<sup>73</sup> Thus the exemplar of Angers 477 was probably a northern French copy of Bede which had already been augmented with earlier Latin computistical material derived from Ireland, and circulated in Francia; the Breton annotators were able to draw on yet more such material, glossed in Irish. Other signs of Irish links in the manuscript include an entry in the margin of Bede’s paschal tables (fol. 36v) that seems to derive from an Irish annalistic source: the words ‘Pestilentia in aqua obiit Uuiniaius’ beside the data for the year AD 549. This refers to the death of Uuiniaius/Finnianus, founder of Clonard, whose obit occurs in Irish annals at this year (a holy man of the same name was known in other British and Breton sources and manuscripts).<sup>74</sup> Finally, on fol. 47v there is a cryptogram in Greek letters, similar to ‘Dubhthach’s cryptogram’ in Bamberg Staatsbibliothek H. J. IV.11, fol. 106v, and even more similar to that in the ninth-century Welsh manuscript of Juvenius at Cambridge

<sup>70</sup> Lambert, ‘Rencontres culturelles’, 101.

<sup>71</sup> Lambert, ‘Rencontres culturelles’, 102; Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ó Cróinín, ‘Irish Annals from Easter Tables’, 79; Ó Cróinín, ‘The Irish Provenance’; Ó Cróinín ‘A Seventh-Century Irish Computus’; Walsh and Ó Cróinín (eds), *Cummian’s Letter*. Ó Cróinín has reconstructed this 658 tract on the basis of versions in the manuscripts Brussels Bibliothèque Royale 5413–22, fols. 77v–107v (s.ix, copied from an Irish exemplar in north-eastern France); Vatican City BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 1260 (s.ix, from Fleury?), containing an identical text; and related materials in the ‘Munich Computus’ in Munich Staatsbibliothek Clm 14456 (written at Regensburg), and the so-called ‘Sirmond group’ of manuscripts.

<sup>73</sup> Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, clxxxiii–clxxxviii.

<sup>74</sup> Poulin, ‘La circulation’, 46; Clancy, ‘The Real St Ninian’.

(Cambridge University Library Ff.4.42).<sup>75</sup> To complete the picture of the Welsh affiliations of Angers 477, there is a surviving fragment of Bede's *De Natura Rerum* from Wales (Aberystwyth National Library of Wales Peniarth 540), two bifolia written in Caroline script with some Insular traits in Wales in the first half of the twelfth century. This fragment has a few Welsh-language glosses, two of which – *cindraid* glossing Latin *ledona*, 'neap tide', and *riberthi* glossing *malina*, 'spring tide', are equivalent to a pair of vernacular glosses found both in Angers 477 and in its Irish-Continental relative, Karlsruhe Aug. 167: *cundraid* and *rebirthi* in Angers 477, *hicontractu* and *hirobartai* in the Karlsruhe manuscript. The Peniarth manuscript shows that the results of collaboration between ninth-century Irish, Welsh and Breton scholars on the Continent could become (or remain) available in Wales itself.<sup>76</sup>

In Angers BM 477, we see Breton scholars working on a text that was very well known in Carolingian Europe: at least fifty-seven eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts of Bede's scientific works are extant.<sup>77</sup> However, they had, for preference, obtained the text through Irish and Welsh intermediaries (the text with its Latin glosses perhaps by way of northern France, the Irish glosses perhaps from Reichenau). This example reveals the difficulties surrounding any attempt to classify ninth-century Breton culture simply by the preponderance of 'Carolingian' or 'Insular' influences. Might the reception of Bede's works in Brittany have been connected with the Welsh acceptance of the Roman Easter in 768?<sup>78</sup>

Angers BM 476 is a manuscript of similar date and script-type to Angers 477, containing excerpts from Bede and a pseudo-Bedan computational text continued with a very brief chronicle of Breton affairs, attributed to Redon by its editor, Bernhard Bischoff, because its only reference to ecclesiastical affairs is a notice of the foundation of Redon.<sup>79</sup> (The chronicle must have been completed after 919, since its final entry refers to the 'expulsion' of the Bretons by the Vikings in that year.) Because it contains only two Breton glosses, the manuscript has been less studied than Angers 477, but the nature and possible sources of its main contents would repay further study.<sup>80</sup> In particular, it contains on fol. 12r–v a discussion of spring and neap tides that seems to be derived from the

<sup>75</sup> Lambert, 'Les commentaires celtiques (1)', 140. For the Irish and Welsh parallels, see Derolez, 'Dubthach's Cryptogram' and McKee, *The Cambridge Juvenius Manuscript*.

<sup>76</sup> Huws, 'A Welsh Manuscript', especially p.119; Dumville, 'Writers, Scribes and Readers', 58.

<sup>77</sup> For manuscript-statistics, see Kendall and Wallis (eds), *Bede*, 36–40.

<sup>78</sup> As suggested by Lambert, *Manuscripts*, 35.

<sup>79</sup> *Annales Rotonenses*, ed. Bischoff, 105.

<sup>80</sup> There is some doubt about the contents of Angers BM 476 in the published descriptions. Fleuriot (*Dictionnaire*, 4) and the IRHT catalogue entry (

Hiberno-Latin text *Liber de Ordine Creaturarum*, but with the addition of a concept of a 'bright spring tide', *malina lucida*, which may have been the work of a local Breton author.<sup>81</sup> Another manuscript, Paris BnF nouv. acq. lat. 1616, was written at the end of the ninth or in the first half of the tenth century, in Continental script with Insular abbreviations, and consists of fourteen folios of unidentified computistical texts with eight Old Breton glosses.<sup>82</sup> One item in it is a statement about 'Egyptian days' (unlucky or fatal days for medical procedures) that is found also in Karlsruhe Aug. 167 and some other Continental manuscripts, reinforcing the connections suggested by Angers 477.<sup>83</sup>

Some later computistic manuscript-evidence suggests the transmission of Irish computistic material via Brittany to other Continental centres. Immo Warntjes and Jacopo Bisagni have studied Paris BnF Lat. 6400B, the relevant section of which – fols. 249(2)r–284v) – is a tenth-century manuscript from Fleury containing an Irish computistical tract (*Computus Hibernicus Parisinus*) datable to 754 by the calculations relative to solar eclipses that it contains.<sup>84</sup> The tract was composed in Ireland, but the immediate exemplar of BnF Lat. 6400B seems to have been Breton, or at least used by Bretons: the manuscript has two Breton glosses, and its contents are closely paralleled by the computistica preserved in Paris BnF Lat. 7418A, an eleventh-century Breton manuscript traceable to Landévennec.<sup>85</sup> Though surviving in later copies, these examples of Irish computistica of as early as the mid-eighth century found uniquely in Breton and Breton-derived manuscripts further flesh out the picture of a Breton Church directly influenced by Irish learning.

It is very likely that more evidence for the transmission of Irish computus material through Brittany will be discovered: the latest example is BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 123, an eleventh-century manuscript from Ripoll, Spain, which contains ultimately Irish scientific material that can be

[avance.irht.cnrs.fr/Manuscrits/Voir?idFicheManuscrit=583](http://avance.irht.cnrs.fr/Manuscrits/Voir?idFicheManuscrit=583)) accessed 21 January 2020) describe it as containing Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, but Bischoff's *Katalog*, I.21–2 (67), lists the contents as computus by Bede and annals, while Lambert, 'Les commentaires celtiques (2)', 204, gives *Recueil de traités de comput, parmi lesquels le Liber de Computo faussement attribué à Bède*, and annals, which he publishes. The dating of the manuscript is likewise disputed: for Dumville, it is a mid-ninth-century example of hybrid Insular-Caroline script ('Writers, Scribes and Readers', 52, note 14), Bischoff likewise places it in the ninth century, but Lambert suggests the tenth or eleventh: 'Les commentaires celtiques (2)', 204.

<sup>81</sup> Bisagni, 'The Newly-Discovered Irish and Breton Computistica', 32–3.

<sup>82</sup> Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, 5; Bischoff, *Katalog*, III.242 (5103).

<sup>83</sup> Chardonnes, 'Do Anglo-Saxons Dream?', 135, note 10.

<sup>84</sup> Warntjes, 'An Irish Eclipse Prediction'.

<sup>85</sup> As suggested by Bisagni, 'A New Citation', 122 note 23, on the basis of the presence of feast days of St Winwaloe in a calendar in the manuscript.

traced via Fleury and Brittany.<sup>86</sup> Further study of the important known manuscripts, particularly the glosses in Angers BM 477, has the potential to shed more light on their exact sources and the contacts these imply. Perhaps the most interesting contribution made to the picture so far by Angers 477 is the suggestion of three-way collaboration between Irish, Welsh and Breton scholars at a Continental centre. That there was more than one centre where such encounters could take place is suggested by the evidence of grammatical manuscripts.

### *Grammar*

In grammar, as in computus, there was a synergy between Insular and Continental scholarship in the ninth century: 'grammar . . . was a subject in which Irish scholars excelled and was the basis on which the Carolingian education reforms and biblical studies were built'.<sup>87</sup> A case in point of this confluence is the grammar by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel, composed *ca* 805.<sup>88</sup> Smaragdus, although he finished his career as abbot of the rich Lotharingian monastery of Saint-Mihiel, may have originated from the once-British enclave of Britoña in Spain; he knew the work of the Irish grammarian Clemens Scotus; and one manuscript of his grammar, Paris BnF Lat. 13029, of the mid-ninth century and of Corbie provenance, has Insular features and nineteen Breton glosses, indicating that within half a century of its composition, the text had been studied by Bretons, annotated and recopied.<sup>89</sup> (Bili, the hagiographer of St Machutus, drew on the verse preface to Smaragdus's grammar in his own prefatory hymn.<sup>90</sup>)

The *Institutiones* of Priscian is a grammatical text that yields explicit evidence of joint Irish and Breton study. As in the case of the manuscripts of computistical works (Angers BM 476 and 477), there is a pair of manuscripts of Priscian's *Institutiones*, Paris BnF Lat. 10289 and 10290, in very similar script, that have been preserved under consecutive catalogue numbers since early modern times, suggesting a shared provenance. All are believed to have been written in Brittany, or by Breton scribes.<sup>91</sup> In

<sup>86</sup> Bisagni, 'The Newly-Discovered Irish and Breton Computistica'.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 172.

<sup>88</sup> Smaragdus, *Liber in partibus Donati*, ed. Löfstedt, Holtz and Kibre.

<sup>89</sup> For Smaragdus' origin, see Dubreucq, 'La Grammaire', 123–6, based on a note in Madrid Real Academia de Historia 22, fol. 2r. For Paris BnF Lat. 13029, see Dubreucq, 'La Grammaire', 126–34; Holtz, 'La tradition ancienne', 174–8, 196–207; Kerlouégan, 'Landévennec à l'école', 318.

<sup>90</sup> Holtz, 'La tradition ancienne', 196.

<sup>91</sup> Bischoff, *Katalog*, III.159–60 (4622 x and 4623); Ó Cróinín, 'The Old Irish and Old English Glosses', 88 and references.



both cases one of the two manuscripts is heavily glossed in the vernacular while the other has only a sprinkling of glosses. In the case of the Priscian manuscripts, BnF Lat. 10290, of Echternach provenance, dating from the last quarter of the ninth century, is much the more heavily glossed and has been more intensively studied as a result. The first forty-seven of the 247 folios are glossed in Latin, Old Irish, Old Breton, Old Welsh and a mixture of the last three languages, in a very similar combination to that found in Angers BM 477.<sup>92</sup> The actual text of BnF Lat. 10290 is closely related to that in the monumental St Gall manuscript of Priscian, St Gall Stiftsbibliothek 904, written in Ireland (or perhaps more probably by an Irish scholar on the Continent) in the mid-ninth century and perhaps used by the circle of Sedulius Scottus.<sup>93</sup> The Irish glosses in BnF Lat. 10290 (most of them in the main hand) also correspond closely to the 'primary layer' of glossing in the St Gall manuscript.<sup>94</sup> Apparently copied from an Irish or Continental-Irish exemplar, BnF Lat. 10290 was then annotated by a number of Brittonic-language scribes. The sequence of events in the glossing process has not yet been fully worked out. Lambert's analysis suggests that there were five glossators in all. Some Latin glosses were derived from additional manuscripts, including probably the partner-manuscript, BnF Lat. 10289.<sup>95</sup> Other glossators added glosses in Old Irish, and Old Breton glosses translating or 'Bretonising' the Irish glosses, suggesting that they had either at least a rudimentary knowledge of Old Irish, or access to Irish-speakers. Yet other glosses seem to be 'Bretonised' versions of Old Welsh; one may even have gone through a three-stage process of language assimilation, being a Bretonisation of a Welsh version of an Irish gloss.<sup>96</sup> Individual scribes wrote glosses in more than one language, suggesting manuscript-sources for the glosses rather than original composition, including perhaps a manuscript of Priscian glossed in Old Welsh.<sup>97</sup> However, one scribe,

<sup>92</sup> Irish glosses on fols. 1–47 according to Lambert, 'Rencontres culturelles', 102; Breton glosses on fols. 1–42 and Irish glosses on fols. 1–43 according to Lemoine, 'Les méthodes d'enseignement', 46, 58. It has never been suggested that any of the glossators of BnF Lat. 10290 also worked on Angers 477.

<sup>93</sup> Dumville, *Three Men in a Boat*, 23–8, 34–6; Lemoine, 'Les méthodes d'enseignement', 62.

<sup>94</sup> Hofman and Moran, *St Gall Priscian Glosses*, digital edition at [www.stgallpriscian.ie/](http://www.stgallpriscian.ie/) (accessed 25 January 2017). See also Lambert, 'Rencontres culturelles', 102–3; Lemoine, 'Les méthodes d'enseignement', 47, 58, 61–3.

<sup>95</sup> Lemoine, 'Les méthodes d'enseignement', 46.

<sup>96</sup> For examples, see Lambert, 'Rencontres culturelles', 102–3; Lambert, *Manuscripts*, 28–35.

<sup>97</sup> Fleuriot believed that the glossators of BnF Lat. 10290 worked from an exemplar that was glossed in both Old Irish and Old Welsh; Lambert, that the source of the Welsh glosses was a separate manuscript: Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, 8; Lambert, 'Les gloses du manuscrit BN Lat. 10290', 210.

the 'Welsh corrector', added grammatically Welsh endings to words that an earlier glossator had left incomplete: this implies that a scribe whose first language was Welsh actually worked at the location (Echternach?) where BnF Lat. 10290 was produced.<sup>98</sup>

Another grammatical manuscript from Brittany with Insular connections is the mid-ninth-century fragment of *Ars de Verbo* by Eutyches in Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. F.4.32.<sup>99</sup> Eutyches's sixth-century treatise on the verb survives in thirty early medieval manuscripts with a markedly 'Celtic' transmission. The copy in Bodleian Auct. F.4.32 contains many Latin glosses, and fifty-five in Old Breton. The Latin glosses, and commentary on the text, seem to derive from the commentary on Eutyches by the Carolingian scholar Remigius of Auxerre (in Paris BnF Lat. 7499).<sup>100</sup> They also appear to be related to the glosses on Priscian in St Gall 904 and BnF Lat 10290. The text as reproduced in this manuscript shows clear evidence of Irish affiliations, for instance, the heading IN HONOMATE SUMITONANTIS ('in the name of the Most High Thunderer', i.e. God), ARS EUTICIS GRAMATICI. The Graecism *honomate* for *nomine* is found also in the Irish-derived computus manuscript Paris BnF Lat. 6400B.<sup>101</sup> The Bodleian Eutyches-fragment, then, is another item of educational material in Brittany deriving from an Irish milieu acclimatised in Carolingian Europe. However, not every grammatical text used in Brittany had Celtic connections: the *Ars Grammatica* by Alcuin was also copied and glossed there in the third quarter of the ninth century.<sup>102</sup>

### *Hisperica Famina*

The most curious literary products available in ninth-century Brittany that one might classify as 'educational' are the texts known as *Hisperica Famina*.<sup>103</sup> These are short narratives about everyday activities, presented in the most recherché Latin vocabulary possible: they have been interpreted as reflections of scholarly competition in a society (Ireland) where minute gradations of rank were extremely important, but another

<sup>98</sup> Lambert, 'Les gloses du manuscrit BN Lat. 10290', 179, 210; Lemoine, 'Les méthodes d'enseignement', 61.

<sup>99</sup> Facsimile edition: Hunt (ed.), *St Dunstan's Classbook*. A description of the Eutyches manuscript with references is found in Russell, *Reading Ovid*, 14.

<sup>100</sup> Jeudy, 'Les manuscrits'; Lemoine, 'Symptomes insulaires', 145.

<sup>101</sup> For more examples of this Graecism in Celtic manuscripts, see Bullough, 'The Educational Tradition', 327 note 45.

<sup>102</sup> Merseburg Domstiftsbibliothek 1.204; Bischoff, *Katalog*, II.185 (2765): four folios of Alcuin's *Ars Grammatica* containing Breton glosses contemporary with the main hand.

<sup>103</sup> Herren (ed. & transl.), *The Hisperica Famina*.

interpretation is that they are intentionally humorous parodies of classroom language exercises.<sup>104</sup> Most scholars believe that they originated in seventh-century Ireland.<sup>105</sup> The textual tradition, however, consists entirely of manuscripts glossed in Breton, or in one case written by a Breton-named scribe, Liosmonoc.<sup>106</sup> *Hisperica Famina* may in fact be Breton compositions;<sup>107</sup> however, if they are Irish, they achieved maximum 'take-up' by Bretons in the ninth and tenth centuries, attesting to strong Irish influence in Brittany. One may also note the use of 'hisperic' vocabulary in Bili's *Vita S. Machutis*, composed at Alet probably in the late 860s or early 870s.<sup>108</sup> Louis Lemoine suggested that since two of the *Hisperica Famina* manuscripts (Luxembourg Bibliothèque ducale 89, s.ix, and Paris BnF Lat. 11411, s.ix) have Echternach provenance, the texts themselves may have been composed at Echternach, where the evidence of the Priscian manuscript Paris BnF Lat. 10290 suggests that Irish, Welsh and Breton scribes worked, perhaps simultaneously.<sup>109</sup>

### Poetry

Direct contact between Brittany and Wales is attested in one of the most famous early medieval Welsh manuscripts, the 'Cambridge Juvenius' (Cambridge University Library Ff.4.42). This fourth-century Latin verse rendering of the Gospels was a popular school text everywhere in early medieval Europe. The probably mid-ninth-century manuscript from an unidentified centre in Wales, written by a scribe with an Irish name (Nuadu), was annotated over the following century by a number of different scribes whose hands and language mark them out as variously Welsh, Irish and – in the case of the scribe whom Bradshaw designated 'F' – Breton.<sup>110</sup> The hand of Scribe F has been described as remarkably similar to that of the main hand of Orléans BM 221, one of the Breton manuscripts of *CCH*, and the one vernacular gloss that he provided, *roenhol*, 'ancestral', may be a Breton (or Cornish) rather than a Welsh word-form, although this is debated.<sup>111</sup> One strand of the glossing in

<sup>104</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'Language and Society', 725–6.

<sup>105</sup> Love, 'Insular Latin', 129–30; but see also the discussion by Carey, 'The Obscurantists'.

<sup>106</sup> Lemoine, 'Note sur les *Hisperica Famina*', 219–20; Lapidge and Sharpe, *A Bibliography*, nos. 325–30; Herren, *The Hisperica Famina*, 7–11; Guillotel, 'Recherches', 25–6; Bischoff, 'Der Barberinus'.

<sup>107</sup> David Dumville has consistently urged this possibility: 'Writers, Scribes and Readers', 59; 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 88.

<sup>108</sup> Lemoine, 'Maniérisme et hispérisme'.

<sup>109</sup> Lemoine, 'Note sur les *Hisperica Famina*', 222–3; see also Stevenson, 'The Irish Contribution', 269–71.

<sup>110</sup> McKee, *The Cambridge Juvenius Manuscript*, 20–3; McKee, 'Scribes and Glosses', 9.

<sup>111</sup> McKee, *The Cambridge Juvenius Manuscript*, 549–50 and references.

Cambridge Ff.4.42 is exegetical and is derived from Hiberno-Latin biblical commentaries, especially *Liber Questionum in Evangeliiis*, and it is for this type of gloss that Scribe F is partly responsible; there is some independent evidence for the circulation of *Liber Questionum* in Brittany.<sup>112</sup> The Breton contributor to the Cambridge Juvenius clearly fitted into the continuum of Insular scholarship reflected in the manuscript's pages.

Ninth-century Bretons also read the two other best known Christian Latin poetic works, the *Carmen Paschale* of Caelius Sedulius (Orléans BM 302, in Insular script of the first half of the ninth century, with nine Old Breton glosses) and Arator's *De Actibus Apostolorum* (five leaves in the composite manuscript Brussels Bibliothèque Royale 5413–5422, again of the first half of the ninth century, with script reminiscent of that of Orléans BM 221).<sup>113</sup> In the Brussels manuscript the Arator text is bound together with a computus-text derived from seventh-century Ireland, as discussed earlier.

The most famous example of a poetic manuscript connected with early medieval Brittany is Berne Burgerbibliothek 167, in Caroline minuscule script, containing the complete works of Vergil with various prefatory pieces and running commentary, with fifty-seven Breton glosses and a few glosses in Old Irish or 'Bretonised' Old Irish. This is one of the manuscripts of the *Scholia Bernensia* commentaries on Vergil, represented most fully by Berne Burgerbibliothek 172, and also by Berne 165.<sup>114</sup> The manuscript was probably written outside Brittany, but was annotated by a Breton scholar or scholars with the help of a manuscript glossed in Irish.<sup>115</sup> By contrast, a Vergilian commentary in Paris BnF Lat. 11308 (s.ix) seems to contain Breton words poorly rendered into Irish by its glossator.<sup>116</sup> Breton and Irish commentators, then, were drawing on each other's work. The manuscript-evidence for Breton interest in commentaries on Vergil interestingly complements the heavy use of quotation from Vergil in ninth-century Breton hagiography. We should probably envisage authors like Wrdisten and Wrmonoc as being well versed in the

<sup>112</sup> The principal evidence is in Vatican City Vat. reg. Lat. 49, a probably tenth-century Breton homily collection known as the *Catechesis Celtica*: Wilmart (ed.), 'Catéchèses celtiques'; McNamara, 'Sources and Affiliations', 187–93; McNamara, 'The Affiliations and Origins'; *Liber Questionum*, ed. Rittmueller, 142–66; Rittmueller, 'MS Vat. Reg. Lat. 49 Reviewed'.

<sup>113</sup> Bischoff, *Katalog*, II.351 (3740); I.155 (719). For borrowings from these poetic texts in ninth-century Breton hagiography, see Kerlouégan, 'Citations... chrétiennes', and Wright, 'Knowledge of Christian Latin Poets'.

<sup>114</sup> Berne Burgerbibliothek 165 is classed as a Tours manuscript of s.ix<sup>2/4</sup> by Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.114 (541), but a Breton origin has been suggested: Ganz, 'Harley 3941', 35, note 25. For the text, see Hagen, *Scholia Bernensia*.

<sup>115</sup> Lambert, 'Les gloses celtiques', 127.

<sup>116</sup> On the commentary, see Daintree, 'Scholia', 22.

late antique and early medieval tradition of commentary on Vergil as well as the text itself.

## History

Early medieval Brittany apparently inherited the same foundational texts in history as did post-Roman Britain: the *Historia Adversum Paganos* by the fifth-century author Orosius, who wrote at Carthage but who may possibly have been a Briton,<sup>117</sup> and *De Excidio Britanniae* by the Briton Gildas, writing (according to the traditional dating) in the second quarter of the sixth century. These two texts seem to have reached Brittany from Celtic Britain. The late ninth-century saints' lives by Wrdisten and Wrmonoc of Landévennec draw on both, a particularly extensive quotation from Orosius occurring in Wrmonoc's *Vita Pauli Aureliani*.<sup>118</sup> Wrmonoc refers to Gildas's work as *Ormesta Britanniae*; some of the Breton manuscripts of Orosius bear the title *Ormesta Mundi*. (*Ormesta*, Welsh *gormes*, Breton *wormes*, translates as 'unlawful possession' – or perhaps 'prophecy').<sup>119</sup> Evidently, Breton scholars were alert to the common theme of barbarian invasion as God's punishment for sin that runs through both works, which Gildas adapted specifically to Britain.<sup>120</sup> Taken together, the two texts would have formed a coherent, self-contained view of Christian history and the place of the Britons in it.

One textual fragment of Gildas from Brittany has survived – Rheims BM 414, of the late ninth or early tenth century, in which two leaves of excerpts from Gildas's criticism of kings, introduced with the words *Gildasius arguens principes ait* ('Gildas, accusing rulers, says ...'), are appended to a copy of the *Prognosticum* by Julian of Toledo (ca 643–690), a treatise on the fate of the soul between death and the Last Judgement which forms a fitting companion-piece.<sup>121</sup> Of Orosius's history, there are eight manuscripts containing Breton glosses, dating from between the ninth and the twelfth centuries.<sup>122</sup> The earliest, Vatican City BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 296, s.ix, is credited in a colophon to Liosmonoc, who also wrote the 'A'-text of *Hisperica Famina* (Vatican City BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 81). The majority are of non-Breton origin and the glosses they

<sup>117</sup> Donnchadh Ó Corráin has made this suggestion, which might help to account for the strongly Insular transmission of Orosius's history: 'Orosius', 134.

<sup>118</sup> Wright, 'Knowledge of Christian Latin Poets', 175–82.

<sup>119</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, 296; Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions', 105–6, 116; Lambert, 'Gloses à Orose', 214. For the linguistic details, see also Anscombe, "'Ormesta'".

<sup>120</sup> Wright, 'Did Gildas Read Orosius?' <sup>121</sup> Larpi, 'A New Witness'.

<sup>122</sup> Lambert, *Manuscripts*, 26; Deuffic, 'La production manuscrite', 318, 320 (nos. 110, 121); Fleuriot, *Dictionnaire*, 5–7 (nos. 12, 18, 33, 35, 32).

contain have been reproduced mechanically, but some of them still give the text the Brittonic title *De Ormesta Mundi*. It seems that an important strand in the medieval text-history of this work passed through Brittany.<sup>123</sup>

An historical text that was available in Brittany by *ca* 1000, and possibly earlier, is the Welsh historical compilation *Historia Brittonum*: but, unlike Gildas and Orosius, the signs are that it reached Brittany through an Irish intermediary. First composed in North Wales in 829/30, it was extant in a variant version, the 'Chartres recension', in a Breton manuscript of the first half of the eleventh century, two leaves of which survived as part of Chartres BM 98, until it was destroyed in an air raid in 1944. The recorded readings of the manuscript include an Irish idiom rendered into Latin, suggesting that the text had been edited by a Gaelic-speaker.<sup>124</sup>

The Insular tradition of annalistic writing, which flourished in Ireland and reached a respectable level in pre-Norman Wales, is barely represented in Brittany: mere 'stubs' of annalistic activity appear, associated with computistic material, in the two Bedan manuscripts, Angers BM 476 and 477. It has been suggested that notices of a few early Insular and Breton events (dated 421–1056) forming a brief chronicle from medieval Mont-Saint-Michel derive from a contemporary Breton record, but the material looks more like a selection of events compiled retrospectively in the twelfth century or later.<sup>125</sup> Brittany seems to have fallen between the Insular and the Frankish schools of early medieval chronicling, and Breton scholars may have felt themselves to be adjunct to one or other of these.<sup>126</sup> The idea of a continental *Britannia* that needed chronicling as such, in terms of a foundational event like the coming of Christianity or

<sup>123</sup> For the glossed manuscripts of Orosius, see Lambert, 'Gloses à Orose', and Lambert, *Manuscripts*, 26–7. For the possibility (rejected) that a Breton collaborator might have been involved in creating the late ninth-century Old English translation of Orosius, see Russell, 'Revisiting the "Welsh Dictator"', 34, note 8.

<sup>124</sup> Wadden, 'The Frankish Table', 7–8; Dumville, 'An Irish Idiom', 183; Dumville, 'The English Element', 3.

<sup>125</sup> Avranches BM 213, fols. 173r–175v, available online at [www.unicaen.fr/bvmsm/ead.html?id=FR\\_UCBN\\_MSM\\_mss\\_av&c=FR\\_UCBN\\_MSM\\_mss\\_av\\_Avranches\\_BM\\_213](http://www.unicaen.fr/bvmsm/ead.html?id=FR_UCBN_MSM_mss_av&c=FR_UCBN_MSM_mss_av_Avranches_BM_213); *Aliud chronicon*, ed. Migne, cols. 1323–6. For comment see Delisle (ed.), *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, II.208, note 1; Keats-Rohan, 'Memoria, memorialization'. Molly Miller, 'Relative and Absolute', 174, note 1 and 'Date-Guessing and Pedigrees', 102–3, followed by David Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain', 182, note 42, argued that these annals' notice for 534 recording the death of a *Cavallonus rex fortissimus Maioris Britanniae* preserves an early Welsh annalistic obit for Cadwallon, father of Maelgwn of Gwynedd; but the notice may derive from Bede's death-date for the second Cadwallon of Gwynedd in 634, and have been misplaced by a century (easily done by a copyist if using a source that already contained AD dating).

<sup>126</sup> For early medieval chronicling in the Insular world and in Francia, see Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time*, 189–92, 204–21, 237–49.

a centralising political leadership, may, as already suggested, not have arisen until the ninth century, and then only weakly.

### **Ireland, Wales and Brittany – A ‘Privileged Circulation’?**

Unfortunately we do not know how many pieces may be missing from a full picture of the literate culture of ninth-century Brittany, the abilities and priorities of its scholars, and the relative importance of Insular and Continental influences. Nor can we be sure which of the former were due to Brittany’s ancestral links with the Atlantic Archipelago and which already belonged to the Carolingian world of learning. However, the manuscript record does at least bring home the reality of multiple and productive contacts between literate Breton, Welsh and Irish-speakers. What it cannot tell us is whether the manuscripts that have survived and been identified are typical of what once existed. If they are typical, one might suggest that their weighting – towards Scripture, canon law and the definition of the Church hierarchy, the technicalities of grammar and computus, and the encyclopaedia – reveals a hunger for the basic building blocks of order on the part of a Church which stood convicted of a chaotic and ‘barely Christian’ past.<sup>127</sup> However, it may simply be that technical, legal and biblical manuscripts are the most likely to reveal the origins of their users, through glosses, decoration, calendars and colophons.

A different side of Breton learning may be revealed in such a manuscript as Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 18961, fols. 25r–46v (s.ix<sup>2</sup>), which Bischoff identified as Breton on the basis of the similarity of its script to that of a Landévennec gospel book.<sup>128</sup> It contains a philosophical florilegium assembled in the circle of Alcuin: excerpts from Boethius, Augustine and others, concentrating on proofs for the existence of God. The contents are substantially the same as those of another manuscript now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6407, which was written in Verona ca 800 under the aegis of one of Alcuin’s pupils, Archdeacon Pacificus. However, Clm 18961 contains unique items including an excerpt from *Quaestionum Naturalium Libri VIII* by Seneca, an extremely rare classical text which is known to have been available in ninth-century Reichenau, but whose medieval transmission is not otherwise attested until the twelfth century. The implication is that at least one Breton had access to texts produced by the ‘inner circle’ of the

<sup>127</sup> Kitzinger, ‘Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, 960’, 38–9; compare C. A. Jones, ‘The Book of the Liturgy’.

<sup>128</sup> Bischoff, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen*, I.161–2.



Carolingian Renaissance, perhaps at a centre known for its Insular contacts.<sup>129</sup>

What is clear is that Bretons must have been both proactive and selective in seeking out a variety of sources of written culture, both Insular and Continental. References by modern historians to Brittany 'sitting astride' an established route between Ireland and the Continent, 'remaining a highway' by way of which texts 'reached' Breton scholars, or, indeed, to Carolingian scholarship 'sweeping' into Brittany in the course of the ninth century, give Breton scholars, by implication, far too passive a role.<sup>130</sup> As outlined in [Chapter 2](#), travellers from Ireland to Europe had no particular reason to travel through Brittany after the mid-seventh century. Rather than Irish manuscripts in Breton use being the chance products of geographical convenience, it seems likelier that some Breton churchmen (including the leadership at Landévennec) worked hard to forge contacts with Continental Irish centres, independently of political allegiances, and that the texts we find copied and used by Bretons were chosen to suit their own needs.

As for the preferred geographical locations of contact, Reichenau appears several times, in the evidence of BL Royal 5.E.XIII, Munich Clm 18961, and the computus-glosses. (There may have been a pre-existing link between Reichenau and North Wales, to judge by the use of the 'Frankish Table of Nations' in *HB*). Computus-glosses point also to Soissons or another centre in northern Francia; the two Priscian manuscripts and *Hisperica Famina*, to Echternach; and the reception of *CCH*, possibly to Corbie or Cambrai, centres where the text was also copied and used at a very early stage in its Continental transmission. This would fit with the hagiographical evidence that it was in Picardy, in the former Roman Belgic Gaul, if anywhere, that Bretons had ecclesiastical influence in the seventh century (see [Chapter 2](#)). With regard to the Soissons connection, we recall that Marcus, the British hermit mentioned by Heiric of Auxerre, was based at Soissons.<sup>131</sup>

The manuscript-evidence for direct contact between Brittany and Wales in and before the ninth century is rather stronger than that for direct Brittany-Ireland contact: it includes, for instance, the transmission of the work of Gildas in Brittany, the Breton gloss in the Cambridge Juvenius manuscript, and possibly a trace of Breton orthography in

<sup>129</sup> Bischoff, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen*, I.161, II.228; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 169, note 89; Dumville, 'Some British Aspects', 22; Ineichen-Eder, 'Theologisches und philosophisches Lehrmaterial'.

<sup>130</sup> Dumville, 'Writers, Scribes and Readers', 57; Dumville, 'Some British Aspects', 21–2; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 169.

<sup>131</sup> Heiric of Auxerre, *Miracula Sancti Germani*, II.VIII.80–82, ed. Migne, cols. 1245–6.

a gloss to the ninth-century Welsh manuscript of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* in Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. F.4.32.<sup>132</sup> However, the evidence of glossed manuscripts suggests that intellectually both Welsh and Breton scholars followed an Irish lead, imitating the Irish tradition of vernacular glossing and in some cases directly translating Irish glosses. At Landévennec, at Alet and at Rhuys, the combined evidence of hagiography and manuscripts underlines the importance of the Irish contribution: we notice the honoured role given to St Patrick in Wrdesten's *Vita Winwaloei*, and to Brendan in the Lives of Machutus. We should probably envisage that contact between Brittany, the Insular Brittonic regions and Ireland had been continuous throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, but that the end of the Easter controversy (in 768), followed by the Carolingian Renaissance and Carolingian dominance in Brittany, acted as a stimulus to this contact, catching it up into a wider 'magnetic field' of influences. The patronage of the newly successful dynasty of Merfyn Frych in Gwynedd, with its Manx origins, may have been able to palliate the impact of escalating Viking raids on Irish scholars; in turn, Irish tutelage may have helped to ease Welsh and Breton scholars' passage into the Carolingian world of learning.<sup>133</sup>

Given the uncertainties of dating key Breton manuscripts, it is impossible to trace precisely the chronological development of Breton intellectual life and external contacts during the ninth and early tenth centuries. However, on the available evidence this period was one of rapid progress, by the end of which 'Brittany had become one of the most active book-producing areas of the now collapsing Carolingian empire' and its leading scholars were abreast of the latest intellectual trends.<sup>134</sup> Prejudice against Britons had abated, as suggested by the respect with which Heiric of Auxerre (d. 876) mentioned his Welsh acquaintance Marcus.<sup>135</sup> One source that may shed light on this progress is a book-list, in tenth- or eleventh-century Caroline script, on a single leaf which now forms part of the composite manuscript Paris Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 3340.<sup>136</sup> It is headed *Incipit brevis de divinis libris Sancti Salvatoris atque Sancti Gildasii*: it apparently comes from the abbey of the Saviour and St Gildas at Déols, near Bourges, where the monks of Rhuys and Locminé found refuge from the Vikings

<sup>132</sup> Russell, *Reading Ovid*, 80.

<sup>133</sup> It has been suggested that two of the poems of Sedulius Scottus (fl. 840–60, at Liège) honoured members of Merfyn's dynasty: Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 248; MWG, 70.

<sup>134</sup> Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 200.

<sup>135</sup> On Heiric's close connection with John Scotus Eriugena, see Marenbon, *From the Circle*, 113–5.

<sup>136</sup> Valéry, 'La bibliothèque', 37–8.

in the 920s.<sup>137</sup> It lists 113 items, a respectable library even by Carolingian standards.<sup>138</sup> Some at least of the books on the list, notably the 'British/Breton antiphonaries', must have originated at one of the Breton monastic houses before the Viking exodus. The discernible contents agree remarkably well with manuscript-evidence on the texts available in Brittany, but there is more material by Carolingian authors; more biblical exegesis, both patristic and anonymous; a quantity of mainstream hagiography; *Gesta Franchorum* (no. 6) and *Gesta Anglorum* (no. 22), perhaps the histories of Gregory of Tours and Bede; several classical Latin texts; and, as the icing on the cake, the *Periphyseon* by the greatest of Irish *peregrini*, John Scotus Eriugena (d. 877), and the commentary on Martianus Capella by his pupil Remigius of Auxerre (d. 908). The range of material listed is typical of a Carolingian library, although the apparently random order contrasts with well-organised surviving Carolingian lists.<sup>139</sup>

If this library was partly assembled by Daoc, the abbot of Rhuys who led the community to exile at Déols in the second decade of the tenth century, this would fit with another item of evidence, a note copied into Leiden Voss Lat. O15, a compilation of classical and early medieval writings made by Ademar of Chabannes (988–ca 1034).<sup>140</sup> The note is a *grammaticorum diadache* or list of important scholars from master to pupil, beginning with Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and ending with the Carolingian school of Auxerre.<sup>141</sup> After Eriugena, Heiric and Remigius, it includes several of their successors including 'Daoch the Briton, who illuminated all Gaul with the rays of doctrine; Ambrosius also, the teacher of the auditor Israel ...'<sup>142</sup> Ambrosius, with some of the other names on the list, remains unidentified, but Daoch may be none other than Daoc of Rhuys, which would explain the presence of works by Eriugena and Remigius in the Saint-Gildas booklist.<sup>143</sup>

The 'Israel' of Ademar's list may be Israel 'the Grammarian', whom Flodoard of Rheims called *Israel Britto*; Michael Lapidge has argued that he was a Breton who worked alongside Irish scholars in King Æthelstan's

<sup>137</sup> Lot, *Mélanges*, 241–3; Valéry, 'La bibliothèque', 31–4.

<sup>138</sup> The ninth-century library-catalogues of Reichenau, St Gall and Saint-Riquier, all important centres of Carolingian scholarship, listed 415, 264 and 256 codices, respectively: McKitterick, *The Carolingians*, 176–83.

<sup>139</sup> McKitterick, *The Carolingians*, 175–96.

<sup>140</sup> <http://hagiohistoriographiemedievale.blogspot.co.uk> (accessed 27 July 2017).

<sup>141</sup> University of Leiden online catalogue, <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/ossiani-latini/vlo-015-liber-manualis> (accessed 28 July 2017).

<sup>142</sup> Daoch Brittigena, qui omnes Gallias doctrinae suae radiis inlustrarunt; Ambrosius quoque, Hisraelis praeceptor auditoris ...' Ed. Delisle, 'Manuscripts originaux', 312.

<sup>143</sup> Valéry, 'La bibliothèque', 50–1, 82, 84.

Wessex, moved to Trier *ca* 940 as tutor to Bruno, later archbishop of Cologne, and produced a number of grammatical and philosophical writings.<sup>144</sup> He may also have been the author of the 'Hisperic Latin' poems *Rubisca* and *Adelphus Adelpha Meter*; this fits with attested Breton interest in the *Hisperica Famina*. At its climax, apparently, Breton learning stayed close to its Irish models.

The manuscript-evidence for the increasing participation of Bretons in the intellectual life of Europe contradicts the near-silence of narrative and administrative sources. Dispersal of Breton scholars and manuscripts in Francia was not merely a result of Viking terror. Breton manuscripts such as Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42 and the exemplar of Cambridge Corpus Christi College 279 were available for copying at Frankish centres (Corbie and Tours, respectively) well before the Viking crisis of 919–936. The relations of Brittany with Fleury, in particular, may have been long-term and complex. As Marco Mostert points out, at least fifteen Breton manuscripts are traceable to Fleury's early medieval library, most of them dating from the ninth century and only one from the tenth. Bernhard Bischoff even suggested that Breton influence might have contributed 'Celtic' features to the script of pre-ninth-century manuscripts written at Fleury, such as the grammatical collection Berne Burgerbibliothek 207 (s.viii<sup>ex</sup>).<sup>145</sup> The first Bretons at Fleury must have been colleagues rather than refugees.

However, only some of the centres of Breton activity seen in manuscript-evidence – particularly the Loire Valley, and Fleury – were later used as points of retreat for Breton clergy and their relics during the Viking crisis. Possible reasons include the difficulties of travel and the reduced possibilities of patronage during a time of political disintegration; and, bound up with this, the transformation in the role of Irish clerics on the Continent during the tenth century. From the inspirational wandering ascetic of the seventh century, through the court scholar of the ninth, the image of the Irish expatriate changed in the tenth to that of an exemplary Benedictine monk, whose exotic origin suggested a long (but remote and unthreatening) tradition of holiness.<sup>146</sup> Although, as will be seen, Irish influence was not entirely lacking in Breton-Latin culture of the eleventh century, its role was greatly reduced amid the flood of French

<sup>144</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, 29, ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, *The Annals*, 46; Lapidge, 'Israel the Grammarian', 98. Wood, 'A Carolingian Scholar', regards the evidence for Israel being a Breton as insufficient. For Israel's career and writings, see also Jeaneau, 'Pour le dossier'; Heikkinen, 'Poet, Scholar, Trickster'; Stevenson, '*Rubisca*'; Howlett, '*Rubisca*'; Howlett, 'Five Experiments'.

<sup>145</sup> Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 90.

<sup>146</sup> Picard, 'The Cult', 229; Dumville, 'St Cathroe', 185–8; Bourguès, 'Les origines irlandaises', 170; Ó Riain, 'Saint Ronan', 159.

influences penetrating Brittany, and this must be partly due to the reduction of Latin scholarship in Ireland itself in the post-Viking period.<sup>147</sup> Instead, during the Viking crisis, the English kingdom came to play a temporary, but significant role in the transmission of Breton manuscript culture.

### England: Manuscripts and Scholarship

The political background to the blossoming of relations between Brittany and the English kingdom will be outlined in [Chapter 5](#). The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the evidence of manuscripts for this new phase of Insular-Breton relations. About twenty-five manuscripts survive that were certainly or probably written in Brittany and had arrived in England before the end of the eleventh century. No definitive list has been produced, but they ‘constitute more than a quarter of the foreign books known to have been imported into England in the First Viking-Age, by far the largest single regional group among these imports’, and they include some of the earliest books to be imported after the ninth-century hiatus in Anglo-Latin learning.<sup>148</sup> David Dumville has argued that the arrival of Breton manuscripts in England began in the time of King Alfred as an organised attempt by the English Church to re-equip itself with basic Christian texts in the wake of England’s Viking crisis by commissioning them from Breton scriptoria, and progressed to a less organised arrival of manuscripts together with refugee clergy as Brittany underwent its own crisis from 919 onwards.<sup>149</sup> The movement came to an end shortly after Alan II became duke of Brittany in 936, and was followed by a brief period of ‘reverse’ influence of Anglo-Saxon manuscript production in Brittany.

Some manuscripts can be linked directly to the royal court or to particular church leaders. Two ninth-century Breton gospel books, London BL Cotton Otho B.IX and BL Royal 1.A.XVIII, were given by King Æthelstan to Chester-le-Street and St Augustine’s, Canterbury, respectively; another, Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. D.2.16, the ‘Leofric Gospels’, in Exeter in the eleventh century, was probably likewise donated by Æthelstan. The ‘Bodmin Gospels’ manuscript, London BL Add. 9381, written in Brittany around 900 and enshrined at St Petroc’s church in Cornwall by the second half of the tenth century, may have arrived via a more direct route between Brittany and Cornwall, but given that both the ‘Bodmin’ and the ‘Leofric’

<sup>147</sup> Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints’ Lives*, 19–24; Herbert, ‘Latin and Vernacular Hagiography’, 339–40.

<sup>148</sup> Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 201; Ortenberg, *The English Church*, 240; McKee, ‘The Circulation’.

<sup>149</sup> Dumville, *Liturgy*, 112–14.

Gospels are likely to have been written at Landévennec, their donation may possibly be connected.<sup>150</sup> Two manuscripts of *CCH*, London BL Cotton Otho E.XIII and Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42, can be associated with Archbishops Oda and Dunstan of Canterbury (941–58 and 961–88).<sup>151</sup> Thus, some manuscript-imports at least were socially prestigious. Intellectually, however, they seem to have been rather basic. Gospel books and liturgical manuscripts predominated; the only others identified were of canon law, with at least one grammar (the Eutyches section of Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. F.4.32). This selection seems to have been based on what was required in England rather than on what Brittany had to offer. Throughout the tenth century, the preferences of English churchmen in building their libraries from abroad were for ‘a restricted selection of devotional and practical religious literature’.<sup>152</sup> This selective uptake may have contributed to our rather limited picture of the intellectual breadth of Breton learning, outlined in this chapter; it may also cast doubt on the idea that Breton churchmen in general were reduced to such straits that they had to sell their most prized books cheap to the first comers.<sup>153</sup>

Breton script, as such, cannot be shown definitely to have influenced the evolution of script in tenth-century England, that is, the creation successively of Anglo-Saxon ‘square’ minuscule and of Anglo-Caroline.<sup>154</sup> The most that can be said is that Breton Caroline offered ‘a model for the adaptation of Caroline script to an Insular aesthetic which might have informed the approach seen in [Anglo-Caroline] Style II’: the less formal and uniform type of Anglo-Caroline script written at Glastonbury and Canterbury, centres associated with Dunstan.<sup>155</sup> Dunstan’s influence may also have been instrumental in introducing the ‘Breton style’ of musical notation into England.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>150</sup> British Library online catalogue entry, [www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8620&CollID=27&NStart=9381](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8620&CollID=27&NStart=9381). The catalogue-entry gives art-historical grounds, and Lemoine, ‘Autour du scriptorium’, textual grounds for associating the manuscript with Landévennec.

<sup>151</sup> Keynes, ‘King Athelstan’s Books’, 165–79; Ambrose, ‘The *Collectio*’, 110–3.

<sup>152</sup> Gameson, ‘The Circulation’, 350.

<sup>153</sup> Some generalisations about the plight of the Breton clergy have been based on the letter of Radbod to Æthelstan (see Chapter 5): ‘increasing destitution and despair’, Dumville, *Liturgy*, 113; ‘starving Breton exiles in Francia had to sell their books to survive’, McKee, ‘The Circulation’, 340.

<sup>154</sup> Dumville, ‘English Square Minuscule’; further discussion in Voth, ‘Irish Pilgrims’, 117–9, 127–32.

<sup>155</sup> Rushforth, ‘English Caroline Minuscule’, 201–3.

<sup>156</sup> Rankin, ‘Some Reflections’, 346–8. See also Hartzell, ‘A Fragment’, for a late tenth-century single leaf possibly from St Augustine’s, Canterbury with a sequence of chants similar to those in a group of Breton liturgical manuscripts. Rankin, ‘Music Books’, 491, gives further examples. For a general survey of ‘Breton’ notation and its sources, see Rankin, *Writing Sounds*, 105–11, superseding Huglo, ‘La domaine’.

Although restricted in scope, the books and clergy that came from Brittany can be shown to have affected the direction of English intellectual life and ecclesiastical organisation.<sup>157</sup> Three Breton manuscripts containing all or parts of *CCH* were in England by the tenth or eleventh centuries: London BL Cotton Otho E.XIII (containing the A-text, with additions); Oxford Bodleian Library Hatton 42 (containing the B-text); and London BL Royal 5.E.XIII (containing excerpts from an unidentified version).<sup>158</sup> There was also Cambridge Corpus Christi College 279, a Tours manuscript copied from a Breton exemplar; and a tenth-century bifolium fragment reused in a binding, London Lambeth Palace Library 1231, containing part of *CCH*, but not certainly Breton.<sup>159</sup> Cotton Otho E. XIII has a tenth- or eleventh-century St Augustine's, Canterbury provenance, and may have been the manuscript of *CCH* that was used by Archbishop Oda of Canterbury in compiling his *Constitutiones*, a basic blueprint for church reform, in 942 × 946.<sup>160</sup> Hatton 42 likewise sojourned at Canterbury, at Christ Church, ca 1000. Soon afterwards it was at Worcester where it was used and annotated by Wulfstan (bishop of Worcester 1002–16, and archbishop of York 1002–23); an avid legal researcher, he included excerpts from its texts of *CCH*, *Excerpta de Libris Romanorum et Francorum* and other items in his 'Handbook', Cambridge Corpus Christi College 265.<sup>161</sup> London BL Royal 5.E.XIII and Corpus Christi College 279 were also at Worcester during the Middle Ages.<sup>162</sup> It may have been from one of these manuscripts (or a copy) that the text of *ELRF* reached Wales, where, in the mid-thirteenth century, some of its rulings were incorporated into redaction 'B' of the Latin text of the Welsh laws.<sup>163</sup>

Not only *CCH* but the paralegal and penitential texts that travelled in the same manuscripts had an impact in later Anglo-Saxon England. The earliest penitential in Old English, the tenth-century *Scriftboc* in Cambridge Corpus Christi College 190, made use of the 'Bigotian Penitential' found exclusively in the Breton manuscripts Paris BnF Lat. 3182 and Cambrai BM 625; two eleventh-century English manuscripts,

<sup>157</sup> Billett, *The Divine Office*, 156.

<sup>158</sup> Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 361 (283–4); 629 (479–80); 459 (378–9). For BL Royal 5.E.XIII and its contents, see Ambrose, 'The Codicology'; Gneuss and Lapidge, no. 459 (378–9); Petittmengin, 'La compilation', 625.

<sup>159</sup> Simpson, 'Ireland, Tours and Brittany'; Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 520; Dumville, 'Ireland, Brittany and England', 91.

<sup>160</sup> Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 184; Ambrose, 'The Collectio', 107–11; Whitelock, Brett and Brooke (eds.), *Councils and Synods*, 67–74.

<sup>161</sup> Ker, 'The Handwriting', 328–9; Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan', 196–203; Cross and Hamer (eds.), *Wulfstan's Canon Law Collection*, 23, 33.

<sup>162</sup> Flechner, 'Paschasius', 415 and note 37.

<sup>163</sup> Emanuel, *The Latin Texts*, 13, 20–1, 188–90; Owen, 'The *Excerpta*'.



Oxford Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 482 and Brussels Bibliothèque Royale 8558–63, contain Old English translations of the *Iudicia Theodori* found in Paris BnF Lat. 3182 and BnF Lat. 12021. The implication is that these texts came to England in the tenth century, probably from Brittany, although there are no surviving English-provenance manuscripts of the Latin texts themselves.<sup>164</sup> Clearly, the English Church, trying to rebuild itself after the destruction of the ninth century, found practical value in the Irish canon collections: these had been created to lay a legal and jurisdictional foundation for a Church that, like the English Church, lacked a Roman administrative legacy. The English were able to obtain these texts in their complete forms from Brittany, another region that had found them useful during its own crisis of ecclesiastical authority, in the ninth century.

*CCH* had also been an influence on the *Liber Officialis* of Amalarius of Metz (d. ca 850), a work that provides one of the most pleasing illustrations of Anglo-Breton collaboration in the tenth century. The *Liber Officialis* was a treatise on all aspects of Christian liturgy; its section on the seven grades of holy orders was drawn ultimately from *CCH*.<sup>165</sup> Disseminated widely in Carolingian Europe, it was edited into a condensed, two-book form, known as the *Retractatio Prima*, probably in Brittany in the second half of the ninth century. A Breton manuscript of this edition survives as Paris BnF nouv. acq. lat. 1983 (ca 900). The *Retractatio Prima* was the first version of Amalarius to be transmitted to England, no later than the 920s; there are two good-quality English manuscripts of it dating from the reign of Æthelstan (Boulogne-sur-Mer BM 82 and Cambridge Trinity College B.11.2). As if to repay a debt, an English manuscript was provided as the exemplar of a copy of Amalarius (Cambridge Corpus Christi College 192) made at Landévennec in 952, according to its colophon.<sup>166</sup>

A possible, though disputed, aspect of Breton influence in tenth-century England is the revival of the ‘hermeneutic’ style of Latin composition, characterised by Graecisms, archaisms, generally arcane vocabulary, and convoluted word order. ‘In England in the tenth century virtually every Latin author whose works have survived is affected by this stylistic tendency’; it was also a feature of royal charters from the

<sup>164</sup> Frantzen, ‘The Tradition’, 40–4, 50–2. Note, however, that in Frantzen’s later reworking of this article in *The Literature*, he omitted any reference to the Bigotian Penitential or *Iudicia Theodori* as sources for English penitentials, leaving it unclear whether he had changed his mind on the point or was simply abbreviating his remarks.

<sup>165</sup> Ambrose, ‘The *Collectio*’, 108; Reynolds, ‘Unity and Diversity’, 131–2.

<sup>166</sup> The stages of this process are analysed by Dumville, ‘L’écriture’, ‘Breton and English’, and ‘The English Element’.

reign of Æthelstan onwards, and some specific items of vocabulary used in charters from 928 to 937 are found also in *Hisperica Famina* and the poems ascribed to the 'Breton' Israel the Grammarian.<sup>167</sup> Michael Lapidge has cautioned against regarding the use of rare words and Graecisms too narrowly as 'hisperic' or peculiarly Celtic.<sup>168</sup> However, there are indications that Bretons promoted the trend. Their example may have been instrumental in its adoption in England, even before the monastic reform movement of the mid-tenth century brought English church leaders into close contact with Fleury and other Continental centres where they had access to a range of hermeneutic texts.

The English court was evidently attempting to emulate the scholarly patronage of the Carolingian court at its height – and to compensate for the demise of the latter. In the case of the English transmission of 'Celtic' manuscripts, as with Continental instances, the powerful attractive effect of the English court and Church may have worked to bring Celtic-speaking scholars into closer contact with one another. Donald Bullough drew attention to a group of manuscripts associated with Dunstan (d. 988), abbot and reformer of Glastonbury and successively bishop of Worcester and London and archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>169</sup> Dunstan almost certainly acquired the manuscript of Eutyches' *Ars de Verbo* from Brittany which was at some stage assembled with Welsh manuscript-units into Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. F.4.32, 'St Dunstan's Class-Book'.<sup>170</sup> A mid-tenth-century copy of *Expositio in Regulam S. Benedicti* by Smaragdus, Cambridge University Library Ee.2.4, has annotations in Dunstan's hand; it was copied from a Continental exemplar, but has Insular abbreviations and spellings and Welsh or Cornish script features introduced by the scribe. Vatican City BAV Lat. 3363 is a mid-ninth-century manuscript of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* written in the Loire Valley, perhaps at Fleury; by the middle of the tenth century it was in the possession of Dunstan, and in between it had acquired a gloss written in a Caroline hand in what could be either Cornish or Breton: *ud rocashaas* 'it has hated', translating *perosa*.<sup>171</sup> The two Breton or Breton-derived canon-law manuscripts, Bodleian Hatton 42 and Cambridge Corpus Christi College 279,

<sup>167</sup> Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style', 73, 99–101; Stevenson, 'The Irish Contribution', 269–72; Bullough, 'The Educational Tradition', 308; Lapidge, 'Israel the Grammarian', 105.

<sup>168</sup> Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style', 72–6.

<sup>169</sup> Bullough, 'The Educational Tradition', 306–7. The same group of manuscripts is discussed by Voth, 'Irish Pilgrims', 127–32.

<sup>170</sup> [www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/haywardp/hist424/seminars/Auct\\_F.4.32.htm](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/haywardp/hist424/seminars/Auct_F.4.32.htm) (accessed 29 January 2017); Lemoine, 'Symptomes insulaires'. Bischoff, *Katalog*, II.358 (3774); Deuffic, 'La production manuscrite', 307 (no. 68).

<sup>171</sup> Sims-Williams, 'A New Brittonic Gloss'.

have both Canterbury and Worcester connections and their acquisition should perhaps be associated with Dunstan. Meanwhile, the 'Cambridge Juvenius', Cambridge University Library Ff.4.42 (s.ix), was annotated – apparently – at Worcester in the early eleventh century.<sup>172</sup> At Worcester, too, was probably compiled the Latin glossary in BL Harley 3376 (s.xi), which contains a quantity of obscure Hiberno-Latin vocabulary and has two Breton or possibly Cornish glosses (*guohioc* and *petellerion*), suggesting a Breton exemplar for some of its material.<sup>173</sup> Two more Brittonic manuscripts that reached Canterbury (St Augustine's) in the tenth or eleventh century from Cornwall and Wales, respectively, are Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 572 and Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 153 (the 'Corpus Martianus Capella').<sup>174</sup> It is too simple to associate the collection of all these manuscripts with Dunstan himself, but he may stand as an example for more widespread activity of this kind. If Dunstan was really collecting books, and scholarly inspiration, from both Welsh and Breton sources – and possibly Irish ones too, since Glastonbury was already noted as a resort for Irish pilgrims in the 930s – was he making use of a network of contacts that already existed, as implied by manuscripts glossed by Irish-, Welsh- and Breton-speakers?<sup>175</sup> Or was he fostering such contact through patronage and purchasing power? Either or both may be true.

The distinctive manuscript-culture of ninth- and tenth-century Brittany did not long outlast the return of the Breton leadership from its Viking exile in the mid-tenth century. The practice of vernacular glossing faded: the few Breton glosses in post-tenth-century manuscripts are 'fossils' mechanically copied from earlier exemplars. Without active glossing, and with the abandonment of the Insular system of abbreviations, the major diagnostic features for Breton manuscripts disappear. Brittany never adopted a version of the 'Welsh reformed minuscule' script or 'Late Celtic' abbreviations.<sup>176</sup> Very few manuscripts written in Brittany between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, other than charter-collections, have been identified; no scholar has argued that any distinctively Breton features survived in its Latinate manuscript-culture.<sup>177</sup> Even though there were to be further phases of elite cultural

<sup>172</sup> Bishop, 'The Corpus Martianus Capella', 258; McKee, 'Scribes and Glosses', 20.

<sup>173</sup> Stevenson, 'The Irish Contribution', 277.

<sup>174</sup> Dumville, *Liturgy*, 116–7; Bishop, 'The Corpus Martianus Capella', 257–75; O'Sullivan, 'The Corpus Martianus Capella', 36–7.

<sup>175</sup> McKee, 'The Circulation', 341.

<sup>176</sup> Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule', 160 and references; McKee, 'Script in Wales', 169–70.

<sup>177</sup> Barret, 'Le manuscrit', and Vergnolle, 'De Jumièges à Landévennec', describing the mid-eleventh-century Cartulary of Landévennec, note its eclecticism in script and decoration.

contact with the Atlantic Archipelago, these cease to be physically identifiable through the medium of contemporary manuscripts.<sup>178</sup> It was, arguably, the ability of the Carolingian monarchy to create a highly connective scholarly environment in which varied local traditions could contribute and be preserved – followed by the similar but smaller-scale achievement of the first kings of a newly united English kingdom – that afforded modern scholarship this unique window on the interactions of Brittany with the Atlantic Archipelago.

<sup>178</sup> Dumville, 'Brittany', 153.

## 5 From Invasion to Conquest: Brittany and Its History, 919–1066

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### Political Background

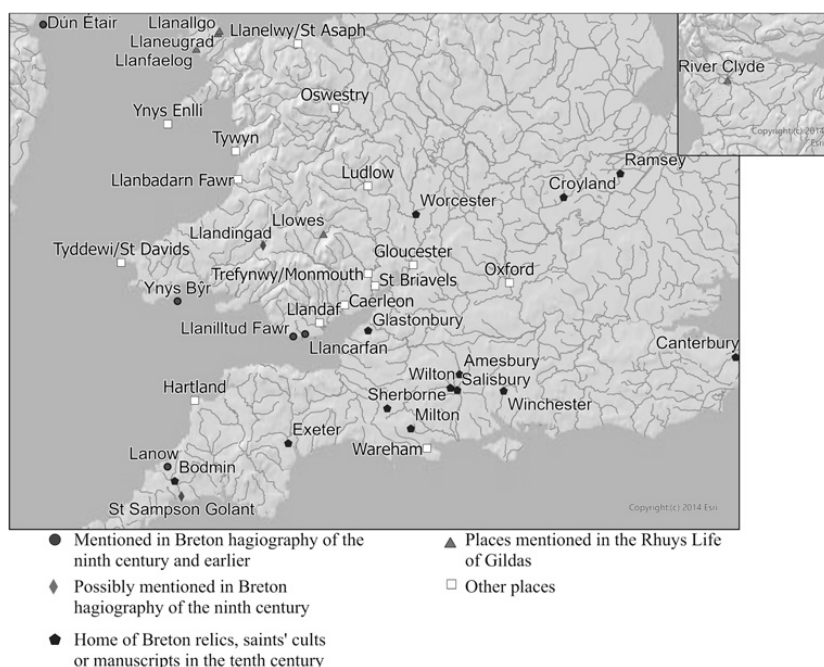
#### *Brittany and England*

The late ninth century saw a change in Brittany's relations with the Atlantic Archipelago, in the shape of a revival of contact with lowland Britain. For the first time since the end of the Western Roman Empire, Brittany's elite began to interact visibly with the region's geographically closest points of contact in Wessex – Winchester, Salisbury and Exeter. Breton manuscripts appear in English libraries, Breton relics at West Saxon churches, and Breton saints in West Saxon calendars, litanies and prayers (Map 5.1).<sup>1</sup> As David Dumville notes, 'relations between Wessex and Brittany seem to have been opened at a time when both kingdoms had been contending successfully against the Vikings and both were led by kings, Alfred (871–899) and Alan (888–907), who were later to be known as "the Great"'.<sup>2</sup> For West Saxon rulers, it was an impetus to form a Christian alliance against the pagan invader, and the Britons played a pivotal role in this scheme. In Wales, the situation was initially complicated: southern kings turned to Alfred, whereas the expansionist Anarawd ap Rhodri of Gwynedd allied with the Vikings of Northumbria. Eventually Anarawd rejected his Viking associates and submitted to Alfred, enabling the Welsh and English to present a united front against various Scandinavian armies. At the battle of Buttington, Powys (893), this alliance enjoyed success against the Viking force of Hásteinn, who had previously campaigned in Brittany.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, one pressing reason for Alfred and his successors to bring Brittany into his sphere of influence was that the same Viking fleets were active on both sides of the Channel. The aspiration to include the Bretons in this grand anti-Viking alliance may

<sup>1</sup> Dumville, *Wessex and England*, 154–8, 200–1; Dumville, 'Writers, Scribes and Readers', 62.

<sup>2</sup> Dumville, *Liturgy*, 112.

<sup>3</sup> Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, 80, ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 66–7; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS A, ed. Bately, 57. Anarawd's submission is placed pre-Buttington in *WAB*, 493–6. For Hásteinn's career in Brittany, see Price, *The Vikings*, 32–7; Cassard, *Le siècle*, 26, 35.



Map 5.1 Places in Britain and Ireland with early medieval connections to Brittany

explain why certain *Armorici* were included in a list of people who had willingly submitted to Alfred.<sup>4</sup> Another reason for Alfred's interest in Brittany was that the literate resources of the Celtic regions could be used to help repair England's damaged culture. Breton manuscripts probably arrived in Wessex at first as counter-gifts to Alfred's support of Breton monasteries, noted by his Welsh biographer Asser.<sup>5</sup>

However, in 919, in Flodoard's famous words, 'the Northmen ravaged, destroyed and annihilated all of Brittany . . . the Bretons were abducted and sold, while those who escaped were driven out'.<sup>6</sup> Mutual favours gave

<sup>4</sup> Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, 75, ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 60. Here the term *Armorici* most likely draws on the usage in *HB*; see [Chapter 3](#).

<sup>5</sup> Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, 76, 102, ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 60, 89; Dumville, *Liturgy*, 112–14.

<sup>6</sup> *Nordmanni omnem Britanniam in Cornu Galliae in ora scilicet maritima sitam depopulantur, proterunt atque delent, abductis, venditis, ceterisque cunctis ejectis Britonibus*. Flodoard, *Annales*, 1, ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, *The Annals*, 3.

place to a refugee movement. This too was led from the top: Count Matuedoi of Poher and his son Alan took refuge with King Æthelstan of England (924–39), or perhaps initially with his father, Edward the Elder. The two families had close ties, Æthelstan being Alan's godfather.<sup>7</sup> This period of exile marked a significant change in cross-Channel relations, for the Breton leaders were drawn to Wessex rather than the Brittonic world. These spheres were not completely distinct, however, for various Welsh rulers visited Æthelstan's court. Foremost among them was Hywel Dda, who strengthened his dominant position across much of Wales under Æthelstan's overlordship. The Breton exiles could have forged ties with Hywel through this network, which may explain why Alan named his son Hoel, a name not known to have been previously used in Brittany.<sup>8</sup> Yet others in Wales disagreed with Hywel Dda's approach to Wessex; this position appears to be expressed in the vivid poem *Armes Prydein*, which argues that the Britons and their Scandinavian allies should rise up against a rapacious English overlord. In the poet's scheme, Brittany is part of the wider Brittonic world stretching *o Vynaw hyt Lydaw* 'from Manaw (Gododdin) to Llydaw (Brittany)'.<sup>9</sup> Just as troops would march from Alclud (Dumbarton) to do battle against the English, so too the cavalry would arrive from Brittany.<sup>10</sup> If the poem was composed in the run-up to, or aftermath of, the Battle of Brunanburh (937) it is notable that by then Alan had returned to Brittany with Æthelstan's support and was immersed in warfare against the Vikings.<sup>11</sup> The poem appears to reflect the continued idea of the Brittonic world, as opposed to the complex political reality.

An important facet of the new relationship between Brittany and Wessex was the movement of clergy and of relics.<sup>12</sup> It is no accident that this movement took place at a time when the English royal house

<sup>7</sup> *Chronicon Namnetense*, 27, ed. Merlet, *La chronique de Nantes*, 81; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 52–4, 103.

<sup>8</sup> Quaghebeur, 'Alain Barbe-Torte', 158–61; Quaghebeur, 'Alain de Bretagne'. In general, see Kirby, 'Hywel Dda: Anglophil?'

<sup>9</sup> The reference to Brittany reflects the longstanding links between the Britons, as noted by German, 'L'*Armes Prydein Vawr*', 185–91, although Dumville has considered a possible allusion to Vikings active in Brittany: 'Brittany and "*Armes Prydein Vawr*"', 152–3.

<sup>10</sup> *Armes Prydein*, ll. 153–4, 172, ed. Williams, 12. The reference to *katueirch* 'war-horses' is interesting given that the Bretons were renowned for cavalry warfare: Smith, *Province and Empire*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> The poem is generally dated to the 930s or 940s, to the reign of Æthelstan (Williams, *Armes Prydein*, xii–xx) or his successor Edmund (Breeze, '*Armes Prydein*', 210–18). An eleventh-century date has also been proposed (Etchingham, 'Viking-Age Gwynedd and Ireland', 164–6).

<sup>12</sup> For the development of a hagiographical literature around the flight of clergy and relics from the Vikings in various parts of the Frankish kingdoms, see for instance Bourguès, 'Les Vikings', 211–12; Trumbore Jones, 'Pitying the Desolation'; Lifshitz, 'The Migration'.



had more influence with Continental rulers than it had ever had before, or would until after the Norman Conquest; and when relic-translations were playing an important role in the political legitimization of rulers in much of Europe as the Frankish kingdoms fragmented.<sup>13</sup>

A clear example of Æthelstan's involvement with a group of Breton clergy exiled within Francia pertains to the community of St Samson of Dol. Their prior Radbod sent a letter to Æthelstan, begging for assistance, reminding the king of their prayers for his father, and offering him relics of Paternus, Senator and Scubilio, bishops of Avranches.<sup>14</sup> The result was that relics of these saints and of Samson himself were enshrined at Malmesbury and at Æthelstan's newly founded abbey of Milton in Dorset; so (at Milton) was a copy of Radbod's letter, as recorded by William of Malmesbury in the 1120s. Of particular interest is the fact that the Dol clergy were able to claim pre-existing links with Æthelstan's predecessor, Edward the Elder.

More Breton relics appear in surviving English relic-lists from the tenth century onwards.<sup>15</sup> The abbey-register of Milton showed that, as well as relics from Dol, the abbey possessed an arm of St Branwalatr.<sup>16</sup> The 'Leofric Gospels' manuscript (Oxford Bodleian Library Auct. D.2.16, written in Brittany, probably at Landévennec), given by Æthelstan to the monastery of Sts Mary and Peter at Exeter, has written into it an early eleventh-century Old English narrative of Æthelstan's foundation of the monastery and a list of the relics with which he endowed it: among 146 identified items were parts of the bodies of the Breton saints Winwaloe, Wennal (Guenael), Conocan, Melanius, Withenoc, Machutus, Tugdual and the otherwise unknown Wigenoc; also of Ipotemius (or Hypothemius), bishop of Angers, who had been translated to Redon in Brittany in the 830s.<sup>17</sup> There are related lists in two other Exeter manuscripts, which add

<sup>13</sup> For Æthelstan's Continental role, see Foot, *Æthelstan*, 46–56; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas'. For the politics of relic-translations, see Meijns, 'The Policy', and works cited therein. For the diplomatic value of relic gifts, see Rollason, 'Relic-Cults', 92–3.

<sup>14</sup> Radbod, 'Letter to Æthelstan', in William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, V.249, ed. and transl. Winterbottom and Thomson, I.597–9; also transl. in Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, no. 228, 821–2; see Foot, *Æthelstan*, 190–2. Guillotel suggested ('L'exode', 297) that Radbod's letter should be associated with Hugh the Great's embassy of 926, when the relics of Samson had found refuge with Hugh in Paris.

<sup>15</sup> *Segan*, 32, 35, 38, 47, 51, ed. Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands*, 15–20; Rollason, 'Lists, 64–6'; *Historia Ecclesie Abbenonensis*, II. 227, ed. Hudson, II. 222–3; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II. 94, IV. 123; Gougaud, 'Mentions anglaises'; Gougaud, 'Notes sur le culte', 605–7.

<sup>16</sup> The information derives from the lost abbey-register of Middleton, printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, II. 349–50. For discussion, see Brett, 'A Breton Pilgrim', 46; Rauer, *Beowulf*, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II.93. For edition and discussion of the lists, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, 171–209; Smith, 'Rulers and Relics', 73, 90–1. For Leofric and the

the name of *Wttuualus* (Gudwal).<sup>18</sup> The bulk of the collection was probably Æthelstan's gift, making Exeter, for Æthelstan, what Magdeburg was for his brother-in-law Emperor Otto I: 'a well-defended frontier city which doubled as a centre of sacral hegemony'.<sup>19</sup>

Probably most of these relics arrived in England in a small number of high-level transactions. Hugh the Great, duke of the Franks, d. 956, was named in *Translatio Sancti Maglorii*, the most famous and circumstantial account of the translation of relics from Brittany, as the recipient of an entire convoy of relics brought from Brittany to Paris and ultimately installed in his foundation of Saint-Magloire.<sup>20</sup> Hugh the Great married Æthelstan's sister, an alliance initiated in 926, according to William of Malmesbury, by lavish gifts from Hugh to Æthelstan, including relics,<sup>21</sup> and a substantial sub-set of the relics donated by Æthelstan to Exeter were of saints also mentioned in Saint-Magloire lists. Other relics on the Exeter list may have come from Montreuil-sur-Mer.<sup>22</sup> One possible source for these was the community of Landévennec, exiled at Montreuil, whose abbot, John, played a role in the return of Alan II from his exile at Æthelstan's court.<sup>23</sup> Another may have been Æthelstan's cousins Counts Arnulf of Flanders (918–65) and Adulf of Boulogne. Adulf was an intermediary in the marriage alliance with Hugh the Great; Arnulf, a famous practitioner of the politics of relic-redistribution, briefly captured Montreuil in 939 and sent its ruling family into protective custody at the court of Æthelstan, perhaps accompanied by freshly acquired relics.<sup>24</sup>

'construction of memory' in eleventh-century Exeter, see Insley, 'Remembering Communities Past'.

<sup>18</sup> No. 92 as edited by Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, 196. The manuscripts are Oxford Bodleian Library Bodley 579 and London BL Royal 6.B.VII.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 'Rulers and Relics', 91.

<sup>20</sup> Guillotel has established the basic authenticity of this text, which in its oldest surviving form consists of a series of interpolations into a historical collection made at Saint-Magloire de Paris between about 1150 and 1181 (Guillotel, 'L'exode', 306–7), but which must be based on an earlier account whose main points can be verified from other sources. For Saint-Magloire, Paris, see Terroine and Fossier (eds.), *Chartes et documents*.

<sup>21</sup> Foot, *Æthelstan*, 47–8; Ortenberg, 'The King from Overseas', 212–21. Julia M. H. Smith has argued that the alliance and the accompanying gifts of relics signified a solemn commitment on Hugh's part to further the accession of the Carolingian Louis IV, who was under Æthelstan's protection: 'Rulers and Relics', 93.

<sup>22</sup> Fawtier-Jones and Oheix, 'La Vita ancienne', 16; Lot, *Mélanges*, 188–99.

<sup>23</sup> *CL*, 25, pp. 562–4; Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 2, pp. 152–4; transl. Brett, 'A Breton Pilgrim', 62–4.

<sup>24</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, 21, ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, *The Annals*, 31; Richer, *Historiae*, II.11–12, ed. and transl. Lake, *Histories*, I.186–93. On Arnulf's activities see Bozóký, 'La politique des reliques'.

Diplomatic gifts were evidently an important source of Æthelstan's Breton relics and a desirable one, since such relics came ready accredited. However, his relic-collecting was not limited to accepting what he was offered. The prologue to the Old English version of the Exeter relic-list describes how the king 'sent honest, discerning men over the sea, and they travelled as widely as they could travel and with his treasures they purchased . . . the greatest of relic-collections'.<sup>25</sup> Some may have been acquired directly from their guardian clergy, but the process is usually obscure. Branwalatr is a case in point: he has no *Vita*, his cult in Brittany is confined to litanies and a small number of place-names and dedications, yet he was treated as one of the most important Breton saints in England, with an abbey dedicated to him and his feast day placed in three calendars from Winchester.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Iwi, venerated at Wilton, we have only a fourteenth-century Life to connect him with Brittany, and a vague account in the late eleventh-century Life of St Edith by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin to explain the arrival of his relics.<sup>27</sup> Place-names and dedications in Côtes-d'Armor show that an Iwi was genuinely venerated there, but nothing definite is known of him.<sup>28</sup> Given the royal connections of Wilton, it is hard to see the cult of Iwi being established there in the tenth century other than with royal support or sanction, and this is borne out by his feast day appearing in the same Winchester calendars that include Branwalatr.<sup>29</sup>

Whatever the mechanism of their travels, the tenth century marks a moment of transition for Breton relic cults. Until then, few Breton saints had any reputation in the wider world, and even within Brittany, few had undergone the processes of translation and enshrinement that characterised successful cults in most of western Christendom.<sup>30</sup> The removal of relics from Brittany in the 910s and 920s signifies a major shift in practice. Was this perhaps orchestrated by Breton church leaders in a deliberate and successful attempt to 'add value' to their relics? In Brittany, the local cult of a saint could continue almost undamaged by the loss of his body,

<sup>25</sup> Ed. and transl. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, 176–7.

<sup>26</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 73–4. The calendars are those in London Cotton Titus D.XXVII, Cambridge Trinity College R.15.32 and London Cotton Vitellius E.XVIII: Wormald (ed.), *English Kalendars*, 113–25, 127–39, 155–67.

<sup>27</sup> John of Tynemouth, *Vita S. Ywii*, in Horstmann (ed.), *Nova Legenda Anglie*, II.91–2; Goscelin, *Vita S. Edithae*, II.6, ed. Wilmart, 273–4, transl. Wright and Loncar, 'Goscelin's Legend', 74.

<sup>28</sup> DCA, 132–4, 156, 205; Orme, *The Saints*, 148–9; Blair, 'A Handlist', 541.

<sup>29</sup> German, 'L'Armes Prydein Vawr', 194, note 65. The calendars are in the manuscripts Cambridge Corpus Christi College 9; London BL Cotton Titus D.XXVII; Cambridge Trinity College R.15.32; London BL Arundel 60; London BL Cotton Vitellius E.XVIII. See Rushforth, *Saints*.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written'.

while in Francia or England the relics could be exchanged for substantial benefits. That rulers like Hugh the Great and Æthelstan were prepared to lavish such benefits on Breton clergy and their relics is a measure of how far the Breton Church had progressed in perceived respectability since Ermoldus Nigellus had accused the Bretons of being Christians in name only. These rulers were eager for means of enhancing their authority, given Hugh's dubious legitimacy and the military dangers facing Æthelstan's overlordship in Britain. The increasing demand for, and limited supply of relics in post-Carolingian Europe doubtless made relics from a hitherto unexploited region like Brittany more attractive.<sup>31</sup> Even so, it is impressive that Æthelstan's abbey of Milton was dedicated to Mary, Michael, Samson and Branwalatr: the two Breton confessors were elevated into the company of the Mother of God and the Archangel.<sup>32</sup> Through translations, Breton saints moved from merely commanding the devotion of a local community to channelling the piety of a transnational elite.

In many cases, the relics rapidly passed beyond the reach of the communities that had originally owned them, and these communities ceased to benefit: however, Breton clergy did receive royal patronage in England. A surviving letter of recommendation on behalf of a Breton pilgrim mentions the support he received from Æthelstan.<sup>33</sup> Two litanies containing sequences of Breton saints to be invoked in prayer were apparently preserved by Breton exiles in England: especially revealing is the petition in the 'Rheims' litany to 'preserve the clergy and people of the English' and 'to free us from our captivity' (the idea of exile as captivity deriving from the 'Babylonian captivity' of the Hebrews).<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the cults of Celtic saints in England should be seen as evidence of a coherent policy of veneration of leading saints from the outlying areas in which Æthelstan claimed influence.<sup>35</sup> Such were his ambitions beyond the English kingdom that his coins and charters proclaimed him ruler and guardian of all Britain from the late 920s onwards. While these titles referred to the island of Britain, scholars based at the court of Wessex had long been aware of the idea of the Britons as a people, which lent further significance to Æthelstan's patronage of Breton saints' cults.<sup>36</sup> In calendars of the late Anglo-Saxon period, feast days of a limited number

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Portable Christianity*, 162.   <sup>32</sup> Sharp, 'England', 201.

<sup>33</sup> Brett, 'A Breton Pilgrim'.

<sup>34</sup> Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, 292–3; Tanguy, 'De l'origine', 44–5; and see, [Chapter 6](#).

<sup>35</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 217.

<sup>36</sup> Asser's use of the term *Armorica* for Brittany is probably drawn from *Historia Brittonum*; see [Chapter 3](#). For the implications of the term *rex totius Britanniae*, see Foot, *Æthelstan*, 212–16.

of Gaelic, Cornish and Breton saints recur: Patrick, Brigit, Columcille and Gildas for the Gaelic-speaking world; Budoc, Machutus, Samson, Branwalatr, Winwaloe and Iwi for Brittany; Petroc and Neot for Cornwall.<sup>37</sup> The absence of Welsh saints is conspicuous. Evidently the patronage-relationship between English kings and their Welsh subordinates – and perhaps the attitude to relics – was different, despite the availability of Welsh scholars and manuscripts. Given the role allocated to a leading Welsh saint, David, in the poem *Armes Prydein*, perhaps it is not surprising that Welsh saints were felt to be inappropriate patrons.<sup>38</sup>

The cults of the Breton saints introduced into England in the tenth century continued popular in England throughout the Middle Ages, and some of their Lives were copied and even new ones produced; but no new Breton saints were definitely introduced thereafter.<sup>39</sup> The existing cults were apparently fed from Continental centres – primarily those outside Brittany – and not via Cornwall: for instance, the cult of Winwaloe was popularised from Wereham Priory in Norfolk, a priory of Montreuil founded in the late twelfth century; a cult of Gudwal at Worcester in the thirteenth century may have been introduced from Ghent.<sup>40</sup> Brittany, Cornwall and Wales would continue to share their saints, but for the transportation of essentially local cults from Brittany to an international public in France, Flanders and England, the tenth century was a moment that would not recur.

### *Brittany and Francia*

Between 900 and 1000 politics and society in Brittany were transformed, together with those of the former Carolingian Empire. From 831 to 907, Brittany had been ruled by a local dynasty whose power was underwritten by that of the Carolingian monarchy. It has been thought that the introduction of Carolingian institutions into Brittany from the late eighth century onwards was thoroughgoing and led directly to the institutional

<sup>37</sup> For Gildas's veneration in the Gaelic-speaking world, see the discussion later in this chapter of the Rhuys Life of Gildas.

<sup>38</sup> *Armes Prydein* ll. 105, 129, 140, 196, ed. and transl. Williams, 8, 10, 14; for St David's role in the poem see *WAB*, 621.

<sup>39</sup> For the English Life of Machutus, see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 147–54; for that of Judoc, Lapidge, 'A Metrical *Vita*', 256. No English manuscript of either of the Lives of Samson survives, but some episodes from his Lives became known in England, and fragments of a Mass for his feast day survive in an Exeter manuscript: Rauer, *Beowulf*, 103–9 and references. The shorter Life of Winwaloe (BHL 8956D) survives in an English manuscript, London BL Cotton Otho D.VIII (s.xii), and may have been produced in England (Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 437–40). For Lives of Melor, see Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.20–32; Bourguès (ed.), *Le dossier hagiographique*.

<sup>40</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II.101, I.72.

parity between Brittany and the rest of northern France that can be seen from the eleventh century onwards.<sup>41</sup> This point of view was rooted in a belief in the effective 'public' power of the Carolingian state, the usurpation and 'privatisation' of which by the aristocracy was the essence of the 'feudal' revolution at the end of the first millennium.<sup>42</sup> More recent historiography sees the Carolingian polity as a fluid, personal network of patronage and power-relationships rather than an impersonal state structure, and suggests that the essential change that took place between the ninth and early eleventh centuries was the sharper definition of the elite's powers in legal terms, rather than the replacement of 'public' by 'private' power.<sup>43</sup> If this point of view is justified, the idea of institution-alised Carolingian state power operating in ninth-century Brittany cannot be used to explain the situation that prevailed by the eleventh. In Brittany, Carolingian influence resulted in the importation of Frankish titles and ideas of lordship, but only to a limited extent and at the discretion of the local rulers: their direct relationship with the Frankish monarch placed a protective shield over some of the unique features of Breton society. Pre-existing institutions such as the *plebs*-community and the *machtiern* survived into the late ninth century.<sup>44</sup> However, this shield was blasted away by the disintegration of the West Frankish kingdom, the Viking crisis of 919–36 and the political reconstruction that followed. It is this period that should probably be seen as crucial in Brittany's adaptation to the social and legal practices of northern France.

With the future Alan II of Brittany in English exile, Frankish rulers twice (in 921 and 927) 'ceded' Brittany to a fleet of 'Northmen' based at Nantes. In 931, Bretons rebelled against a Northman leader, Felecan, and killed him, only for his place to be taken by another Loire Viking, Incon; and in 933 the Frankish King Rodolfus ceded Brittany, in turn, to William Longsword, count of Rouen and leader of the embryonic Viking-led polity of Normandy.<sup>45</sup> There has been debate about the severity of the Viking impact on Brittany, given that there is little evidence of permanent settlement or cultural change in the form of place-names or archaeology (aside from camps at strategic locations and the impressive ship-burial on the Île de Groix). Yet the presence of Viking armies and fleets had far-reaching

<sup>41</sup> This is the implicit approach of Guillotel in Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, followed by Tonnerre, *Naissance* and Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*.

<sup>42</sup> For a summary of the classic historiography of the transition from the Carolingian 'state' to 'feudalism' as articulated by Marc Bloch and François-Louis Ganshof, among others, see Innes, *State and Society*, 242.

<sup>43</sup> MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 8, and references; West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Province and Empire*, 30–31, 128–9; W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 175–87.

<sup>45</sup> Flodoard, *Annales*, 13, 15, ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, *The Annals*, 20, 23.

political effects, jeopardising the ancient ties between the Britons and strengthening their links with Wessex.<sup>46</sup> One region where Norse-speakers settled permanently was the Cotentin peninsula, which had once belonged to the Breton ruler Salomon, but was transferred to William Longsword.<sup>47</sup> Simultaneously, magnates from Frankish Neustria encroached on the frontier regions of Rennes and Nantes which had been under the control of Breton rulers since 851. Alan II returned to Brittany in 936 in a settlement apparently brokered between his patron Æthelstan and Hugh the Great, duke of the Franks. Æthelstan's dynasty remained a source of inspiration, to judge by Alan's minting of coins on an English model, but the king himself was dead by 939.<sup>48</sup> Alan was left to deal with these already-established interests in his bid to reassert dominance (now ducal, no longer regnal) across Brittany.<sup>49</sup> To secure his power, he entered a marriage-alliance with a neighbour, Count Theobald of Blois. When he died in 952 with his son from this marriage still a child, his widow married Fulk II of Anjou, and Theobald and Fulk jointly took control of Brittany.<sup>50</sup> Their power was soon challenged by the comital house of Rennes. This family was not originally Breton, but seems to have been descended from Berenger, marquis of Neustria in 886–96, and to have moved into the Rennais during the Viking troubles of the early tenth century.<sup>51</sup>

These struggles for dominance by competing neighbours seem to have dealt a decisive blow to pre-existing social structures in Brittany. As can be seen from the charters which reappear from the 990s onwards, *machtiers* and *plebenses* were replaced by *castellani*, *milites* and dependent peasants.<sup>52</sup> Recently discovered archaeological evidence for settlement abandonment and the emergence of fewer and larger agricultural units during the tenth century seems to point in the same direction.<sup>53</sup> The elite adopted the French language (already predominant in the Rennais and

<sup>46</sup> Cassard, *Le siècle*, 116. For a minimum view of Viking impact, see McNair, 'Vikings and Bretons?'; for a maximum view, Quaghebeur, 'Norvège et Bretagne'; Quaghebeur, 'Alain de Bretagne'. For overviews of the period, see Price, *Viking Brittany*; Coumert, 'Jean-Christophe Cassard'.

<sup>47</sup> Musset, 'Essai sur le peuplement', 98–101; Abrams, 'Early Normandy', 53–4. These Norse-speaking settlers had links with the Insular world, especially the Irish Sea region.

<sup>48</sup> Rory Naismith has drawn attention to an English-style coin minted by the Breton moneyer Conwoion in the 940s: 'A Pair', 224–5.

<sup>49</sup> Van Torhout, 'La résistance'.

<sup>50</sup> For the alliance between Theobald and Fulk, see Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 8 and references.

<sup>51</sup> For discussion of the (disputed) origins of the family of Berenger, see Merlet, 'Origine'; Guillotel, 'Une autre marche'; Keats-Rohan, 'Poppa "de Bayeux"'; Chédeville, 'Un millénaire'. For brief accounts, Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 393–5, and Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 60, note 233.

<sup>52</sup> This transformation was noted and trenchantly described by Planiol, *Histoire*, II.238–9.

<sup>53</sup> Catteddu and Le Gall, 'Archaeology'.



Nantais, from where political leadership was exercised). Brittany by the year 1000 was no longer the home of a *gens*, an ethnic unit claiming a clearly separate identity in terms of descent, language and law.<sup>54</sup> This makes it all the more interesting that Brittany's new ruling class chose a Breton *political* identity, selectively preserving legitimising elements from Brittany's past.<sup>55</sup> In the crisis of legitimacy that faced rulers in the Frankish kingdoms as the Carolingian dynasty failed, Brittany – which had always been regarded unfavourably by Frankish intellectuals – seemed to have comparatively a better claim to exist than many of the new principalities of France. It had a line of rulers who had at least been recognised by the Carolingians, and if their civility and Christian orthodoxy were in doubt, they were preferable to the overtly pagan Norse 'pirates' of the Seine and Loire. Alan II was supported by Æthelstan, the most respected ruler in Europe, whose West Saxon dynasty had (however opportunistically) sought to overcome the political antagonisms of Britain in a 'Christian empire'.<sup>56</sup> The point was taken in Francia. Not only Alan II and his descendants, but also the Rennes dynasty, consciously claimed a British political heritage; and tenth-century writers in Francia made more overt and more favourable references than before to Breton saints, scholars and travellers in the Frankish world, as well as being eager to acquire Breton relics.

### The Ducal Dynasty of Rennes and the 'Riwal' Genealogy

The last years of the tenth century saw the rise of the Rennes dynasty to dominance in Brittany. Its effective founder, Berenger (active *ca* 931–70) was called simply 'count' (*comes*) in charters; his successor Conan I (d. 992) styled himself *comes Britanniae* and *Britannorum princeps*.<sup>57</sup> The influence of this family on politics, church reform and the resulting ideological bent of literature, especially hagiography, in Brittany has been somewhat obscured by the subsequent historiographical dominance of its Norman neighbours, and by its own replacement as dukes of Brittany by the dynasty of Cornouaille in 1066. However, one may with care discern a 'Rennais phase' during which this family sought with some success to gather up the heritage of power in northern Brittany – including both sacred and secular traditions from the Insular world. Within Brittany Berenger apparently used the alternative Breton name Judhael, just as

<sup>54</sup> See [Chapter 3](#).

<sup>55</sup> For the further development of this Breton identity in the later Middle Ages, see Pépin, 'Does a Common Language ...?', 99–100.

<sup>56</sup> Foot, 'Where English Becomes British', 139–44.

<sup>57</sup> Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 5 and 6, pp. 159–57.

some Norman leaders of the same period used both Scandinavian and Frankish names, and some Cornish landowners both English and Cornish ones.<sup>58</sup> The adoption of the name Alan by his dynasty (Duke Alan III, 1008–1040) indicates that it also claimed descent from Alan I ‘the Great’.<sup>59</sup>

The Berenger dynasty was not the only mixed Frankish and Breton family to rise to power during the post-Viking ‘reconstruction’. The nomenclature of the lesser nobility in eleventh-century Brittany suggests a Frankish influx at this social level too. One of the most prolific such families became famous during the eleventh century as the seigneurs of Dol-Combours.<sup>60</sup> Its founding couple were Hamon I and his wife Roiantelina, active during the reign of Duke Alan III; of their sons, Jungeneus became archbishop of Dol, Rivallon I founded the secular seigneurie of Dol which dominated the archbishopric in subsequent generations, and Gauzlin founded the castle of Dinan. We may guess that Hamon’s forebears came from outside Brittany but may have had long-standing associations there: the name Gauzlin may point to a link with the Rorgonids of Maine whose most famous member, Count Rorgon, Charlemagne’s son-in-law, had briefly been count in north-eastern Brittany in 819–20.<sup>61</sup>

The family probably rose to power in close association with the Rennes dynasty, although relations between the two had grown tense by the later eleventh century.<sup>62</sup> Both were interested in church reform, and the religious foundations of the Dol-Combours family mirrored those of the counts of Rennes. It must have been under the aegis of the Rennes dynasty – although we do not know exactly when – that the bishoprics

<sup>58</sup> The identification of Judhael/Berenger and his status as count of Rennes is not certain, though generally accepted. Sources include Flodoard, *Annales*, 26 (944), ed. and transl. Fanning and Bachrach, *The Annals*, 40; Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 3, pp. 155–6 (the foundation-charter of Saint-Florent de Saumur, 958); Jaffé, *Regesta*, 2879, p. 330 (a letter of Pope John XIII, 970); Guillotel, *Actes*, 2, pp. 152–3 (a Landévennec charter of 942 × 952); *CL*, 40, p. 569 (dated 952 × 960); *Chronicon Namnetense*, 37 and 39, ed. Merlet, *La chronique de Nantes*, 107–8, 111–12; *Vita Gildae*, 34, transl. Williams, 35. For Cornish/English names see Padel, *Slavery*, 10–11.

<sup>59</sup> In a genealogical table from Saint-Aubin, Angers dating from the 1060s–1080s, a Pascwethen, son of Alan the Great, is claimed as their ancestor: Poupardin, ‘Généalogies angevines’. It is more likely that a link by marriage was involved: for the role of female descent in establishing personal royal status in Wales, see Thornton, ‘Predatory Nomenclature’, esp. 6–7, 12–13; *MWG*, 23–4.

<sup>60</sup> See Guillotel, ‘Des vicomtes d’Alet’ and ‘Combours’; Brand’honneur, *Manoirs et châteaux*, 114–28. The spelling *Combours* is preferred by Guillotel to the more usual *Combours*.

<sup>61</sup> Keats-Rohan, ‘Raoul Anglicus’, 66.

<sup>62</sup> For an outline of their conflicts, which Katharine Keats-Rohan believes were perpetuated in the settlement of Bretons in England in 1066 and after, see Keats-Rohan, ‘The Bretons and Normans’, 51–4.

of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier were founded, perhaps to further the archiepiscopal claims of Dol.<sup>63</sup> The choice of locations for the new sees, their patron saints, and those saints' connections must have been fraught with political significance which can be glimpsed in the flurry of hagiography that the process occasioned.<sup>64</sup> An assertive pride in Breton descent can be seen among the Breton aristocracy of the eleventh century, even those who were not Breton-speaking, and this sense of identity was fostered by myth-making.<sup>65</sup>

It is during the tenth century that we first see stirrings in Brittany of the idea of a 'passage of dominion', the association of legitimate political power in Brittany with the arrival of an original leader from Insular Britain. The leader in question would eventually be named as Conan Meriadec in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, foreshadowed by the Cartulary of Quimperlé in the 1120s. However, Conan was preceded by an alternative founder-figure named Riwal, the elaboration of whose legend allowed new power-structures in northern Brittany to be fused to older ones.

The Riwal story appears in a brief historic statement and genealogy inserted into two rewritten saints' Lives in the eleventh century: the second Life of Judoc by Isembard of Fleury (*ca* 1010 × 1020), and the *Vita II* of Winnoc (*ca* 1064). Both saints were allegedly Bretons involved in the expansion of Columbanian monasticism in northern Gaul in the seventh century. Judoc was founder and patron of Saint-Josse-sur-Mer in the Pas-de-Calais, Winnoc was enshrined at Bergues in Flanders. The First Life of Judoc (*ca* 920?) had alleged that Judoc was a brother of Judicael, the warlike yet pious king of Brittany who had made peace with the Merovingian Dagobert I in 635. When Judicael retired into monastic life, Judoc feared that he would be forced to take the throne and fled to Francia.<sup>66</sup> Winnoc, in his first Life dating probably from the early ninth century, was designated simply as 'a Briton', but the genealogy added to his eleventh-century Life made him another brother of Judicael.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Guillotel, 'Le premier siècle', 77; Morin, *Trégor, Goëlo, Penthievre*, 188–90; Le Gall-Tanguy, 'La formation des espaces diocésains', 34–9. Soubigou, 'La rénovation', 188, suggests that the creation of the two sees was the work of Alan II and Archbishop Wicohen of Dol.

<sup>64</sup> Guillotel, 'Le dossier hagiographique'; Bourges, 'Une construction idéologique', [www.hagio-historiographie-medievale.org/](http://www.hagio-historiographie-medievale.org/) (accessed 25 January 2020).

<sup>65</sup> For examples see Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 48.

<sup>66</sup> *Vita I S. Judoci*, 2, ed. Le Bourdellès, 'Vie de saint Josse', 917 (for the dating, Le Bourdellès, 'Vie de saint Josse', 861); *Chronicle of Fredegar*, IV.78, ed. and transl. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Fourth Book*, 66.

<sup>67</sup> *Vita I S. Winnoci*, 23, ed. Krusch and Levison, 770; *Vita II S. Winnoci*, Preface, ed. Mabillon, 'Vita S. Winnoci Abbatis', 304. For the dating and authorship of *Vita II S. Winnoci* and the place of the genealogy within it see Levison, *apud* Krusch and Levison

Thus, during the tenth and eleventh centuries, the three saints, Judicael, Judoc and Winnoc, were gathered into a single putative family, descended from Riwal.

The text-history of Isembard's *Life of Judoc* has its difficulties. The text has never been published. Isembard's authorship can be deduced only from a reference to his work in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Orderic Vitalis.<sup>68</sup> The only early manuscript that survives (London BL Royal 8. B.XIV, s.xi) is mutilated, so that it no longer contains the actual *Vita* by Isembard but only his *Inventio* and *Miracula*, with some other appended texts on Judoc; the other manuscripts are late-medieval or modern.<sup>69</sup> Even so, Isembard's authorship of the *Vita* has never been questioned in scholarship. It has been suggested that the genealogy is an interpolation dating from the twelfth century.<sup>70</sup> However, the arrival in Brittany of Riwal is mentioned in the body of the text, and he is called the *tritavus* (great-great-great-grandfather) of Judoc's father Juthael, which agrees with the number of generations in the genealogy and strongly suggests that Isembard knew and included it.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, other material in Isembard's *Life* – a description of the Egyptian origin of the Irish, derived from *HB* or one of its Irish versions – shows the author's interest in (and access to) Insular Celtic lore.<sup>72</sup>

A translation of the genealogy as printed in Mabillon's edition of *Vita II S. Winnoci* is given here. The Latin text in the footnote includes variant readings (in square brackets) from the text of Isembard's *Vita S. Iudoci* in Paris BnF Lat. 11926 (a copy of a lost Saint-Josse manuscript, made in 1658).

Riwal, the duke of Brittany, was the son of Deroch, the son of Withol, the son of Urbien, the son of Cathov, the son of Gerento. This Riwal, coming from Britain beyond the sea with a multitude of ships, took possession of the whole of lesser Britain in the time of Chlothar, king of the Franks, who was the son of King Clovis. This Riwal begat a son named Deroch, Deroch begat Riatha, and Riatha begat Jonas, and Jonas begat Judual, and Judual begat Juthael, and Juthael begat the holy king Judicael, and St Judoc, and saints Winnoc, Eochu, Eumaelus,

(eds.), *Vitae Audomari, Bertini, Winnoci*, 751–2; Defries, 'Constructing the Past', 356–72.

<sup>68</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.13–15, ed. Chibnall, *The Ecclesiastical History*, II.156–69, 366–7; de Gaiffier, 'Isembard de Fleury-sur-Loire'. On the authorship and manuscripts of various versions of *Vita Iudoci*, see also Howe, 'The Date'; Lapidge, 'A Metrical *Vita*'.

<sup>69</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 115.

<sup>70</sup> Le Bourdellès, 'Vie de saint Josse', 883, note 71. For the use of the genealogy in successive versions of *Vita Iudoci* see Howe, 'The Date', 29.

<sup>71</sup> Paris BnF Lat. 11926, fol. 103r. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10039106r/f111> (accessed 12 December 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Merdrignac, 'La perception', 65–7.

Doetwalus, Gozelus, Largelus, Riwas, Riwaldus, Judgozethus, Helom, Ludon, Quenmaelus. This same Juthael begat daughters whose names are as follows: Curiela, Onenna, Bredequen, Cleor, Prust. 17 December is the day of the death of the holy confessor Judicael, King of Brittany. He reigned over Brittany in the time of Dagobert son of Chlothar.<sup>73</sup>

This genealogy does not seem to have been composed especially for either Judoc's or Winnoc's *Vita*: its focus is on Judicael, whose reputation as a saint first appears in the ninth century, in a charter of Louis the Pious mentioning the church of 'St Méen and St Judicael', and in Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* (865 × 872).<sup>74</sup> The genealogy may have been produced at Saint-Méen, or at one of the places where Judicael's relics were successively taken during the Viking period: Saint-Jouin-de-Marnes or Saint-Florent de Saumur.<sup>75</sup> It may even be the work of the 'Ingomar' who produced a *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo* partly preserved by the fifteenth-century historian Pierre Le Baud, to be discussed later.<sup>76</sup> Juthael, the father of many saints, a major character in 'Ingomar's' work, is first mentioned in this genealogy; his appearance can hardly not be connected with the appearance of the name Judhael (the same name) in the comital dynasty of Rennes in the mid-tenth century. But also, the choice of Riwal as the original founder of Brittany cannot fail to have resonated with the dynasty of Dol-Combour: a Riwal was the father of its foundress the 'viscountess' Roiantelina, and Rivallon was a name that continued to occur in the dynasty.<sup>77</sup> It seems likely that the genealogy was created under the influence of both the Rennes and the Dol-Combour families, when they were closely associated at the turn of the tenth and eleventh

<sup>73</sup> *Riwalus Britanniae dux filius fuit Derochi, filii Witholi, filii Urbieni [Urbienni], filii Cathovi [Catonis], filii Gerentonis. Hic autem Riwalus a transmarinis Britannis [transmarina Britannia] veniens cum multitudine navium, possedit totam minorem Britanniam tempore Chlotharii regis Francorum, qui Chlodovei regis filius exstitit. Iste Riwalus genuit filium [filium genuit] nomine Derochum [Derocum], Derochus [Derochus] genuit Riatham, et Riatha [Riatam] genuit Jonam, et Jona genuit Judualum, et Judualus genuit Juthaelum [+ regem, patrem quidem sancti Iudoci], Juthaelus autem [+ rex] genuit S. Judicahelum regem et S. Judocum, et S. Winnochum, Eochum [Eeocum], Eumaelum [Ehumaelum], Doetwalum [Dothuualum], Gozelum [Goherlum], Largelum, Riwas [om.], Riwaldum, Judgozethum [Jugorentum], Helom [Helum], Ludon [Iudon], Quenmaelum [Guenmaelum]. Idem autem Juthaelus genuit filias, quarum ista sunt nomina: [+ sancta] Curiela, Onenna, Bredequen [Brede guen], Cleor, Prust. XVI Kalend. Januarii transitus S. Judicahelis confessoris, Britanniae regis. Hic autem [+ Iudicahelis rex] rexit Britanniam tempore Dagoberti filii Chlotharii. Vita II S. Winnoci, Preface, ed. Mabillon, 'Vita S. Winnoci Abbatis', 304.*

<sup>74</sup> Morice (ed.), *Mémoires*, I, 225–226; Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I, 37–8, I, 43, I, 48, I, 50, ed. Lot, 377, 379–380, 382–383.

<sup>75</sup> *Historia Sancti Florentii Salmurensis*, ed. Marchegay and Mabilie, *Chroniques*, 261; for discussion see Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 153–60.

<sup>76</sup> Fawtier, 'Ingomar, historien breton'.

<sup>77</sup> Roiantelina is designated *filia Riual* in a 1030 charter for Mont-Saint-Michel: Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 18, pp. 194–200.

centuries, as an adoption of the local dynastic and cult traditions of north-eastern Brittany. Duke Alan III went on to re-found the church of Saint-Méen, the original home of Judicael's cult, between 1024 and 1034. Noticeably, neither dynasty actually claimed descent from Judicael or his British ancestors. The genealogy strongly implied that the line of Riwal had come to an end with the ascetic family of Judicael, Judoc and Winnoc. This seems to show a tacit recognition that the Carolingian age had wiped the slate clean and established new leadership in Brittany, and at the same time states a claim that the *regnum* of Brittany, as such, had more ancient, Insular British origins, and thus a mandate to exist independently of its neighbours. The foundation of Normandy, not to mention various Insular Viking polities, had created a recent precedent for the right of a ruler arriving 'with a multitude of ships' to carve out a lasting territory; yet the Norman leadership had had to settle in formal subjection to the king of the Franks. Not so the Bretons, apparently. Approximately contemporary with Dudo of Saint-Quentin's creation of a heroic and providential history for the dukes of Normandy, the Riwal genealogy seems to represent a 'stub' of a similar effort on behalf of the self-styled *comes Britanniae*.<sup>78</sup> Just as a 'Viking' identity was claimed for a Norman ruling dynasty whose Scandinavian connections were increasingly tenuous, so a British past was chosen to differentiate a dynasty that was largely Frankish.<sup>79</sup>

The genealogy must have been assembled from various sources, and shows an aptitude for historical synthesis – although the Frankish historical framework, derived directly or indirectly from 'Fredegar's' Chronicle, obviously leaves too little time for the generations between Riwal and Judicael.<sup>80</sup> As well as Frankish sources, the author seems to have known traditions found in a number of Breton hagiographical texts. Riwal is the name of the *dux* of Domnonia mentioned in Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloei*; Cathov, likewise, recalls the British 'King Catovius' who was a kinsman of Winwaloe. A more recent stretch of the genealogy corresponds to the Lives of Samson. Judual, son of Jonas, appears in *Vita I S. Samsonis* as the 'rightful' ruler of Domnonia whom Samson restored to power; *Vita II S. Samsonis* adds Jonas's father (spelled *Riada*). All three appear in order in the Riwal genealogy.

<sup>78</sup> Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *De Moribus*, transl. E. Christiansen; see Albu, *The Normans in their Histories*, 7–46; Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*, 44–52, 61–70, 77–80. Also comparable is the genealogy created in a liturgical context for the counts of Flanders in about 960: Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*, 46.

<sup>79</sup> Brooks, *Anglo-Saxon Myths*, 2; but see Abrams, 'Early Normandy'; Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*.

<sup>80</sup> Seven generations are made to elapse between the times of Chlothar I (511–60) and Dagobert I (623–39).

The compiler may also have used Insular sources or a shared Insular-Breton tradition. Of the 'pre-Breton' ancestors, Deroch is unidentified;<sup>81</sup> Withol, however, derived from Latin *Vitalis*, is found (in the form *Guitaul*) as the name of Vortigern's father in *Historia Brittonum*.<sup>82</sup> Could the inclusion of the name represent an early attempt to attach the Breton rulers to Vortigern's line, as seen in the twelfth-century *Vita S. Gurthierni*? The apical trio of names, Urbien, Cathov and Gerento, relate to a different group of Welsh sources. They resemble the names Cado, Gereint and Erbin found in the 'Dumnonian' pedigree of the *Ach Morgan ab Owain* genealogical tract in the fourteenth-century Welsh collection in Jesus College Oxford 20, and related pedigrees in *Bonedd y Saint* (*ByS*), the thirteenth-century collection of Welsh saints' pedigrees, and in the Latin Life of St Cybi in the Cotton Vespasian A.XIV manuscript-collection.<sup>83</sup> *Cato* also appears in *Vita I S. Carantoci*, from the same manuscript, as a co-ruler of King Arthur in Devon and benefactor of saints.<sup>84</sup> The relationship among these texts has been noted by scholars, but its exact significance has remained unclear.<sup>85</sup> The attempt to date the Welsh texts accurately has thus far frustrated scholars; once again it appears that a partial Breton representative of a learned tradition provides the earliest-dated example of a tradition expressed later and more fully in Wales.

The *Ach Morgan ab Owain* tract centres on Morgan ab Owain, king of Morgannwg ca 930–74, and aims to attach his ancestors to the royal lines of surrounding kingdoms.<sup>86</sup> It was probably compiled during his lifetime, but may have been augmented later; if the 'Dumnonian' pedigree itself is as old as this, its composition will have slightly preceded the production of the Riwal genealogy. The text is corrupt, making it unclear exactly where a link through the female line is supposed to connect Morgan's ancestors to the south-west British rulers it concerns.<sup>87</sup> Once the direct line of the

<sup>81</sup> The name occurs in the Cartulary of Redon as both a male and a female name, meaning 'the fierce one'. This seems to argue against Raude's suggestion that in the genealogy it was originally an epithet rather than a separate name: Raude, *L'origine géographique*, 74, 144.

<sup>82</sup> *HB*, 49, ed. Faral, 35.

<sup>83</sup> *EWGT*, 41–50, 51–67; 'Jesus College 20', ed. Guy, 341; *Vita II S. Kebii*, *VSB*, 234–51. A new edition and study of *ByS* is being prepared by Barry Lewis.

<sup>84</sup> *Vita I S. Carantoci*, 4–5, *VSB*, 144–7; *WCD*, 86.

<sup>85</sup> Fleuriot, 'Old Breton Genealogies'; Giot, Guigon and Merdrignac, *The British Settlement*, 123–6; *DUBALA*, 165–76. For evidence that the Life of St Carantoc was interpolated at Llancarfan in the mid-twelfth century see *MWG*, 81–5.

<sup>86</sup> *MWG*, 142–6.

<sup>87</sup> Bartrum's emendation, involving a link through the female line at Iudhael, Morgan's eighth ancestor (*fl.* 716 × 757), has been disputed by Ben Guy, who suggests a less speculative emendation whereby *Peibiauwn glawrawc* was the father both of Morgan's



south-western rulers is reached, however, the text reads: 'Theudu, son of Peredur, son of Cado, son of Gereint, son of Erbin. Gereint son of Erbin son of Kynwawr son of Tudwawl son of Gwrawr son of Gadeon son of Cynan son of Eudaf Hen.'<sup>88</sup>

In the twelfth-century Latin *Life of St Cybi*, Cybi is said to have been born in Cornwall, the son of Salomon (Selyf), son of Erbin, son of Gereontus, son of Lud.<sup>89</sup> *Bonedd y Saint* makes Cybi the son of Selyf, son of Gereint, son of Erbin, son of Custennyn Gorneu (Constantine of Cornwall).<sup>90</sup> The fact that such variations exist underlines that, throughout the Welsh genealogical tradition, short sections of genealogy could be transmitted separately, altered in order, and recombined in various ways. (The earliest written Welsh genealogies, as Ben Guy has argued, seem to have comprised five generations or less.<sup>91</sup>) The 'Dumnonian genealogy', which extends the line of Cado, Erbin and Gerent back to Cynan and Eudaf Hen, is a product of such combination: that the compiler of the *Ach Morgan ab Owain* tract saw it as an extension of a more limited original is suggested by his repetition of the names of Gereint and Erbin.<sup>92</sup> It seems almost certain that a short text or orally transmitted fragment similar to the individual pedigrees in *ByS*, containing the names of Cado, Erbin and Gerent, associated with south-west Britain, was available to the author of the 'Riwal genealogy'. The 'Riwal' compiler has given Cado as Cathov by a plausible identification with the *Catovius* of *Vita S. Winwaloei* and has treated the south-west Brittonic form *Gerent* as a third-declension Latin name *Gerento*. Urbien is not the same name as Erbin, but is similar enough to be an easily committed confusion or substitution; the compiler may have made the change because Urbien, unlike Erbin, was a well-known name in

ancestor Tewdwr and of Arbeth/ Efrddyl, mother of Theudu (Ben Guy, pers. comm., 22/02/2019; and see Guy, *The Earliest Welsh Genealogies*, 148–9).

<sup>88</sup> 10. . . . Theudu m. Peredur m. Cado m. Gereint m. Erbin. 11. Gereint m. Erbin m. [Custennin m.] Kynwawr m. Tudwawl m. Gwrawr m. Gadeon m. Cynan m. Eudaf hen . . . Jesus College MS 20, 10–11, EWGT, 45; ed. Guy, 'Jesus College 20', 341.

<sup>89</sup> *Cuius genitor Salomon uocatur filius Erbin filius Gereonti filius Lud, olim princeps milicie: Vita II S. Kebii*, 1, VSB, 234–5. In this version of *Vita S. Kebii*, Erbin is son of Gereint, while in *Ach Morgan ab Owain* and in *ByS* it is the other way round. Wade-Evans, *Life of St David*, 98–100, preferred the reading 'Erbin son of Gereint', but a second manuscript of *Vita Kebii* recently discovered by David Callander (in a seventeenth-century hagiographical miscellany, Yale Beinecke Library Osborn fb229) has 'Gereint son of Erbin' as in the other texts: [www.welshsaints.ac.uk/new-life-of-st-cybi-discovered](http://www.welshsaints.ac.uk/new-life-of-st-cybi-discovered), by M. Crampin, 23/01/2019 (accessed 14 June 2019).

<sup>90</sup> *ByS* 26: Kyby m. Selyf m. Gereint m. Erbin m. Custennyn Gorneu. *ByS* 27: Yestin m. Gereint m. Erbin m. Custennyn Gorneu, EWGT, 58. Some sixteenth-century manuscripts of *ByS* include a longer pedigree of the saints descended from Gereint ap Erbin which is closely similar to the *Ach Morgan ab Owain* tract: *ByS* 76, EWGT, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Guy, 'The Earliest Welsh Genealogies', 464–5.

<sup>92</sup> Wade-Evans noted that 'the pedigree from Kynwawr to Eudaf . . . seems to consist of scraps': 'Bonedd y Saint, D', 355.

Brittany, appearing indeed in a ninth-century genealogy of claimed descendants of Judicael in a charter from Redon, to be discussed presently.<sup>93</sup> These minor changes do not disguise a proto-genealogy of saint-producing kings of south-west Britain which the compiler decided would make a fitting extension (deeper into the past) to the family line of Riwal, his founder of Brittany.

However, the recognition that the Riwal genealogist, the author of *Ach Morgan ab Owain* and the compilers of *ByS* must have been drawing on a similar source or sources raises many questions. As noted, the *Ach Morgan ab Owain* pedigree traces the ancestry of Cado, Erbin and Gereint back several more generations, to Cynan and his father Eudaf Hen (Octavius). These two appeared as founding figures in the Cartulary of Quimperlé in twelfth-century Brittany, in material certainly derived from Wales, probably from Llancarfan (see [Chapter 7](#)), and they were to become a fixed point in the tradition of the foundation of Brittany after Geoffrey of Monmouth chose them as leading characters. Why, then, did the author of the Riwal genealogy not extend his own version back to Cynan, particularly in view of the adoption of the name Conan by the comital dynasty of Brittany? Had the connection between Cynan and the family of Gerent not yet been made in the sources available to him? (In other words, must we suppose that there were two separate events, a century or more apart, of transmission from Wales to Brittany of pedigree-material that was ultimately combined in Wales within one short text?) Likewise, did the Riwal genealogist not know of the genealogical doctrine found in *ByS* attaching Gerent and Erbin to Constantine of Cornwall? The omission is the more puzzling in view of the presence of a royal or saintly Constantine in other texts from Brittany.<sup>94</sup> And conversely, why and when was the name of Kynwawr/Conomor, historically a Breton ruler, adopted into the Welsh pedigree-tradition although he was apparently excluded as a royal ancestor in Brittany itself? The temptation is to think in terms of a pedigree ‘nucleus’ from Cornwall that was exported both to Brittany and to Wales in the ninth or tenth century and extended forwards in time in Brittany, and backwards in Wales; but other processes may have been at work, including independent conservation of oral tradition going back to the sixth century. Geraint ab Erbin was

<sup>93</sup> For the name Urbien see Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 705–10.

<sup>94</sup> These include the calendar in Angers BM 477; the ninth-century genealogy in *CR*, 109, pp. 82–3, to be discussed later; and the *Vita S. Turiavi* from Clermont, in which both Constantine and ‘Geren’ appear as saint-friendly notables of Cornwall: *Vita S. Turiavi*, 5, ed. Duine, ‘Vie antique’, 34–6. Peter Bartrum and Rachel Bromwich considered that Custennyn would have been present in the original version of *Ach Morgan ab Owain*, and that his absence is an accidental omission: see Pearce, ‘Traditions’, 132. For the identity of the Cornish saint Constantine, see *WCD*, 162–3; Orme, *The Saints*, 94–6.

to have a considerable career as a literary character in medieval Wales; Iudhael, a more recent ancestor of Morgan ab Owain, was also the name of a member of the Riwal dynasty.<sup>95</sup> It is tempting, but fruitless, to speculate on how much more information than the bare names in the genealogy may have been shared between Wales and Brittany *ca* 1000.<sup>96</sup>

The *Ach Morgan ab Owain* genealogy raises further chronological and geographical problems if the persons named in it are given their conventional identifications with independently attested historical persons. Its arrangement prompted Susan Pearce, and Bernard Merdrignac after her, to posit a historical 'reverse migration' of a ruling dynasty from Brittany to Cornwall.<sup>97</sup> It perhaps makes more sense to envisage that the creators of both the Welsh and the Breton genealogies collected rulers who were individually famous either in south-west Britain or in Brittany, but were chronologically unattached, into an artificial single family line.

One of the many interesting aspects of the Riwal genealogy is the way that it introduced features of Celtic hagiography into the lives of 'mainstream' Frankish saints. Judoc and Winnoc had long ago been adopted as local saints of Picardy and Flanders, but their eleventh-century hagiography gave enhanced importance to their Breton antecedents, adding a long list of ancestors – which had never been characteristic of Frankish saints, however blue-blooded – and of saintly brothers and sisters. (Of the siblings of Judicael, Judoc and Winnoc listed in the genealogy, only Onenna and Curiela are otherwise known, although the names of the others are plausibly Breton and unlikely simply to have been invented: a reminder of the possibility of swift 'turnover' of saints in early Brittany.<sup>98</sup>) The Riwal genealogist must have been aware of the Insular Celtic practice of creating pedigrees for saints: indeed, his work is a relatively early example of it.<sup>99</sup> In Ireland, the earliest recension of the voluminous collection of saints' genealogies was created *ca* 950; in Wales, such texts can be traced back to the late eleventh or early twelfth century.<sup>100</sup> The Irish saintly pedigrees had the practical purpose of linking founding saints with the clerical families who controlled major churches.<sup>101</sup> The Welsh tracts may have been aimed more generally at claiming ancestral legitimacy and independence for the churches of south Wales in the context of the Norman Conquest, by linking their founding saints to early and eponymous rulers. As Thomas Charles-Edwards notes, *ByS* in some sense resurrects defunct royal dynasties by claiming their kinship with

<sup>95</sup> For discussion of the literary appearances of Gerent in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, see Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales', 142–5; *WCD*, 312.

<sup>96</sup> *WCD*, 311. <sup>97</sup> Pearce, 'The Traditions', 139; *DUBALA*, 244.

<sup>98</sup> *DCA*, 325–6; Ropartz, 'Pèlerinage', 209, note 2. <sup>99</sup> Ó Riain, 'The Saints', 379.

<sup>100</sup> *MWG*, 42, 82–3, 130–42. <sup>101</sup> Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Genealogies'.

heavenly patrons: 'the great dynasties of Wales had their members in heaven'.<sup>102</sup> The Riwal genealogy seems to partake of this aim, rather earlier. In any case the claim it laid for the antiquity and legitimacy of a *regnum* of Brittany was stated in thoroughly Insular terms.

Collections of genealogies never became an established literary genre in Brittany as they did in the Insular world.<sup>103</sup> Yet there is one example of the preservation of a royal or aristocratic patriline in ninth-century Brittany. In view of the fact that the Riwal genealogy culminates in Judicael as its most recent member, it is interesting that a unique genealogy appended to a charter in the Redon Cartulary, dated to 869, also centres on Judicael, but as the most distant ancestor. In the charter in question, a widow named Roiantdreh adopts Salomon (ruler of Brittany 857–74) as her son and settles her property on him, leaving her daughters to his protection. After the witness list, the genealogy follows, set out not in the 'ascending' form usual in Insular genealogies, but in the biblical 'descending' form, from Judicael to Roiantdreh herself:

'Jedechael begat Urbien; Urbien begat Urbon; Urbon begat Judon; Judon begat Custentin; Custentin begat Argant; Argant begat Juduual; Juduual begat Louenan; Louenan begat Roiantdree [*sic*].'<sup>104</sup>

Given Roiantdreh's high status, her familial approach to Salomon, and her proprietorship of parts of three *plous* in the immediate vicinity of Judicael's cult-centre at Saint-Méen – Sévignac, Médréac and Ploumaugat – it is entirely credible that she was, or could claim to be, descended from the seventh-century king. Possibly this charter, rather than being a mere property arrangement, represents some kind of final political settlement between the old royal line of Breton Domnonia and the Carolingian-backed dynasty that had supplanted it. A copy may have been kept in the Redon archive on account of its political importance: Redon was not a party to the transaction, and if any of the property it covered eventually came to Redon, this is not apparent.

The interest of the Roiantdreh genealogy is manifold. It reveals that a leading family in Brittany, or scholars associated with it, could at this time record a lengthy sequence of ancestors, as was the practice in the Insular

<sup>102</sup> *WAB*, 616.

<sup>103</sup> Pearce, 'The Traditions', 137. For Insular genealogy as a literary genre, see *MWG*, 20–46.

<sup>104</sup> *CR*, 109, pp. 82–3: *Jedechael genuit Urbien; Urbien genuit Urbon; Urbon genuit Judon; Judon genuit Custentin; Custentin genuit Argant; Argant genuit Juduual; Juduual genuit Louenan; Louenan genuit Roiantdree.*

world, but not normally in the Frankish sphere.<sup>105</sup> Comparing the Roiantdreh and Riwal genealogies, the similarities and differences are intriguing. The Riwal genealogy implies that the ruling line of Domnonia had ended with Judicael and his siblings, but Roiantdreh's genealogist thought differently. Two of the names in the Roiantdreh genealogy, Urbien and Juduual, recur in the Riwal genealogy, but this is not enough to suggest direct textual dependence. In any case the compiler of the 'Riwal genealogy' is unlikely to have been aware that there was relevant material in the Redon archive (not yet copied into the extant cartulary). What the recurrence does imply is that a dynastic consciousness was maintained from the ninth century (and perhaps from the seventh century) until *ca* 1000, by members of Roiantdreh's family itself or perhaps by the guardians of Judicael's cult. The appearance of a Judicael, count of Poher and grandson of Erispoe, in the late ninth century suggests that the Carolingian-backed dynasty of Nominoe had associated itself in some way with Roiantdreh's family; and conceivably, Roiantelina of the Dol-Combour dynasty was a surviving descendant, as the shared name-element from Old Breton *roiantol*, 'royal', implies.<sup>106</sup>

That this dynastic consciousness included a link with south-west Britain is suggested by the name *Custentin* in the Roiantdreh genealogy, a name which does not otherwise occur in the Redon cartulary and which, as we have seen, belongs to a reputed royal saint of Cornwall. Needless to say, such genealogies were statements of family aspiration rather than biological fact. But they do reveal that the raw materials of genealogical collections like those found in the Insular world may have been available in Brittany up to the ninth century, at least. Had it not been for Carolingian regime change followed by Viking attack, Breton literati might have developed their work as their colleagues in Wales did; but the last of the royal families that might have sponsored them apparently lost power in the ninth century, just when the most successful dynasties in Wales were consolidating theirs, and we are lucky that even these traces of their work have survived.

As well as being the subject of Insular-style genealogical scholarship, Judicael was also, apparently, the subject of a biography in the early eleventh century, the *Historia de Sancto Iudicælo*. This is a ghost text, surviving only in excerpts made in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries

<sup>105</sup> MWG, 15–16 and references. But see Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings*, 25–30 for the proliferation of royal Frankish genealogy in the Carolingian period. Carolingian royal genealogies, like the Roiantdreh genealogy, were normally presented in the biblical, *genuit* format.

<sup>106</sup> Pettiau, 'A Prosopography', 175–8 and references. For the name-element *roiantol* see McKee, *The Cambridge Juvenius Manuscript*, 549–50.

in the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc, the *Histoire de Bretagne* by Pierre Le Baud, and the Obituary of Saint-Méen (Paris, BnF Lat. 9889). Le Baud alone preserves information about the author of the text, one Ingomar, who dedicated his work to Hinweten, identifiable as the abbot who was placed in charge of Saint-Méen at its re-foundation in 1024 × 1034.<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately there has never been an edition of all the fragments possibly belonging to this text. It may have gone through a series of expansions and revisions: there is probably at least a nucleus of material that is genuinely the work of Ingomar (including perhaps the Riwal genealogy), but the difficulty is identifying it. Parts of the text are most unlikely to be as early as the eleventh century: for instance a topographical romance about a Frisian conquest of Brittany featuring the characters Corsoldus and Aletha (from the place-names Corseul and Alet).<sup>108</sup> It is difficult to imagine a Breton author creating this reverse derivation of personal names from place-names before Geoffrey of Monmouth had shown the way with famous examples like ‘Ebraucus’ from York and ‘Leir’ from Leicester; and the tale of the merchant who elopes by sea with the King’s wife could be based on Geoffrey’s story of Brennius and Belinus.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, we need to consider the function of the ‘Frisian’ story in the longer narrative of the settlement of Brittany in which it is embedded. In the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc and Le Baud’s history, the story links the history of Maximianus and Conan Meriadoc and their immediate successors, derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth, with the arrival in Brittany of Riwal and his successors, taken from the Riwal genealogy. The point of the ‘Frisian’ story seems to be to reconcile these two potentially contradictory accounts of the origin of Brittany by creating an interregnum after which the arrival of Riwal could be presented as a fresh start. As such, it is unlikely to have been composed before Geoffrey’s account became accepted. However, the same is not necessarily true of a poem on Judicael which Léon Fleuriot argued was a Latin translation of a vernacular poem: its strophic construction and animal-imagery corresponds closely with the early Welsh praise-poetry found in the Books of Aneirin and Taliesin. Whether this poem was a

<sup>107</sup> *Chronicon Briocense*, ed. Le Duc and Sterckx; Fawtier, ‘Ingomar, historien breton’. Citations of the *Histoire du roi saint Iudichael* by ‘Ingomar’ are found in Le Baud, ed. D’Hozier, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 63–5, 80–1, 82, 86, 87, 88. See also Bourgès, ‘Le dossier littéraire’; Bourgès, ‘L’hagiographie bretonne’, 44–5 (accessed 15 August 2019). For a helpful presentation of the hagiography of Sts Méen and Judicael see Le Huërou, ‘De quand date la *Vita* ...?’

<sup>108</sup> Le Baud, ed. D’Hozier, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 63; however, Tanguy, ‘Incarnations mythiques’, 335–8, and Bourgès, ‘Corseul’, 24–6, regard the story as part of the authentic work of Ingomar.

<sup>109</sup> *HRB*, III.35–7, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 48–51.

pastiche created by an eleventh-century author, or a genuine example of orally transmitted verse dating back to the seventh century, it reveals a knowledge of Welsh poetic conventions that must indicate Insular connections at some date.<sup>110</sup>

From the beginning of the history of Brittany, the north-east appears as the centre of power and the zone of the greatest interplay between Bretons and their neighbours: the fact that the evidence for the Insular-Celtic practices of genealogy, vernacular poetry and heroic biography clusters round the figure of Judicael of Saint-Méen is probably, paradoxically, the result of his early recording in written sources from Francia. The 'Riwal tradition' that grew up around him was widely accepted and incorporated into a number of Breton saints' Lives produced both inside and outside Brittany in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. *Vita S. Brioci*, *Vita S. Leonorii* and the three Lives of Tugdual, the alleged founder of Tréguier – texts produced in what might be called the 'northern Brittany-Fleury-Angers nexus' – introduced Riwal (*Rigaldus* in *Vita S. Leonorii*) as a relative or supporter of their saints and 'the first of the Britons to come to this side of the sea'.<sup>111</sup>

### Encounters in the Loire Valley

As has already been implied, the Viking Age resulted in an increased Breton presence in Francia as well as in England. Manuscript-evidence shows Bretons active in various parts of Francia already in the ninth century, but later hagiography and relic-lists add enormously to the evidence-base. Some saints from the 'relic convoy' to Paris described in *Translatio S. Maglorii* eventually passed to different homes: Leonorius to Beaumont-sur-Oise, where an abbey was founded in his name; Guenael to Corbeil, according to both *Translatio S. Maglorii* and his *Vita*; Melor to the Augustinian house of Notre-Dame-du-Château at Meaux; Corentin to Saint-Corentin-les-Mantes (Chartres), to Montreuil and to Marmoutier; Samson to the abbey of St Symphorian at Orléans, which was granted by Hugh the Great to Bishop Agan of Dol in 930.<sup>112</sup> Relics of Winwaloe

<sup>110</sup> The poem is edited by Fleuriet, 'La littérature bretonne', 156–9. For parallels with *Y Gododdin* see Koch, 'De Sancto Iudicælo', 258–9.

<sup>111</sup> *Vita S. Brioci*, 46–7, ed. Plaine, 182–3; *Vita I S. Tugduali*, 1; *Vita II S. Tugduali*, 2; *Vita III S. Tugduali*, 4; ed. La Borderie, 'Saint Tudual', 84, 87, 97. *Vita S. Leonorii*, 28, ed. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 158. For the circumstances of composition of the Lives of Tugdual, see Guillotel, 'Le dossier hagiographique'; Bourguès, 'La production hagiographique du scriptorium de Treguier'; Bourguès, 'De la *vita*', 6–7. For the manuscript-tradition, see also Tanguy, 'Une version'.

<sup>112</sup> Guillotel, 'L'exode', 277–8, 294–5; Le Goualher, 'La translation' (Guenael); Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III. 35–6 (Melor); Bourguès (ed.), *Le dossier hagiographique de saint*



travelled to Montreuil and to Château-du-Loir.<sup>113</sup> The monks of Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys went to Déols, near Bourges.<sup>114</sup> Many places claimed relics of Machutus and Tugdual.<sup>115</sup> By the mid-tenth century, however, it seemed the period of chaotic flight was over and Bretons, like their Frankish and Insular counterparts, turned to the re-establishment of monastic practice and scholarship and to forging new connections with this in view.

At Fleury, in particular, we find a multidirectional meeting-ground.<sup>116</sup> The abbey, reformed by Odo of Cluny in 930, trained visiting monks and sent out reforming teams far and wide. Soon after 946, Cathroe, a Scot who had undertaken an epic journey through British, Scandinavian and English territory to reach Francia, went to train as a monk at Fleury and then became abbot successively of Waulsort and Metz. An Irishman, *Melchalamnus*, was called from Fleury with twelve monks to found a new community at Saint-Vincent, Laon, in 961.<sup>117</sup> English reformers too were in touch with Fleury. Archbishop Oda of Canterbury (941–58) received the tonsure there in 936 and sent his nephew, the future saint Oswald, to study there. Oswald went on to found the monasteries of Westbury, Winchcombe and Ramsey, putting his disciple Germanus, a long-term student at Fleury (and possibly a Briton) in charge of them: one result may have been a reinforcement of Breton saints' cults in England.<sup>118</sup> In about 946, Duke Alan II of Brittany sent his son Guerec to be educated at Fleury.<sup>119</sup> In 958, Fleury in co-operation with Count Theobald of Blois took charge of the recently founded monastery of Saint-Florent de

*Melar*, 199–206; Fawtier-Jones and Oheix, 'La *Vita* ancienne', 16 (Corentin); Merdrignac, 'Saint Ronan', 136–7 (Corentin); Orchard (ed.), *The Sacramentary*, xxix (Samson).

<sup>113</sup> Guillotel, 'L'exode', 283–4, 300; Deuffic, 'L'exode', 357; Lebecq, 'Les moines'; Lebecq, 'Landévennec', 39–41; Fossier, 'L'acte faux'; Le Bourdellès, 'Les Bretons'; Oury, 'Saint Guingalois'; Laurain (ed.), *Cartulaire manceau*, 108–16; Charles, 'Saint Guingalois', 280–2; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II.98.

<sup>114</sup> Lot, *Mélanges*, 241–3; Valéry, 'La bibliothèque', 31–2

<sup>115</sup> Deuffic, 'L'exode', 381; Deuffic, 'Marmoutier' (accessed 03 June 2020); Fawtier-Jones and Oheix, 'La *Vita* ancienne', 16; Lot, *Mélanges*, 188–99; Guillotel, 'L'exode', 278–9; Debary, 'Les transferts'; de Barthélemy, 'Les reliques'; [www.infobretagne.com/tugdual-reliques.htm](http://www.infobretagne.com/tugdual-reliques.htm) (accessed 04 September 2017).

<sup>116</sup> For Fleury's contact with Brittany, England and Ireland see Berland, 'L'influence'.

<sup>117</sup> Dumville, 'St Cathroe', 172–8. His name in Irish may have been Máel Calland: O'Brien, *Corpus*, 39, 134, 167.

<sup>118</sup> The combination of East Anglian, Fleury and Breton saints in three English sources – the litanies in BL Harley 2904 and Cambridge University Library Ff.1.23, and the 'Ramsey Metrical Calendar' – suggest that they were the product of this nexus of monasteries. All three contain the unusual combination of Samson, Machutus and Budoc. Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Metrical Calendar'; Lapidge, 'Abbot Germanus', 404–5.

<sup>119</sup> *Chronicon Namnetense*, 75, ed. Merlet, *La chronique de Nantes*, 188.

Saumur.<sup>120</sup> The foundation-charter was witnessed by a number of Bretons.<sup>121</sup> They may have been there primarily as vassals of Theobald, who was effective ruler of Brittany at the time, but their presence signals the availability of reformed monastic ideas to Bretons. During the abbacy of Vulfad at Fleury (950–61), Bishop Mabbo of Saint-Pol-de-Léon retired there bearing manuscripts and the relics of St Paul Aurelian (he was still styled *Paulinani Britanniae episcopus* when he witnessed the re-foundation-charter of Saint-Père de Chartres, in about 954).<sup>122</sup> A few years later, his successor Bishop Hesdren in turn retired to Fleury, with what were reputed to be relics of St Maur.<sup>123</sup> As well as Fleury, the nearby monastery of Saint-Mesmin de Micy was a focus of Breton interest in the mid- to late tenth century. Two hagiographical works composed in the final decades of the tenth century by Letaldus of Micy, his *Miracula Sancti Maximini* and *Life of Martin of Vertou*, respectively, give an (on the whole) favourable impression of Breton churchmen who ‘bought’ the abbacy of Saint-Mesmin, and reproduce some miracle-stories of a strongly Brittonic flavour.<sup>124</sup>

It may be to this period of Breton acceptance in the Orléannais that we should trace the exceptionally interesting calendar of saints in the manuscript Angers BM 477. This manuscript of computus-texts, probably written in the years around 900 by a Breton scribe copying an exemplar from an Irish centre in northern France (discussed in Chapter 4), included a calendar to which saints’ days were added in several stages over the tenth century.<sup>125</sup> Only expert palaeographical study is likely to separate the successive layers of annotation with certainty. However, the main hand of the calendar includes the names of leading saints of Ireland (Brigit, Patrick and Columba), other feasts shared with the sacramentary of Amiens, and a selection of Brittonic saints: from Brittany, *depositio sancti Pauliniani episcopi*; *depositio sancti Samsonis in Pretania* (altered to *Britannia*); *passio Melori et Budcati*; from Wales, *David propheta [sic]*; and from Cornwall,

<sup>120</sup> *Historia Sancti Florentii*, ed. Marchegay and Mabille, *Chroniques*, 240–2. For the continuing influence of Saumur in Brittany in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, see Beaumont, ‘Implantation’.

<sup>121</sup> Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 3, pp. 155–6: *cum aliis innumeris eiusdem gentis nobilibus quorum nomina subter assignata uidentur*.

<sup>122</sup> Castel-Kergiste, ‘Les reliques’; *Cartulary of Saint-Père de Chartres*, ed. Gérard, *Cartulaire*, I.54.

<sup>123</sup> Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 291–3; Gougau, ‘Les relations’, 4–5.

<sup>124</sup> Letaldus of Micy, *Miracula*, 24–7, ed. Mabillon, 603–5. For discussion see Guillotel, ‘Le premier siècle’, 76–7. Letaldus of Micy, *Vita et Miracula*, 3, 7–8, ed. Van Hecke, 811–12; for Letaldus’s authorship see Head, *Hagiography*, 219 note 83.

<sup>125</sup> Barbet-Massin, ‘Le manuscrit 477 (461) d’Angers’, 28–32. The calendar is found on fols. 30v–36r of the manuscript: a full digitised reproduction can be found at <http://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr>. For the local Orléannais saints, see Head, *Hagiography*, 122–3, note 89.

*Constantini requies*. Annotating hands have added feasts of the Breton saints Winwaloe, Corentin, *Huiarnuiu*, *Toconoch*, a bishop *Theernnoch*, abbot *Guoidnou*, Machutus, and what seems to be an additional feast of Paul of Léon, *renavigatio sancti Pauli citra mare*. Other additions include the Cornish saint Petroc as well as the English saints Cuthbert and Augustine of Canterbury, and St Benedict, Fleury's patron. What is especially interesting is that three of the Cornish and Breton saints have been coupled with three local saints of the diocese of Orléans, all honoured at Fleury. Petroc shares a feast day on 4 June with Lifardus, the founding abbot of Meung-sur-Loire near Orléans, and the two have been written in by the same hand: *depositio petroci et sancti lifardi presbyteri*. September feast days include *Eurti episcopi et sancti toconochi*, similarly pairing the fifth-century bishop Evurtius of Orléans and one of the disciples of Paul of Léon. Machutus (15 November) and Anianus, Evurtius's successor (17 November) have likewise been added by a single hand.

The likeliest explanation for this combination of saints is that the original core of the calendar included, alongside feast days derived from its northern French exemplar, those Breton saints whose relics were taken to Orléans and Fleury in the tenth century: Samson, Paul (Paulinianus) of Léon, and perhaps Melor, if his presence can be accounted for by the fact that he appears in the lists of relics removed from Brittany in *Translatio Sancti Maglorii*. Around them accumulated the feasts of other saints from Léon (*Hoiarnbiu*, *Toconoc*, *Ternoch* and *Goeznou*), plus other famous saints of Brittany (Winwaloe and Corentin from Landévennec, and Machutus of Alet), and saints of the diocese of Orléans which was now Paul's home.<sup>126</sup> The presence of Welsh saints may be connected with the Welsh-language glosses in the manuscript (although the scribe of the calendar has confused the Welsh saint David with the Old Testament king). *Budcat*, presented as a companion-martyr to Melor in the calendar, may perhaps be a Welsh saint: Rhygyfarch's Life of David has a reference to two holy men, *Boducat* and *Martrun*, who submitted to David's authority in Cydweli.<sup>127</sup> Might *Budcat* in Angers 477 have been derived from a Welsh liturgical source, and (possibly) the name of his companion-saint been mistaken for a claim that he was a martyr? The real surprise is the presence of two Cornish saints. Petroc and Constantine appear together, as saint and repentant layman, in the eleventh-century Life of Petroc: their occurrence together in this calendar implies that they were already associated in hagiographic tradition.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> For these Léon saints, all of whom still have local cults, see Tanguy, 'De l'origine', 50–1.

<sup>127</sup> Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 14, ed. and transl. Sharpe, 'Rhygyfarch's Life', 120–1.

<sup>128</sup> *Vita I. S. Petroci*, 11, ed. Grosjean, 'Vies', 494–5; *WCD*, 162–3.

Both were culted in Wales as well as Cornwall, and either region may have been the ultimate source of their appearance in the Loire Valley.<sup>129</sup> This calendar was not, of course, created primarily for liturgical use but formed part of a scientific reference manuscript; the saints in it should perhaps be regarded as those venerated by a small community within a community, or even just a succession of individual expatriate scholars. However, a fully liturgical calendar from the same date and area (Angers BM 91, fols. 14r–23r) contained a number of Breton saints, including ‘Meler’.<sup>130</sup>

Given this Breton presence, it is no surprise to find Fleury becoming a school of Breton hagiography in the later tenth and eleventh centuries. The translation of Paul Aurelian was written up by Aimo of Fleury in 1004 × 1010 with accompanying miracles; soon afterwards, his *Vita* was rewritten (by Vitalis, 1005 × 1030) to eliminate its ‘British wordiness’ (*britannica garrulitas*).<sup>131</sup> The Life of another Breton saint, Leonorius, was written, probably at Fleury, towards the end of the tenth century.<sup>132</sup> Soon after the millennium, Isembard of Fleury produced his Life of Judoc. Finally, in the mid-eleventh century, after the abbey of Rhuys had been re-founded from Fleury, a Life of its reputed founder Gildas was written, referring to events at Fleury and containing a further posthumous miracle of Paul Aurelian.<sup>133</sup> Fresh Insular influences, including material that seems to have originated in northern Britain, are evident in it. These and *Vitae* produced at other centres outside Brittany have much to reveal about the nature of Insular contacts.

## Insular Links in Post-Viking Breton Hagiography

### *Lives of Breton Saints Outside Brittany*

In some of the Lives written outside Brittany, there is a sense that the Insular origins of the saint in question have been poorly understood, or lost importance. Two examples are *Vita S. Brioci* and *Vita S. Leonorii*: the first apparently written at Angers in the mid- or late eleventh century, the

<sup>129</sup> For Petroc, see Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 10–15, 73–114, 146–51; for Constantine, Orme, *The Saints*, 94–6.

<sup>130</sup> A digitised reproduction of this manuscript can be found at [https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/resultRecherche/resultRecherche.php?COMPOSITION\\_ID=3202](https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/resultRecherche/resultRecherche.php?COMPOSITION_ID=3202). Bischoff, *Katalog*, I.18 (no number) dates it to the tenth century, ‘with Breton symptoms’; the provenance is Saint-Aubin, Angers. The account of it in Duine, *Inventaire liturgique*, XXV, 35–7, is incomplete. See Bourguès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 131; Grémont, ‘Recherches’, 338.

<sup>131</sup> Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 290–8: discussion of authorship with references at 297.

<sup>132</sup> The earliest (partial) manuscript witness of ca 1000 has Fleury provenance: Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 123.

<sup>133</sup> Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 297, 454.

second perhaps at late tenth-century Fleury.<sup>134</sup> The two show a certain literary kinship: both are partly modelled on *Vita I S. Samsonis*, and they share preoccupations with demonic possession, exorcism, and the keeping of the canonical hours.<sup>135</sup>

*Vita S. Brioci* was written to assist in the veneration of Brioc, whose relics had been at Angers since (perhaps) the late ninth century.<sup>136</sup> It is well-informed in giving the saint's full name as *Briomaglus* and claiming that he originated in Ceredigion: Brioc does seem to be commemorated in the Ceredigion place-name Llandyfriog.<sup>137</sup> However, it shows little further knowledge of Brioc's immediate background. The names of the saint's parents (quite different from those given for *Thyriawc* in his Welsh genealogy) may indicate the author coming under the broader Insular influences of the tenth century: Brioc's father's name *Cerpus* may be a form of the Irish Cairpre, and his mother Eldruda is possibly based on the English Etheldreda (Æthelthryth): Saint-Serge, Angers was granted land at Swavesey in Cambridgeshire, near the centre of Etheldreda's cult at Ely, soon after the Norman Conquest, and the saint (*Edeltruda* in local spelling) at some point became the patron of Treflez in Léon.<sup>138</sup> *Vita Brioci* relies heavily on borrowings from *Vita I S. Samsonis* for its structure, but replaces the complex early Christian Wales of that text with a hackneyed fantasy of paganism and conversion; and the garbling of the traditional master-pupil relationships of Welsh and Breton hagiography, with Germanus of Auxerre replaced at the head of the tradition by Germanus of Paris, suggest an increasing remoteness from a living Insular tradition.

The same is true of *Vita Leonorii*. This text has been dated to the ninth century, on the basis of the script of an early fragment from Fleury (Orléans BM 343); but given the archaising tendencies of Fleury script from the mid-tenth to early eleventh centuries, Joseph-Claude Poulin prefers to date the fragment *ca* 1000 and the text's composition to the late tenth century.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, assuming that the fragment implies the existence of a complete text, the *Vita* is the earliest post-Viking Life of

<sup>134</sup> Tanguy, 'De *Briomaglus* à *Briocus*', 20–2 and references; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 77–83, 121–33.

<sup>135</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 374–7.

<sup>136</sup> Couffon, 'Essai critique', 10–12; Merdrignac, *Recherches*, I.54; Poulin, *L'hagiographie*, 77. Stéphane Morin has suggested that the longer of the two extant versions of his Life was not created until the mid-twelfth century: Morin, *Trégor, Goëlo, Penthièvre*, 289–99; Morin, 'Réflexion', 256 and note 66.

<sup>137</sup> For the occurrence of the name-forms *Briomaglus*, *Briocus* and others, see Tanguy, 'De *Briomaglus* à *Briocus*', 13–16; for Llandyfriog see Ó Riain, 'The Saints', 395 and references; Wmffre, *The Place-Names*, I.173.

<sup>138</sup> ByS, 18, EWGT, 57; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, IV.87.

<sup>139</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 121–3.

a Breton saint. Leonorius, or Lenouerius as the Orléans fragment calls him, is probably the *Leonorius episcopus* whose relics were taken to Paris with those of other Breton saints in the years after 919, and eventually enshrined at Beaumont-sur-Oise; he is also presumably the eponym of Saint-Lunaire, near Saint-Malo.<sup>140</sup> But the *Vita* as we have it never specifies where in Brittany the saint lived, or names any churches he founded – subjects which are major preoccupations of *Vitae* definitely composed within Brittany.<sup>141</sup> It is a peculiar text which reads almost like a parody of the Life of Samson, and of Breton hagiography in general, with a tongue-in-cheek attitude reminiscent of Letaldus of Micy. The opening chapter jumbles the Samsonian historical background, claiming that ‘Gillebertus rex’ (apparently King Childeburt I, 511–58) was a king of the Britons, in an unspecified territory adjacent to Dyfed (*tellure Temetiana* [sic]). (It is probably as a result of compounding this misunderstanding that the text later designates ‘Gillebertus’ as ‘the king who reigned at that time in Francia and similarly in Britannia’, a quotation beloved of historians who argue for sixth-century cross-Channel kingdoms.<sup>142</sup>) However, as with the Life of Brioc, there are several episodes that show familiarity with favourite motifs of Insular British hagiography: a portable altar miraculously recovered from the sea, a miraculous bell, stags that plough for the saint, a helpful animal that leads him to food.<sup>143</sup> These last two motifs are particularly close to Lifris’s Life of Cadog, and suggest that the contact between Saint-Malo and Llancarfan revealed by the ninth-century Lives of Machutus may have helped to shape the tradition of the neighbouring saint Leonorius, even in exile.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, *Vita Leonorii*, like ‘Ingomar’s’ *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo*, contains an episode in which a parent has a vision of their child’s future royalty, arguably containing Celtic mythological features.<sup>145</sup> The impression is that by the late tenth century, as Breton clergy, relics and hagiography made themselves at home in northern France, the motifs appropriate for the Life of a Breton saint became widely known and a capable hagiographer was able to reproduce them.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Guillotel, ‘L’exode’, 312–13.

<sup>141</sup> In this it resembles *Vita Sancti Guenaili*, another text perhaps composed at a saint’s non-Breton resting-place, and some of the Welsh Lives in BL Cotton Vespasian A.XIV that had become detached from the saints’ original locations.

<sup>142</sup> *Vita S. Leonorii*, 13, ed. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 145–6. See Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 189; Carrée and Merdrignac (eds.), *La Vie latine*, 91, 164.

<sup>143</sup> *Vita S. Leonorii*, 6–7, 18, 11, 8, ed. Carrée and Merdrignac, *La Vie latine*, 140–1, 149–50, 144–5, 141–2.

<sup>144</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 11–12, *VSB*, 48–55. <sup>145</sup> DUBALA, 235.

<sup>146</sup> As the editors of *Acta Sanctorum* suggested, ‘it was felt that a Life ought to be invented for [Leonorius] on the pattern of other Breton *legenda*’ (*On a jugé que l’on devait lui*



Another *Vita* from outside Brittany that gave a 'Celtic' flavour to its hero's biography was the *Vita S. Gudwali* produced at Ghent in honour of the relics of this reputed saint and bishop. The Life survives in thirteenth-century manuscripts, and Doble dates it to the twelfth century, but an authorial reference to an earlier source, and a passage in the eleventh-century *Vita Bertulfi*, support the idea that there were earlier writings about the saint in circulation.<sup>147</sup> (*Vita Bertulfi*, 1073 × 1088, recounts a scandal involving the relics of Bertulf and Gudwal: stolen to order at Montreuil for King Æthelstan of England by a relic-thief from *Britannia*, they were recovered by Count Arnulf of Flanders and installed at Ghent – a different perspective on the Exeter relic-list's eulogy of Æthelstan.<sup>148</sup>) The author of *Vita S. Gudwali* understands the Breton and Insular background so poorly that he imagines the saints' relics to have been brought from mainland Britain to Picardy during the Viking Age. Nonetheless, the contents of the Life read like a sampler of typically Breton episodes.<sup>149</sup> The reference to the famine, plague and war that raged in Britain before the saint's birth could have been taken from Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloei* – and probably was, since abridged versions of that text circulated in Flanders during the Middle Ages and one is found adjacent to *Vita S. Gudwali* in the Bruges manuscript. An episode of miraculous shelter from a storm may have been inspired by the same source.<sup>150</sup> Gudwal's election as bishop followed by immediate resignation to lead a hermit's life recalls *Vita S. Maglorii*. The scene where he reclaims land from the sea corresponds to a miracle in *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*. The saint giving his horse to beggars parallels *Vita S. Brioci*. The account of angels assisting the saint in celebrating Mass is found in *Vita I S. Samsonis* and other *Vitae* derived from it; anecdotes about miraculously tamed wolves come into the Lives of Brioc, Cunwal and

*inventer une Vie sur le modèle des autres Légendes bretonnes*): *Acta Sanctorum Iul.* I.119, quoted by Carrée and Merdrignac (eds), *La Vie latine*, 13.

<sup>147</sup> Bruges Stadsbibliotheek 404; Brussels Bibliothèque Royale 3300; Paris BnF Lat. 5606. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, I.69. *Sic enim in antiquioribus gestorum eis exemplaribus legitur: Vita S. Gudwali*, II.10, ed. Hensken, 721.

<sup>148</sup> *Vita Bertulfi Renticensis*, 24, 27, ed. Holder-Egger, 635–6; Mériaux, *Gallia Irradiata*, 225–6 and references, 357; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, I.70, note 13; Huyghebaert, 'La consécration', 130–1; Huyghebaert, *Une translation de reliques à Gand*, lxxiii; Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 50 and note 30. For the cult and hagiography of Gudwal, see also Cassard, 'En marge', 265–7; Debary, 'Saint Gudwal'; Deuffic, 'L'exode', 366–7; Duine, *Inventaire liturgique*, 24.

<sup>149</sup> As pointed out in general terms by Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, I.69.

<sup>150</sup> *Vita S. Winwaloei*, I.1, I.4, ed. De Smedt, 175, 179; *Vita S. Gudwali*, I.1, III.26, ed. Hensken, 719, 724. For the manuscripts, see the Bollandists' website, [http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/Nquerrysaintsection.cfm?code\\_bhl=3687](http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be/Nquerrysaintsection.cfm?code_bhl=3687) (accessed 15 September 2017).



Ronan.<sup>151</sup> The features of Breton sainthood, then, were understood in Ghent, but there no longer seems to have been direct input from the Insular Celtic world.

A more enigmatic text is *Vita III S. Turiavi*, which survives only in a thirteenth-century manuscript from Clermont.<sup>152</sup> Its hero St Turiau is presented as a bishop of Dol, apparently of the early eighth century, who retires (like Maglorius and Gudwal) to become a hermit. The Life mentions two characters 'across the sea': a one-time *rex Constantinus filius Peterni decorvio* [read *de Cornovia?*], whose place in heaven is described by a girl who returns from the dead; and *Gerent*, a friend of Turiau whom he sees in a vision being carried to heaven by angels.<sup>153</sup> Constantine and Gerent were both reputedly royal saints of Cornwall whose cults are evidenced from the tenth century onwards (Gerent is found in the 'Vatican' List of Cornish parochial saints; Constantine occurs in the calendar in Angers BM 477).<sup>154</sup> Their role in Breton and Welsh genealogies has been discussed earlier.<sup>155</sup> The Clermont Life contains some distinctively British miracles: the preservation of part of an oak tree under which Turiau once preached, as an altar; the miraculous provision of a spring containing three fish.<sup>156</sup> It must antedate the 1130s, since it was drawn on for the Life of Teilo in the Book of Llandaf.<sup>157</sup> Although preserved at Clermont, where Turiau was also commemorated in an eleventh-century calendar, the Life may have been written in Brittany, perhaps at Dol or one of its dependencies; it seems likely that the same south-west British contacts seen in the Fleury calendar and the 'Riwal' genealogy were available to its author.<sup>158</sup>

Most interesting is the evidence that Breton hagiography influenced the revival of English hagiography during the tenth-century Benedictine reform there. The widespread cult of Machutus in England was supported by a strong manuscript-tradition of his longest Life, by Bili, which formed the basis for a version in Old English composed in the tenth or early eleventh century.<sup>159</sup> A metrical Latin Life of Judoc, based on his *Vita I*, was composed, probably at Winchester, in the late tenth

<sup>151</sup> *Vita S. Gudwali*, I.4, I.6–7, II.12, IV.39, II.11, IV.35–6, ed. Hensken, 719, 720, 727, 721, 726–7. For the wolf motif see Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 113–6.

<sup>152</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 363–7.

<sup>153</sup> *Vita S. Turiavi*, 5, 9, ed. Duine, 'Vie antique', 35–6, 39–40.

<sup>154</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 94–6; Olson and Padel, 'A Tenth-Century List', 45 (no. 11); see also Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II.15–24.

<sup>155</sup> ByS, 26–7, *EWGT*, 58; Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales', 142–5.

<sup>156</sup> *Vita S. Turiavi*, 11, 12, ed. Duine, 'Vie antique', 41–2. <sup>157</sup> DUBALA, 169.

<sup>158</sup> Duine, *Inventaire liturgique*, 92; Bourguès, 'Joseph-Claude Poulin', 151–2; Bourguès, 'Propagande ducale', 165–6.

<sup>159</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 147–54; *Vita S. Machutis*, ed. Le Duc, *Vie de saint Malo*.

century.<sup>160</sup> Breton hagiography may have inspired writings on English saints. There is an arresting similarity between the Lives of Kenelm and Melor, both boy-martyrs, one culted at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, the other primarily at Lanmeur in Léon, Brittany.<sup>161</sup> The readiest explanation is that, although both *Vitae* apparently date from the later eleventh century, both cults were known at Fleury as early as the tenth century, and their promoters may have shared information.<sup>162</sup> Ramsey, an important centre of Fleury influence in England, was the home of the scholar Byrhtferth (*ca* 970–1020), a prolific hagiographer some of whose output arguably shows Breton parallels. His version of the ‘Royal Kentish Legend’ uses the motif of an animal tracing the bounds of a monastery; his *Vita Ecgwini* contains both the ‘Ring of Polycrates’ motif and the ‘revelatory swine’ motif, in which a sow and her piglets mark the spot where the saint is to found his church.<sup>163</sup> Scholars have remarked upon possible contacts between Evesham and south-east Wales, where these motifs were current in the twelfth century; however, a visitor to Fleury would have had access to the hagiography of Paul Aurelian, in which both motifs are prominent.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries we thus see Breton hagiography becoming an influential genre both in metropolitan France and in England, quarried for its characteristic themes and incidents. Inevitably, in the process, it became less ‘local’. Following their well-established models, Breton hagiographers of the central Middle Ages continued to write about the sixth-century Age of the Saints, an age whose mythical holiness became ever more pronounced, and whose image could no longer be radically changed. Unsurprisingly, the depictions of saints and their milieu grew vague and generic, and genuine knowledge of the Insular background appeared even more rarely: perhaps rather because there was no longer a literary requirement to display such knowledge, than because it did not exist. The promotion of saints’ cults was

<sup>160</sup> Lapidge, ‘A Metrical *Vita*’, 256.

<sup>161</sup> *Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi*, in Love (ed.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives*, 49–89; *Vita S. Melori*, ed. Bourguès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 55–95. See Brett, ‘St Kenelm’.

<sup>162</sup> Love (ed.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints’ Lives*, xci, xcvi–ci, cxxi–cxxxix, cxliii–cxvii; Lapidge, ‘Abbot Germanus’; Lapidge, ‘A Tenth-Century Metrical Calendar’; Davril, *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, 8.

<sup>163</sup> Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend*, 11–12; Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Ecgwini*, I.13, II.10–12, ed. and transl. Lapidge, *The Lives*, 230–3, 244–51. Examples of these motifs in Breton hagiography: tracing bounds, Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.34, ed. Lot, 375; ‘ring of Polycrates’, Wrdisten, *Vita Pauli Aureliani*, 17, ed. Cuissard, 445–6; *Vita S. Maglorii*, 16, ed. Van Hecke, 787; ‘revelatory swine’, Wrdisten, *Vita Pauli Aureliani*, 15, ed. Cuissard, 442–3. For discussion: Krajewski, *Archetypal Narratives*, 76; Jankulak, ‘Alba Longa’, 272–3; Powell, ‘Once Upon a Time’, 178–80.

increasingly professionalised, and even their popular manifestations may have been becoming more stereotyped, with anecdotes easily transferred from one saint to another. However, some texts produced from the mid-eleventh century onwards in southern Brittany – the Vannetais and Cornouaille – contained apparently fresh input from Insular sources. The Cornouaille Lives of Gurthiern and Ninnoc will be discussed in [Chapter 7](#); the ‘Rhuys Life’ of Gildas will be the subject of the [next section](#).

*The Rhuys Life of Gildas: Gaelic and North British Influence*

The Rhuys Life of Gildas warrants separate treatment from the group of *Vitae* that reproduce the ‘Riwal’ tradition. Like them, it can be associated with the reforming collaboration between Fleury and the ducal house of Rennes, but there are important differences. While their connections are with the churches of the former region of Domnonia, it was written for a Vannetais house. It is a more obviously authored text than the others discussed in this chapter, so that, unusually, the circumstances of its composition stand out relatively clearly; it is perhaps the only Breton *Vita* to celebrate the return of a saint ‘lost’ during the Viking Age to his home ground. Its author takes a considerable interest in the history of Brittany, particularly the Vannetais, before and during the Viking Age, and refers directly to the text of Gregory of Tours;<sup>164</sup> oddly, however, he has no theory to offer on the origin of Brittany.<sup>165</sup> Despite quoting at length from Gildas’s *De Excidio Britanniae*, the Rhuys author does not follow the example of Wrdesten and connect his unhappy picture of Britain with migration to Brittany. Nor does he mention the ‘Riwal’ theory, unlike his fellow Fleury hagiographer Isembard.

Most of what we suppose about the abandonment and revival of the monastery of Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys comes from the Rhuys Life.<sup>166</sup> Its circumstantial account of the departure of the monks to Déols under their abbot Daoc stands against an absence of earlier evidence; the very existence of a pre-eleventh-century monastery at Rhuys has been doubted. René Largillière considered that the cult of Gildas in Breton toponymy followed from the re-foundation of Rhuys and dated from the eleventh century at the earliest.<sup>167</sup> At the opposite extreme, Ian Wood has recently re-opened the case for the historical Gildas having founded a monastery in the Vannetais in the sixth century; other scholars have taken

<sup>164</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 32, transl. Williams, 60–1; Valéry, ‘La bibliothèque’, 69.

<sup>165</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 16, transl. Williams, 36–7.

<sup>166</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 32–4, transl. Williams, 60–5.      <sup>167</sup> Largillière, ‘La topographie’, 25.

intermediate positions, suggesting that a church or churches originally dedicated to a local Breton saint, perhaps named *Gueltas*, were reassigned to Gildas between the sixth century and the tenth.<sup>168</sup> This would explain the apparent prevalence of the cult at sites in Cornouaille, particularly along the River Blavet, which have no connection with Rhuys. One possibility is that Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuys was founded, re-founded or expanded not long before the Viking attacks, perhaps with the support of Alan I.

No complete medieval manuscript of the Life survives, but internal evidence suggests that it was composed in the mid-eleventh century.<sup>169</sup> Ferdinand Lot suggested that its author was Vitalis, a monk of Fleury who was abbot of Rhuys from 1038 until after 1067 (with interruptions).<sup>170</sup> For chronological reasons it is unlikely that this Vitalis was identical with the Vitalis of Fleury who rewrote Wrmmonoc's *Vita Pauli Aureliani* during the abbacy of Gauzlin, 1005 × 1030. However, the attention paid in the Life to the role of Fleury in the re-foundation of Rhuys, and to the cult of Paul Aurelian (whose Life, in its rewritten version, is heavily used), makes the Rhuys Life effectively an example of Fleury-Breton hagiography.<sup>171</sup>

The most immediately striking feature of the Rhuys Life is its assertion of a northern British origin for Gildas, in *Arechluta regio*.<sup>172</sup> Andrew Breeze has suggested that *Arechluta* should be identified with the present-day Arclid in Cheshire, and that Gildas may really have been born there.<sup>173</sup> However, the Rhuys hagiographer seems to have understood it as

<sup>168</sup> Wood, 'Columbanus, the Britons'; Wood, 'Columbanus in Brittany'. On Gildas's name and possible confusion with a local saint, see also Loth, 'Le nom de Gildas'; Ó Riain, 'Gildas' and 'Le nom'.

<sup>169</sup> The text is known from its first edition by Jean Dubois (Ioannes a Bosco), *Floriacensis vetus Bibliotheca* (Lyon, 1605): Lot, *Mélanges*, 431. It survives partially in a fragment of a Fleury lectionary of the twelfth century, Rome Bibl. Vallicelliana G 98, which Elisabeth Pellegrin argued was the manuscript used by Dubois: Pellegrin, 'Nouveaux fragments'. A version interpolated at Saint-Philibert exists in a twelfth-century manuscript, Paris BnF Lat. 5318. This and excerpts in medieval chronicles are discussed by Valéry, 'Autour de l'origine'. Bourges, 'La production hagiographique et l'atmosphère religieuse' (accessed 18 August 2017), suggests that the text was first composed shortly after the re-foundation of the monastery and extended with miracle-stories in 1060 × 1067; the apparent change in genre, from saint's life to chronicle, at the end of chapter 31, may support the idea of a two-stage composition. This is also the opinion of Williams, *Two Lives of Gildas*, 8, of Merdrignac, 'La "fabrique des saints"', 54, and of Meaney, 'Scyld Sceffing', 49.

<sup>170</sup> Lot, *Mélanges*, 235.

<sup>171</sup> Chapters 3–5 of *Vita Gildae* are closely based on chapter I.4–8 of the rewritten Fleury *Vita Pauli Aureliani*, with some direct quotations. *Vita Gildae*, 3–5, transl. Williams, 16–23; Vitalis of Fleury, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, ed. Henschen and Papebroch, 'De S. Paulo', 111–12.

<sup>172</sup> *Arechluta* is taken to be a preserved sixth-century name-form by Jackson, *Language and History*, 42, 307. The form is also discussed by Koch, 'Prosody', 151, 153.

<sup>173</sup> Breeze, 'Where Was Gildas Born?'

Strathclyde (he says it was named for the River *Clut*, Clyde), and so perhaps did his immediate source. In stating that Gildas was educated in Wales, was fêted in Ireland, and then moved to Brittany (where he died), he makes the saint's career span the entire Celtic world.<sup>174</sup> Alex Woolf has suggested that the idea of Gildas's Strathclyde origin may emanate from the north of Ireland or from Gaelic-speaking Scotland, where the word *Britannia* would be taken to mean Strathclyde.<sup>175</sup>

The Rhuys author mentions that Gildas visited Ireland in the time of 'King Ainmericus'.<sup>176</sup> 'Ainmericus' must mean Ainmuire, King of Tara 566–9: the spelling suggests that the Latinised name was formed from the Old Irish genitive case of the name, *Ainmuirech*, implying that the author used a written source by an Irish author: perhaps a version of the Irish annals, or possibly even a Hiberno-Latin *Vita* of Gildas.<sup>177</sup> The Rhuys author also uses Gildas's Irish sojourn to connect him with the famous Irish saint Brigit, some of whose relics the Rhuys monks possessed.

However, some of the information in the Rhuys Life must have been derived from Wales. This is most apparent in the reference to Gildas's brother 'Mailocus', who built a monastery 'in Lyuhes, in the district of Elmail'.<sup>178</sup> This establishment, at Llowes, in Maesyfed, is mentioned in two documents in the Book of Llandaf: *podum liuhess in eluail*, and in *elmail Lann Meilic ha lyguess*: the first ostensibly dating from the reign of Morgan ap Athrwys in *ca* 730, the second from the episcopate of Joseph, 1022–*ca* 1045.<sup>179</sup> The name *Meilic* does not equate precisely to Mailoc, but what is significant here is that the Rhuys author knew of the Welsh church.<sup>180</sup> One wonders too whether the author's special interest in Mailoc may have been reinforced by the fact that a similarly named saint, *Melec*, was a local eponym in the Vannetais with an active and widespread cult – although we cannot know whether this saint had any prior connection with Gildas or with his Welsh counterpart.<sup>181</sup>

The author's names for other members of Gildas's family have Welsh analogues that are less exact and harder to account for. His eldest brother, 'Cuillus', appears as 'Hueil', an inveterate enemy of King Arthur, in the twelfth-century Life of Gildas by Caradog and in the tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*.<sup>182</sup> His brothers Mailoc, Egreas and Allecco may be eponyms of

<sup>174</sup> WAB, 3–4. <sup>175</sup> Woolf, *Where was Govan?*, 5–6.

<sup>176</sup> Picard, 'Gildas et l'Irlande', 18–19; Lot, *Mélanges*, 242; *Vita Gildae*, 10–11, transl. Williams, 28–9.

<sup>177</sup> Woolf, *Where was Govan?*, 6; Picard, 'Gildas et l'Irlande', 14.

<sup>178</sup> *Lyuhes in pago Elmail*, *Vita Gildae*, 2, transl. Williams, 16–17. <sup>179</sup> LL, 149, 255.

<sup>180</sup> The identification is rejected by Tanguy, 'Les cultes', 23. <sup>181</sup> DCA, 124.

<sup>182</sup> Caradog, *Vita Gildae*, 5, transl. Williams, 90–3. For traditions about Hueil in Wales, see Henken, 'Folklore', 218–9.

churches in Anglesey, Llanfaelog, Llaneigrad and Llanallgo.<sup>183</sup> Above all, his father, 'Caunus', was to be a prominent figure in medieval Welsh tradition under the name of *Caw*. The earliest datable mention of Caw from Wales itself is in the Life of St Cadog by Lifris of Llancarfan (ca 1081 × 1104). Lifris gave 'Cau' both as Gildas's patronym, and as the name of a gigantic dead warrior brought to life by Cadog in Scotland (*Albania*), who dug the foundations of a monastery for the saint in return for receiving baptism and escaping from hell.<sup>184</sup> As Rachel Bromwich suggested, Lifris may here have been attempting to promote St Cadog's prestige over against another saintly family: he demoted the ancestor of the Gildas family to a sinner who was required to earn redemption by serving Cadog. Caw's gigantic stature was probably suggested by the similarity of his name to Welsh *cawr*, 'giant'.<sup>185</sup> This equation allowed Lifris to enliven his story with the motif of the primeval giant resurrected to receive baptism, which occurs in Tirechán's *Collectanea* in the Book of Armagh, and in Bili's *Vita S. Machutis* from ninth-century Brittany (see Chapter 3).

This reading implies that Caw was already a recognised ancestor-figure when Lifris wrote. Later medieval Welsh tradition presented him as founder of 'one of the three saintly lineages of the Island of Britain'. There are lists of saints who were 'children of Caw' in the Arthurian tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and in the thirteenth-century tract *Plant Brychan*, which include some or all of the siblings of Gildas listed in the Rhuy's Life.<sup>186</sup> The Rhuy's Life may, then, be an early witness to a pre-existing body of Welsh saintly lore.

The figure of Caw may have originated in cultural interaction between the Gaelic and British worlds in the tenth century: the kind of interaction that is exemplified by the varied collection of early medieval memorial stones at Govan in Strathclyde.<sup>187</sup> A royal saint Constantine was enshrined at Govan, probably in the elaborate surviving ninth-century sandstone sarcophagus. Alex Woolf suggests that the name Caw derives from *Causantin*, the Gaelic version of the name Constantine, and that this saint was appropriated as an ancestor of Welsh saints, in an extension of the way in which stories and genealogies of the 'Old North' were adopted into the secular historical lore of Wales.<sup>188</sup> The characterisation of Caw in Lifris's Life of St Cadog has something in common with a Middle Irish

<sup>183</sup> Miller, *The Saints*, 22, 56, 58, 86, 96–7. <sup>184</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 26, VSB, 82–5.

<sup>185</sup> Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 349–50, 452–3; Grooms, *The Giants of Wales*, xxxvi–xliii, 51–4, 150–1.

<sup>186</sup> 'The Llywelyn ab Iorwerth Genealogies', I.5, 4, ed. Guy, *MWG*, 356–7 (for the place of the *Plant Brychan* tract in this text, see *MWG*, 159–60); *EWGT*, 83; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, triad 81, 349; *WCD*, 126–9; Wade-Evans, 'Caw of Pictland'.

<sup>187</sup> Wendy Davies speaking at the 1992 Govan conference underlined the cultural continuum between North Britain, Wales and Brittany: 'Ecclesiastical Centres', 101.

<sup>188</sup> Woolf, *Where was Govan?*, 5–8; Macquarrie, 'Early Christian Govan', 10–14.



text, the ‘Expulsion of Mochuda from Rahan’, which presents a royal Scottish saint, *Cusantin mac Fercussa*, as a digger of monastic foundations with the strength of a hundred men. As it happens, St Mochuda and his monastery, Lismore, are mentioned in the Life of St Cadog.<sup>189</sup> Llancarfan thus emerges as a nodal point for hagiographical motifs that appear as far afield as Ireland, Strathclyde, Saint-Malo and Rhuy. Llancarfan was apparently the beneficiary of the eleventh-century charter mentioned earlier, granting *Lann Meilic*, a church named after Gildas’s brother. As the community of Llancarfan recovered from Viking depredations, it apparently collected churches and the saints and hagiographical traditions that went with them, and was able to pass such information on to interested enquirers.

Other ‘Brittonic’ and ‘Celtic’ features in the motifs and incidents of the Rhuy Life of Gildas may be briefly mentioned. It contains the obligatory Breton saint’s battle with a serpent, the founding of a bell as a gift from one saint to another, and a miracle-working staff.<sup>190</sup> It also contains the pilgrimage to Rome which was to become a popular feature of medieval Welsh saints’ Lives.<sup>191</sup> Its most famous episode may be the ‘Bluebeard’ story in which Conomor (*Conomerus*), the hero/villain of so many Breton *Vitae*, appears in full folk-tale mode as a diabolical character who marries women only to murder them. His final victim is Trifina, daughter of Waroch of Vannes, with her unborn son (and future saint) Trechmor. Gildas, having earlier vouched for Trifina’s safety, brings her back to life, and in a climax recalling the fates of Benlli and Vortigern in *Historia Brittonum*, causes the unrepentant Conomor to be buried in his collapsing fort.<sup>192</sup> Trifina’s name may echo that of *Triphun*, king of Dyfed, who appears in the late eleventh-century Life of St David (although it may alternatively be derived from a topographic term, *trifinium*).<sup>193</sup> Similar stories of persecuted women and murdered child-saints occur in Welsh, Strathclyde and south-west British as well as Breton hagiography, but the main point of the story in its context in *Vita Gildae* is to emphasise the saint’s ability to avenge the breach of his protection, an ability for which Welsh saints were noted; the point is reinforced in the narrations of a number of Welsh charters in which breach of sanctuary calls for lavish compensation.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Dumville, ‘Cusantin mac Fercussa’; Mews, ‘The Flight of Carthach’, 7–9; Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 10, *VSB*, 48–9.

<sup>190</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 13, 10, 40, transl. Williams, 34–5, 28–9, 70–1.

<sup>191</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 13, transl. Williams, 34–5.

<sup>192</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 20–5, transl. Williams, 44–53; *HB*, 34, 47, ed. Faral, 25–6, 34–5.

<sup>193</sup> Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 5, ed. and transl. Sharpe and Davies, 112–13; *DUBALA*, 71–2; Bourges, “‘Buttes-témoin’” (accessed 22 August 2017); Tanguy, ‘Les cultes’, 12–15.

<sup>194</sup> Cartwright, ‘The Cult of St Non’; Brett, ‘St Kenelm’, 258–60; Milin, ‘La légende bretonne’, 316–20; Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.50, ed. Lot, 383–4; W. Davies, ‘Adding



The Breton-Welsh scholarly contacts – perhaps particularly with Llanccarfan – which underlie the Rhuys Life of Gildas appear more clearly in the period following the Norman Conquest. After 1066, as we shall see, those contacts are more evident at Dol and in the Cornouaillais monasteries of Landévennec and Quimperlé. However, Rhuys was well placed to pass the baton on to the Cornouaille houses. It had probably risen to be one of the intellectual centres of Brittany in the last years of the ninth century, and its re-foundation from Fleury allowed it to partly recover that position. It had ‘disciples from *Cornugallia*’ (who tried to claim Gildas’s relics, according to the Life).<sup>195</sup> Quimperlé and Landévennec, for their part, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries claimed the cults of saints whose primary sites were in the Vannetais – Ninnoc and Guenael. The influence of Rhuys may show in the (extremely similar) ‘Waroch’ episodes of these saints’ *Vitae*, and in the adoption of a Gregory of Tours-based historiography in Cornouaille. And it may have been via ongoing Rhuys contacts with Wales that a Life of Paternus of Vannes was made available to the hagiographer of Padarn of Llanbadarn in the late eleventh or early twelfth century: the monks of Rhuys possessed relics of Paternus.<sup>196</sup>

As a postscript to this section, it seems relevant to review, briefly, some further evidence in texts and saints’ cults for contact between the Gaelic-speaking and north British worlds and Brittany in the tenth and eleventh centuries and after. Some tenth- or eleventh-century versions of the Life of St Patrick associate Patrick’s family with Strathclyde and also locate his capture as a slave in Brittany, *Armaire Letha* – the only definite reference to Brittany anywhere in Irish hagiography.<sup>197</sup> The tenth-century Breton litanies, to be discussed more fully in the [next chapter](#), contain the names of a few Gaelic saints, not only those who were known in many parts of Europe (Patrick, Brigit, Columcille, Columbanus and Brendan),<sup>198</sup> but also saints who are otherwise unknown on the Continent: *Carnach*, *Munna* and the otherwise

Insult to Injury’, 138–43; W. Davies, ‘Property Rights’, 521–4; Heist, ‘Hagiography’, 136–8.

<sup>195</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 30, transl. Williams, 58–9; Tanguy, ‘Les cultes’, 18–20.

<sup>196</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 33, transl. Williams, 62–3.

<sup>197</sup> *Vita Tripartita*, ed. and transl. Stokes, *The Tripartite Life*, 17; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 11–13; Clancy, ‘The Cults’, 20–22, and references. On the dating of the *Vita Tripartita S. Patricii*, see also Dumville, ‘The Dating’; Herbert, ‘Latin and Vernacular Hagiography’, 341. The similarity of the claims about Gildas and Patrick was noted by Duine, *Memento*, 406, note 1. Howlett, *Caledonian Craftsmanship*, 198, suggests that the association of Patrick and Gildas with Strathclyde was ‘part of an imaginative attempt to enrich the historic antiquity of Scotland by including in it the very founders of the traditions of the British and the Irish.’

<sup>198</sup> For the cult of Brendan in Brittany, see Wooding, ‘The Medieval and Early Modern Cult’, 198–200.

unidentified, but Gaelic-looking *Dircille*.<sup>199</sup> Carnach may be Cairnech of Tuilén, who, according to some Irish traditions, came from Cornwall.<sup>200</sup> Munna may be Munnu *alias* Fintan mac Tulcháin, a well-attested saint with an obit of 635 in the Chronicle of Ireland and a *Vita* of his own possibly dating from the eighth century. In his *Vita* he was said (like Machutus) to have undertaken a voyage to the Land of Promise with St Brendan.<sup>201</sup> The Breviary of Aberdeen states that he also founded, and was buried at Kilmun in Cowal, and it is conceivably from north Britain that his cult reached Brittany.<sup>202</sup> Munna was much later reputed to be the patron of the church of Logonna-Daoulas in Finistère, a priory of the abbey of Daoulas (founded 1173), which, coincidentally or not, had priories in two places named after St Brigit (Loperhet close by, and Perguet on the south coast).<sup>203</sup> These Clydemouth links chime with those of two saints who are eponyms of *plou*-place-names (presumably of the ninth century or earlier): Cunwal, eponym of Planguenoual CA, tentatively identified with Conval, reputed disciple of St Kentigern and patron of Inchinnan, and Maudan, eponym of Plumaudan CA, possibly also the patron of Kilmodan in Cowal.<sup>204</sup> The parish of Baye in Cornouaille (*ecclesia Beilplebs Beia* in the Cartulary of Quimperlé) appears to be named after *Baya*, an Irish saint localised at Kilmaur, Ayrshire and on the Cumbrae Isles, possibly an avatar of St Bega.<sup>205</sup> Also relevant here are the reflexes of the cult of Machutus of Saint-Malo found in the central Middle Ages in Môn, in the Isle of Man and in Lanarkshire (see Chapter 3).

Were clergy from north Britain or Ireland actually present in post-Viking Brittany, assisting in the reconstruction of the Church, as André-Yves Bourgès has suggested – particularly in the case of Ronan, a saint of Cornouaille who has a clearly Irish name and is given an Irish origin in his twelfth- or thirteenth-century *Vita*?<sup>206</sup> Bernard Merdrignac's image of a

<sup>199</sup> Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, lists a few saints named *Diocaille* but *Dircille* seems unknown to scholarship.

<sup>200</sup> Jankulak, 'Carantoc', 136–47.

<sup>201</sup> *The Annals of Ulster*, 634.6 [635], ed. and transl. Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, 118–19; *The Annals of Tigernach* [635], ed. and transl. Stokes I, 143; *Chronicum Scotorum*, ed. and transl. Hennessy, 84–5. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, 334–9; Butter, 'St Munnu'; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 254–5; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 505–7.

<sup>202</sup> Macquarrie (ed.), *Legends*, 248–51. For Kilmun in Cowal, see Butter, 'St Munnu', 34–5, 38–9.

<sup>203</sup> Deuffic, 'Le monachisme', 84, note 24.

<sup>204</sup> DCA, 172–3; Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 147; Loth, *Les noms*, 27; <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/saint.php?id=210> (accessed 07 October 2019); Macquarrie, 'The Career', 6–8, 13, 21; *Vita S. Cunuali*, s.xi?, ed. Oheix, 'Vie inédite'.

<sup>205</sup> DF, 38–9; *Saints in Scottish Place-Names Project*, <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/saint.php?id=563> (accessed 28 May 2019); Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence*, 142.

<sup>206</sup> Bourgès, 'Les origines irlandaises', 164, 169–71, following a suggestion by Couffon, 'Échos'. See also Ó Riain, 'Saint Ronan'.

*filière trégoroise* connecting the north coast of Brittany with Ireland throughout the Middle Ages still deserves more investigation.<sup>207</sup> For the most part, Irish birth claimed for Breton (and Cornish) saints in *Vitae* of the eleventh century and later seems simply to follow a European fashion for mythologising the ‘island of saints’, and examples of the plagiarisation of particular Irish *Vitae* likewise do not suggest unusually close links with Ireland.<sup>208</sup> However, the scattered evidence for Gaelic and north British influence in post-Viking Brittany is enough to suggest that the contacts revealed in manuscripts of the ninth and early tenth centuries continued in some form, and may even have been extended.

### Landévennec and Its Cartulary

Landévennec, the premier religious house of western Brittany, developed its own distinctive historical tradition in the eleventh century. Returning to their monastery after the Viking interregnum was over, no later than 952, the monks of Landévennec set about restocking their library.<sup>209</sup> They had conserved the most important links with their past: the Life of their founder St Winwaloe, and the details of their landed endowment. The decline of the dynasty of Alan II deprived them of a source of patronage, but they succeeded in attracting the support of the new comital dynasty of Cornouaille, Budic I (d. 1008 × 1019) and his descendants.<sup>210</sup> When Budic’s deathbed grant to Landévennec was confirmed by Duke Alan III of the house of Rennes, the monastery’s future was assured. (The mention of ‘Budic, count of Cornouaille’ as an ally of Judicael in the *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo* by Ingomar, apparently composed in the early eleventh century, may reflect this Rennes-Cornouaille rapprochement.<sup>211</sup>) As with the dynasty of Rennes, the rise of the counts of Cornouaille was accompanied by historical and hagiographical activity at the new dynasty’s most favoured religious houses – Landévennec and, later, their own foundation of Quimperlé – and in new theories about the origins of rulership in Brittany.

<sup>207</sup> Merdrignac, ‘La perception’, 70–1.

<sup>208</sup> Le Duc, ‘Irish Saints’; Gougaud, ‘Les supernuméraires’, 297–9; Merdrignac, ‘La perception’; Dumville, ‘St Cathroe’, 186–8. For ‘Irish’ saints in Cornwall see Jankulak, ‘An “Irish” Saint’, esp. 136–7.

<sup>209</sup> Dumville, ‘L’écriture’; Dumville, ‘The English Element’; Dumville, ‘Breton and English Manuscripts’.

<sup>210</sup> For the origins of the dynasty, see Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 63–4, 89–92, 106–12; Quaghebeur, ‘Stratégie lignagère’.

<sup>211</sup> Fawtier, ‘Ingomar, historien breton’, 185–6.

At Landévennec, during the abbacy of Elisuc, between 1047 and 1055, an elaborate record of the monastery's sacred history was produced: the famous 'cartulary', now Quimper BM 16, which in fact was mainly a collection of hagiography.<sup>212</sup> Fols. 3r–135r contain Wrdisten's longer Life of Winwaloe in prose and verse, followed by Clement's hymn to the saint and Wrdisten's homily, carefully written by a single scribe and elaborately decorated. Then comes a brief Life of Ethbin or Ediunet (both names occur in the text), a disciple of Winwaloe; a list of the abbots of Landévennec; and on the last twenty-four folios, the cartulary proper, in which semi-hagiographical narratives based on events in the Life of Winwaloe mingle with property documents, ranging from brief notes to fully fledged charters; none, however, is datable before two transactions from the mid-tenth century. Finally there is a list of rulers of Cornouaille, in a slightly later hand, ending with 'Houel' (Hoel), 1058–1084, the first Cornouaillais duke of Brittany.

The writing of the legendary/cartulary apparently coincided with the Romanesque rebuilding of the abbey, just as the ninth-century compositions of Clement and Wrdisten had in their time been the climax of a programme of building and opening-up to the Carolingian Church.<sup>213</sup> It is interesting how the Landévennec community chose to memorialise their founders in this context. They re-copied the hagiographical works of Wrdisten, both in the 'cartulary'-manuscript and in an approximately contemporary, exclusively hagiographical manuscript, Paris BnF Lat. 5610A, which was written at Landévennec but later preserved at the church dedicated to Winwaloe at Château-du-Loir.<sup>214</sup> Ethbin or Ediunet had been added to the Landévennec hagiographical canon. Guenael was recognised as Winwaloe's immediate successor as abbot in the abbatial list in the cartulary, but his *Vita* does not appear there: it is preserved only in later manuscripts. The Lives of Ethbin and Guenael pose unsolved questions as to their circumstances of composition and the actual relations of their saints' cults to that of Winwaloe; the adoption of their cults at Landévennec seems to be related to the expansion of that abbey's influence into Léon and the Vannetais, and a desire for a broadening of the sacred history which, in the ninth century, had been concentrated exclusively on the figure of their founder. The *Vitae* of both Ethbin and Guenael claim an Insular phase for their careers: Ethbin allegedly spent the last part of his life as a hermit at 'Nectan's Forest' (*silva Nectensis*, unidentified) in Ireland; Guenael founded monasteries in Britain and Ireland before returning to Brittany. *Silva Nectensis* may

<sup>212</sup> Barret, 'Le manuscrit'. <sup>213</sup> Bardel and Pérennec, 'Le monastère', 84–6.

<sup>214</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 401–2, 406.

suggest that the author knew of the Irish divinity Nechtan and his 'Well', a mythological designation of the source of the River Boyne.<sup>215</sup> This intimation of Insular contact may be inconclusive, but is reinforced by other evidence from Landévennec.<sup>216</sup>

The charters of Landévennec have been dismissed as a feeble series of forgeries, and most commentators consider that only a very few of them may be based on genuine early documents.<sup>217</sup> Most are presented as records of gifts of property to the monastery's founder, Winwaloe, by a legendary King Gradlon and by assorted fellow saints. The majority have no dating, witness-lists or other protocol by which to measure their authenticity; some consist of mere names or lists of properties.<sup>218</sup> However, the 'cartulary' should not be too hastily dismissed: it seems probable that its compilers had access to some pre-tenth-century written documents, and to a range of literary models.<sup>219</sup> The most minimal records, consisting of mere statements that *x* gave *y*, are barely amenable to diplomatic source-criticism: yet similar records, when they survive as marginal notes in liturgical books, can be contemporary notices of real transactions. Such records were characteristic of the Insular world in the ninth century and after, from the south-west Welsh examples in the 'St Teilo Gospels', to the twelfth-century charter-notes in the Book of Deer from north-east Scotland. It is not impossible that similar records were recopied in the Landévennec cartulary.<sup>220</sup> Some of the less laconic records show the features that Wendy Davies described in her classic analysis of the early medieval Latin charter-tradition in western Britain and Ireland: a past-tense, third-person narration and minimal protocol including an anathema.<sup>221</sup> As regards the models available for the cartulary as a complete work, it must be remembered that its date of 1047 × 1055 is earlier than that of any surviving cartulary-manuscript from western Francia. Conceivably its

<sup>215</sup> Dumézil, 'Le puits de Nechtan'; *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, ed. Gwynn, III. 27-35.

<sup>216</sup> For a judicious discussion of the Lives of Ethbin and Guenael, see Morice, 'L'abbaye de Landévennec', I. 108-44. See also Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 452-3, 382-95.

<sup>217</sup> 'Une série de faux pitoyables': Lot, *Mélanges*, 189, note 4; Latouche, *Mélanges*, 64; Guillotel, 'Les origines', 101-2. Bardel and Pérennec, 'Le monastère', 86-7, suggest that earlier documents were lost in a fire before they could be recopied; Quaghebeur, 'L'abbaye de Landévennec', 93, suggests that the monks' exile resulted in the loss of some of their charters.

<sup>218</sup> Bardel and Pérennec, 'Le monastère', 86-7. <sup>219</sup> Brett, 'Hagiography as Charter?'.  
<sup>220</sup> Jenkins and Owen, 'The Welsh Marginalia ... Part I'; Jenkins and Owen, 'The Welsh Marginalia ... Part II'; *Book of Deer*, ed. Forsyth, Broun and Clancy, 'The Property Records'. See also Jenkins, 'From Wales to Weltenburg?' and Hodge, 'When Is A Charter ... ?'

<sup>221</sup> W. Davies, 'The Latin Charter-Tradition', 259, note 4, lists the relevant charters as nos 20, 24, 25, 36, 40, 42, 46, 47 and 51.

editors were inspired by ninth-century west Frankish *gesta episcoporum* and *gesta abbatum* like those of Le Mans, Saint-Wandrille and Saint-Bertin.<sup>222</sup> An even closer similarity, however, is with the 'Book of Armagh', the manuscript-collection on St Patrick's cult written at Armagh in 807.<sup>223</sup> Like the Landévennec manuscript, the Book of Armagh was occupied largely by hagiography; within it, the *Collectanea* by Tirechán form a brief historical or 'hagiographised' cartulary.<sup>224</sup>

Above all, the blurring of lines between hagiography and charter, in which land-grants consist of miracle-narratives that might be taken straight from saints' Lives, sometimes replacing legal protocol, is characteristic both of the Insular Celtic world and of Brittany.<sup>225</sup> The *Collectanea* in the Book of Armagh may be the earliest extant example of this genre. Other examples in Britain are the charters in the Book of Llandaf and those appended to Llifris's Life of Cadog, in the Book of Deer, and, in Brittany, the Cartulary of Quimperlé.<sup>226</sup> A charter containing a miracle-story also occurs in the Cartulary of Redon.<sup>227</sup> The Landévennec cartulary was part of a cultural continuum.<sup>228</sup> To complete the *tour d'horizon* of comparanda, several of its documents are written in the 'hermeneutic' style characteristic of the royal charters of Æthelstan in tenth-century England, reminding us that Abbot John, who headed the monks on their return to Landévennec, engaged in diplomatic activity on behalf of Duke Alan II and must thus have had contact with Æthelstan's court.<sup>229</sup> Any notion that eleventh-century Landévennec was a backwater where basic competence in the compiling (or forging) of charters was not to be expected is wide of the mark.

Finally, the list of rulers (Table 5.1) that concludes the cartulary, slightly later than the body of the manuscript but still probably predating the death of Duke Hoel in 1084, gives evidence of pseudo-historical activity in Cornouaille, although unfortunately it provides only the baldest of summaries of this.<sup>230</sup> A closely similar version of the list appears also in the Cartulary

<sup>222</sup> Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 82–106.

<sup>223</sup> Dublin Trinity College 52; Sharpe, 'Palaeographical Considerations'. The parallels between the two manuscripts were first noted by W. Davies, 'Les chartes', 90.

<sup>224</sup> Tirechán, *Collectanea*, ed. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 123–63; Sharpe, 'Dispute Settlement', 174.

<sup>225</sup> W. Davies, 'Property Rights', 525–6. For discussion of Breton examples, see Morice, 'L'abbaye de Landévennec', I.310–14.

<sup>226</sup> LL; Llancarfan charters in VSB, 124–36; *Book of Deer*, ed. Forsyth, Broun and Clancy, 'The Property Records'.

<sup>227</sup> CR, Appendix, 51, pp. 372–3; CQ, 1, pp. 130–1.

<sup>228</sup> A suggestion first made by Wendy Davies: W. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 136.

<sup>229</sup> Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 2, pp. 152–4; Brett, 'A Breton Pilgrim', 44–5, 50.

<sup>230</sup> For discussion of the list, see Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 41–3, 170–1; Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 77–82; DUBALA, 120–4; Marquand, 'Le milieu politique', 9–11. Most commentators believe that the version in the Cartulary of Landévennec has priority and that the others were derived from it, but this cannot be taken as certain.

Table 5.1 *Rulers of Cornouaille in the Cartularies of Landévennec and Quimperlé, and in the Lives of St Melor*

<i>Cartulary of Landévennec</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>Cartulary of Quimperlé</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Vita Melori</i>	<i>Vita Melori</i>
		Paris Bibliothèque Mazarine 399 <sup>3</sup>	Paris BnF Fr. 22321 <sup>4</sup>
	Haec sunt nomina Cornubie comitum		
Rivelen Mor Marthou	Rimelen Mur Marthou		
Rivelen Marthou	Rimelen Marthou		
Concar	Cungar		
Gradlon Mur	Gradlun Mur		
Daniel Drem Rud	Daniel Drem Rud. Hic		
Alammanis rex fuit	Alamannis rex fuit.		
Budic et Maxenri duo fratres	Budic et Maxenri duo fratres. Horum primus rediens ab Alamannia interfecit Marchell et paternum consulatum recuperavit.		
Iahan Reith. [+ in s.xiii hand: Huc rediens, Marchel interfecit et paternum consulatum recuperavit.]	Jahann Reeth	Johannes	Joannes <i>Lex vel Regula</i>
Daniel Unua	Daniel Unua	Daniel	Daniel
Gradlon Flam	Gradlun Flam		
Concar Cheroenoc	Cungar Keroenuc		
Budic Mur	Budic Mur	Fortunatus	Budic
Fragual Fradleoc	Fraugual Fradleuc	Meliau	Melianus
Gradlon Plueneuor	Gradlon Plueneur	Rivod	Rivod
Aulfret Alesrudon	Altfred Alefrudon		
Diles Heirguor Chebre	Diles Heergur Kembre		
Budic [+ in s.xii hand: Bud Berhuc]	Budic Castellin		
Binidic	Binidic qui fuit episcopus et comes		
Alan Canhiar	Alan Cainard qui construxit abbatiam in honore Sancte Crucis apud Kemperele.		
Houel [+ in s.xii hand: Huuel]			

<sup>1</sup> *CL*, 54, pp. 576–7.<sup>2</sup> *CQ*, 5, pp. 89–90.<sup>3</sup> *Vita Melori*, text P, 1b, ed. Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 55, 60.<sup>4</sup> *Vita Melori*, text D, 2a, ed. Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 80, 84.



of Quimperlé (written 1118 × 1127); there is a third version in the thirteenth-century Cartulary of Quimper.<sup>231</sup> The list makes no overt claims of kinship among the rulers presented, although the repetition of certain names may suggest that this was assumed.<sup>232</sup> However, the intention is clearly to present the comital dynasty of Cornouaille – attested in charters from Diles (fl. 944 × 952) onwards – as legitimate successors to semi-mythical Cornouaillais rulers of the past.<sup>233</sup> It omits Rivelen and Wrmælon, who are known to have ruled Cornouaille in the ninth and early tenth centuries.<sup>234</sup> Unlike the 'Riwal genealogy', the list does not give the rulers of Cornouaille transmarine origins, but a number of them seem to have Insular connections. A few of the entries show a knowledge of Breton (on the part of their originators if not their copyists), giving a rare glimpse of a vernacular historical tradition.

To begin at the end of the list, the names from Hoel back to Aulfret Alesrudon can be identified with some certainty as members of the tenth- and eleventh-century 'new' dynasty of Cornouaille.<sup>235</sup> Aulfret's successor, Diles, is given an epithet (*Heirguor Chebre*) which may translate as 'the exile of Wales' (or 'Cumbria'), providing a hint of Insular connections during the Viking Age.<sup>236</sup> Aulfret's immediate predecessor, Gradlon Plueneur, may be the ninth-century Gradlon *potentissimus Britonum* mentioned by Letaldus of Micy.<sup>237</sup> His epithet refers to Plonéour west of Quimper, a location where the tenth-century *vicecomes* Diles, mentioned in the cartulary, held property, and which would thus seem to be an early power-centre for rulers of Cornouaille (as opposed to Poher). Further back than this, however, the list finds little purchase in historical sources.

Going back to the list's beginning, commentators agree that the two successive rulers named *Riuelen* are a doublet, perhaps connected with the ancestor of the 'Riwal' genealogy. Etymologically, the names Rivelen and Riwal are distinct (Riwallon may have yet another derivation), but they

<sup>231</sup> Henry, Quaghebeur and Tanguy (eds), *Cartulaire*, 28–9, 139–40.

<sup>232</sup> As noted by Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 41–3.

<sup>233</sup> For Diles see Guillotel (ed.), *Actes*, 2, pp. 152–3; Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 112.

<sup>234</sup> *Vita S. Winwaloei*, ed. De Smedt, 263; *CR*, 276, 279, pp. 224, 226; Yeurc'h, 'Poher and Cornouaille', 60, 68.

<sup>235</sup> For the entry *Budic Bud Berhuc* see Le Bihan, 'Une glose bretonne'. On Aulfret see also Quaghebeur, 'La maison d'Alfred'.

<sup>236</sup> Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 91; Quaghebeur, 'Alain de Bretagne' forthcoming, has suggested that Diles's epithet may indicate Welsh connections for his patron Duke Alan II. For the derivation of the name *Aulfret*, see Lambert, 'Les noms des personnes', 41, where it is argued to be a Breton compound rather than a borrowing from Anglo-Saxon England or Francia (in both of which a name Ælfred, Alfrit, Alfred etc. was popular).

<sup>237</sup> Letaldus of Micy, *Miracula*, 24–5, ed. Mabillon, 603, discussed by Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 42.

were capable of being confused by the fourteenth century and this confusion may have set in earlier.<sup>238</sup> Suggestive also in this respect is the name *Rigimalus* for a 'king of Cornouaille' in the (perhaps eleventh-century) *Vita S. Guenaili*.<sup>239</sup> The two Concars on the list are obscure, but the name has British connections, being the name of a Welsh saint Cyngar, son of Geraint ab Erbin – a distant connection with the 'Riwal' dynasty.<sup>240</sup> The epithet *Keroenoc* may perhaps be *Kernewek*, 'of Cornwall' (or Cornouaille). Gradlon *Mur* (the Great) is presumably to be understood as the founding patron of Landévennec, contemporary with St Winwaloe. Who was his successor Daniel *Drem Rud* ('of the ruddy face'), and what caused him to be designated king of the Alemans (*Alamannis rex*)? Might the *Albani* of Scotland have been meant, or is this an echo of the ethnography of *Historia Brittonum* (*HB*), which placed Britons and *Alemanni* genealogically side by side?<sup>241</sup>

Discussion of the list has mostly centred around the next two entries: 'Budic et Maxenri duo fratres' and 'Iahan Reith', with a thirteenth-century interlinear note between the two that reads *Huc rediens Marchel interfecit et paternum consulatum recuperavit* ('Returning here, he killed Marchel and regained his father's countship'). In the Quimperlé version, the note is part of the body of the text and is taken to refer to Budic: *Budic et Maxenri duo fratres quorum primus rediens ab alamannia interfecit marchell et paternum consulatum recuperavit* ('Budic and Maxenri, two brothers, of whom the first, returning from Alamannia, killed Marchell [*sic*] and recovered his father's countship'). It may be noted that this version offers an interpretation of the previous entry which is not implicit in the Landévennec version: it assumes that Daniel, Budic's predecessor, was 'king among the Alamans' because he had been exiled from his Breton 'consulate'. The tale of exile and return is likely to be derived, however obliquely, from the passage of Gregory of Tours's *Histories* in which Theuderic, son of Bodic, 'wandered for a long time as an exile' before collecting a band of followers – possibly from Britain – and killing his oppressor in *ca*

<sup>238</sup> For Rivelen, see German, 'Anthroponyms', 57; for Riwal and Riwallon, Evans, *Gaulish Personal Names*, 269–71 and 272–7. The fourteenth-century chronicler of Saint-Brieuc appears to have identified Rivelen with Riwal, applying Rivelen's epithet *Mor Marthou* to Riwal of Domnonia whom he entitles *Meur Marzou*, 'of the great marvels': Chédeville and Guillotel, *La Bretagne*, 79.

<sup>239</sup> *Vita S. Guenaili*, 10–12, ed. De Smedt, 676–7. For the dating of *Vita Guenaili* and the priority of the *Vita longior* (BHL 8818–9), see Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, 382–94; Morice, 'L'abbaye de Landévennec', I.121–33.

<sup>240</sup> *WCD*, 173–4, 201.

<sup>241</sup> *DUBALA*, 121–2; N. J. Evans, 'Cultural Contacts', 135–54; Goffart, 'The Supposedly Frankish Table', 114; *HB*, 17, ed. Faral, 14–15. For likely sources of Welsh knowledge of the Alemanni, see N. J. Evans, 'Cultural Contacts', 147.

577.<sup>242</sup> It is evidence for the presence of a historiography based on Gregory in eleventh-century Cornouaille, as in the Rhuys Life of Gildas. (However, the more recent exile of Duke Alan II may also have played a part.) Patrice Marquand believes that the 'exile' note is original to the Quimperlé version of the text and was added later to the Landévennec text; Bernard Merdrignac, however, considers that the Landévennec version is the original and that the note should refer to Iahan Reith, Budic's son, whose name he takes to be a Bretonisation of Theuderic (Old Breton *reith*, corresponding to Middle Welsh *rheith* 'right, entitlement', translating Frankish *-ric*, 'rule').<sup>243</sup>

The mention of *Maxenri* raises fascinating questions. The temptation is to assume that this name refers to Magnus Maximus, or Maximianus as he was called in *HB*, the Roman imperial usurper of AD 383 who was adopted as an ancestor in Welsh royal genealogy and credited with the settlement of Britons in Brittany, and who becomes *Maxen* in Middle Welsh texts. If so, the second element might be interpreted as *ri* 'king', as found in Welsh names like *Tudri*: an alternative to the title *Maxen Wledic* ('the ruler') that this character is given in Welsh literature. There are difficulties, however. The *Maxen* rendering of the name does not occur until the twelfth century in Wales, probably under the influence of *HRB*, in which the names of Maxentius and Maximianus are juxtaposed.<sup>244</sup> *Ri* is not otherwise found as a suffix or second element in Breton (as opposed to Welsh) names; it could here simply represent a copyist's failure to reproduce a suspension-mark standing for the final syllable of *Maxenci* or *Maxentius*. (*Maxenci* is the reading of the [derivative] text of the list in the thirteenth-century Cartulary of Quimper.)<sup>245</sup> However, if Maximus is intended, his appearance here as a brother of the exiled Budic looks like an early, and somewhat ham-fisted, attempt to reconcile the Welsh, *HB* version of Breton origins with a local foundation-legend of Cornouaille. If Cornouaillais pseudo-history affirmed that Rivelen was the ultimate founder, but that there was a later episode (inspired by Gregory of Tours) of exile and re-foundation in the time of Budic or his son, then it might seem acceptable, though chronologically absurd, to associate Maximus with the latter. Budic and Maximus formed a plausible pair in terms of their careers, both advancing (from Britain?) to the Continent and killing and replacing an established ruler (Gratian in the case of Maximus; 'Marchel' in the case of Budic; the idea of Maximus's

<sup>242</sup> *LHD*, V.16 (214); *WAB*, 63, 68–9.

<sup>243</sup> Marquand, 'Le milieu politique', 10; *DUBALA*, 122–4.

<sup>244</sup> Guy, 'Constantine', 400.

<sup>245</sup> Cartulary of Quimper, no. 3, ed. Peyron, 6. Conceivably the name may have been influenced by the name of St Maxentius of Poitou.

exile from, and return to Rome was developed in the early thirteenth-century Welsh prose tale, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*).<sup>246</sup> The device of claiming that two characters, perhaps drawn from disparate sources, were ‘brothers’ was similarly used some decades later in the Life of Gurthiern in the Cartulary of Quimperlé, when the characters in question were ‘Beli et Kenan duo fratres . . . filii Outham Senis’ – one the ancestor of Gurthiern, the other the secular founder of Brittany.<sup>247</sup> Twelfth-century authors at Llancarfan, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, were ultimately to reconcile these stories rather differently.<sup>248</sup>

The name *Marchel* for Budic’s (or Iahan’s) rival is yet another puzzle. It might be derived from Gregory’s *Macliavus*. However, it could also be influenced by the Welsh feminine name *Marchell*. Marchell has an important role in the text *De Situ Brecheniauc* as the mother of Brychan, the progenitor of numerous Welsh saints. She also appears in the genealogies appended to Lifris’s Life of St Cadog (which probably drew on *De Situ Brecheniauc*), as Cadog’s maternal grandmother.<sup>249</sup> In both texts, Marchell’s father is Teuderic, who is presented as a primordial king of Brycheiniog.<sup>250</sup> Given that a Theuderic (under the pseudonym *Iahan Reith*) was a character in Cornouaille’s comital list, although in a completely different relationship to the list’s Marchel, it is possible that some form of the genealogy in *De Situ Brecheniauc* was available to the Landévennec compiler. Yet a third indication of a connection with the Brychan tracts is that the epithet *Drem Rud*, applied to the fifth ruler on the list, is also applied to Rein, son and heir of Brychan, in *Cognacio Brychan*, a text closely related to *De Situ Brecheniauc*.<sup>251</sup> All these correspondences suggest communication between Cornouaille and South Wales, soon after the Norman Conquest but probably earlier too, that will be discussed further in [Chapter 7](#).<sup>252</sup>

Is the Landévennec list representative of all that ever existed of the early history of Cornouaille, or is it the remnant of what was once a substantial body of historical lore? A hint that a broader tradition existed is found in the Life of St Melor. This account of the murder of a prince of Cornouaille by his wicked uncle survives in various versions in manuscripts of the fourteenth century and later from England, France and

<sup>246</sup> For *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* see Guy, ‘Constantine’, 398–400 and references.

<sup>247</sup> See [Chapter 7](#). In Welsh genealogy and pseudo-history, the position and role of Beli are quite different: *WCD*, 131, 491–2.

<sup>248</sup> Guy, ‘Constantine’, 397. <sup>249</sup> *DUBALA*, 123–4; *MWG*, 83, 274.

<sup>250</sup> *De Situ Brecheniauc*, 2, *EWGT*, 14. The same Teudiric [*sic*], son of Teithfall, is mentioned in the Book of Llandaf in a synchronism of the kings who ruled South Wales in the lifetime of St Teilo: *LL*, 118.

<sup>251</sup> Wade-Evans, ‘The Brychan Documents’, 29; *EWGT*, 14–19 at p. 18; *MWG*, 130–6.

<sup>252</sup> *DUBALA*, 123–4.

Brittany. In the Old English tract on 'Resting-Places of the Saints' (ca 1030), Melor's relics are located at Amesbury in Wiltshire.<sup>253</sup> Possibly they had been among those acquired by Æthelstan.<sup>254</sup> However, Lanmeur in Finistère was the centre of the saint's popular cult from the eleventh century onwards. The original date of the Life is uncertain, although its editor, André-Yves Bourgès, has made a case for dating it between the accession of Hoel of Cornouaille as duke of Brittany (1066) and the writing of the Landévennec comital list.<sup>255</sup> In the version in Paris Bibliothèque Mazarine 399, which Bourgès regards as best representing the original text, the first *dux* of Cornouaille was Johannes 'the Law or Rule' (*lex vel regula*), whom 'the Lord prompted to migrate, guided by angels, from regions across the sea to Cornubia'.<sup>256</sup> He was succeeded in turn by Daniel, Fortunatus and Meliau, the last of whom was murdered by his brother Rivod. Meliau's son Melor fled to the protection of Commorus, count of Domnonia, but Rivod had him killed by treachery. Divine vengeance smote Rivod, and the text does not relate who, if anyone, then took power in Cornouaille.

There is some overlap between the list of rulers in the Life of Melor and the Landévennec comital list (Table 5.1).<sup>257</sup> The variation suggests a flexible underlying tradition similar to those utilised in the 'Riwal' genealogy. Fragments of genealogy three or four generations long could form part of a hagiographical narrative; alternatively, they could be excerpted from hagiographical or other texts and recombined into longer lists.

The Life of Melor itself has some relationship to the 'Riwal' historical doctrine of Domnonia. Melor's mother is given the name 'Aurilla', a borrowing from the hagiography of Samson, and she is stated to have been a daughter of Count 'Ninoc' (Winnoc?) in the Paris text, of 'Judec' in the Anglo-Norman verse Life – names that belong to the 'Riwal' tradition. But Commorus is a 'good' ruler (as is 'Quonomorius' in the Life of Paul Aurelian from Léon); and if the name 'Rivodus' (*Rivoldus* in some manuscripts) is meant to recall 'Riwal', he has been demoted to villain.<sup>258</sup> It may be that the Life of Melor represents a distinct Léon

<sup>253</sup> Rollason, 'Lists', 64–6.

<sup>254</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, II.87, ed. and transl. Winterbottom and Thomson, I.297; CR, 59, p. 47. For the dual (at least) identity of Melor, see Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.20–52; Orme, *The Saints*, 185–7; Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 134–7.

<sup>255</sup> Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 98–132, 139. It may be worth noting that the phrase *lex sive regula* denotes St Winwaloe's monastic rule, replaced by the Benedictine Rule in 818, in Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, II.12, ed. De Smedt, 226.

<sup>256</sup> *Vita Melori*, text P, 1b, ed. Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 55, 60.

<sup>257</sup> DUBALA, 123; Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 120–31.

<sup>258</sup> *Vita Melori*, text P, II, ed. Bourgès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 55; for 'Rivod' and 'Riwal', 145–7.

historical tradition. As argued earlier, the Life may have taken shape in the tenth century at Fleury, where two successive bishops of Léon retired and Paul Aurelian, Léon's founding saint, was revered.

The origin-stories of Cornouaille are sketchy compared to those of the apparently longer-established kingdom of Domnonia, and it is not certain whether they draw on long-held traditions or recent invention. But evidently, ideas about Breton origins were fluid in the eleventh century and hagiographers propagated alternative versions. The nearest thing to a unified narrative of the origin of Brittany that may pre-date Geoffrey of Monmouth is found in a text known as *De Dignitate Dolensis Ecclesiae* which its editor, François Duine, considered to have been written as a manifesto for the archbishopric of Dol in 1076–80.<sup>259</sup> The text is preserved only in a fifteenth-century miscellany, Paris BnF Lat. 14617, and Duine's dating, as yet unchallenged in scholarship, is not secure, but at the least the text does not seem to depend on Geoffrey of Monmouth. It begins with the *HB* story of the occupation of Brittany by the forces of Magnus Maximus, dated to 386, and continues: 'In 513, the rest of the Britons followed the earlier ones to Lesser Britain' – a reference to the 'Riwal' story which dates the arrival of the Britons to the reign of Chlothar son of Clovis. Here, in summary, is an attempt to reconcile the 'Magnus Maximus' and 'Riwal' versions of Breton origins, which is developed in the 'Ingomar' passages in the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc. The author, concerned to present Brittany as a single political unit from the outset, continues by creating an artificially unified royal succession in the form of two figures from the 'Riwal' tradition – Riwal and his remote descendant Judicael – bookending two Cornouaillais rulers, 'Gradalenus' and Daniel Drem Rud.<sup>260</sup>

This relatively sober if schematic picture of Breton origins must have failed to appeal to Geoffrey of Monmouth (if he knew it). He would invent a dynasty of his own, one which was involved with Britain over several turbulent generations and produced the ultimate hero, King Arthur. The superior appeal of Geoffrey's master-narrative is obvious: even so, the earlier constructs were not completely swept aside.

<sup>259</sup> Duine, 'La métropole de Bretagne ... première partie', 489.

<sup>260</sup> *De Dignitate Dolensis Ecclesiae*, 2, ed. Duine, 'La métropole de Bretagne, chapitre II', 45.

## 6 Saints and Seaways: The Cult of Saints in Brittany and Its Archipelagic Links

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### Introduction

As is apparent in every chapter of this book, saints are inescapable in the history of early Brittany. Saints' lives are the only 'histories' that were composed in the region. The names of 'saints' and their foundations dominate its toponymy. At times it seems as if saints were the only cultural artefact it produced in any quantity. Wales and Ireland have a similar glut of saints, as medieval and early modern authors noted.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that the historiography of the 'Celtic Churches' has tended to work on 'a remarkable assumption of abnormality', as Owen Chadwick put it, and that a unique historical process has been seen at work in these regions.<sup>2</sup>

An influential viewpoint in the twentieth century was that the churches of the Celtic-speaking regions were founded in a process of initial conversion or reconversion directly from Continental or Mediterranean centres of monasticism – Tours, Lérins or even Egypt – and that the wave of ascetic enthusiasm thus unleashed was different in kind and degree from monasticism elsewhere in western Europe, and placed the 'Celtic' churches at odds with the rationalist, hierarchical ethos of the 'Roman' church. In this scenario, men vowed to the service of God travelled between Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Cornwall and Brittany as missionaries, converting populations which had either never been Christianised or had reverted to paganism during the collapse of the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> For E.

<sup>1</sup> Marianus Scottus, *Chronicon*, s.a. 696, ed. Waitz and Kolon, 544: 'Ireland, the island of saints, was sublimely filled with great numbers of saints and miracles' (*Hibernia insula sanctorum sanctis et mirabilibus per plurimis sublimiter plena habetur*). *Y Drych Kristnogawl*, ed. Bowen, 4: 'There is not a country in the whole of Christendom of the same size that has as many saints in it as there used to be among the Welsh' (*Nyd oes wlad yn holl Gred o gymaint o dir a chymaint o saint ynddei ag oedd gynt ymhlith Cymbry*); for this sixteenth-century text, see J. R. Davies, 'The Saints of South Wales', 361–2.

<sup>2</sup> Chadwick, 'The Evidence', 175. For critiques of the concept of the 'Celtic Church', see Hughes, 'The Celtic Church'; W. Davies, 'The Myth'.

<sup>3</sup> The historiography of British Christian origins briefly described here is reviewed by Sharpe, 'Martyrs', 94–102, and Edwards, 'Perspectives', 98–103, with references.



G. Bowen, their travels recreated an Atlantic culture-zone which had first been seen in the age of the megalith-builders, and most recently in the late pre-Roman Iron Age – only, instead of passage graves, bronze artefacts or pottery, it was place-names and church-dedications that marked out the ancient sea routes.<sup>4</sup>

More recent research has considerably modified this picture. The ‘Age of the Saints’ did indeed take place, but all over Christian Western Europe, not uniquely in the Celtic world. It entailed not so much conversion to Christianity (already the dominant faith in most places) as a new relationship between Christianity and the secular world based on monasticism and the cult of saints. Elites consolidating their position in the sixth and seventh centuries, after the upheavals of the creation of Europe’s post-Roman kingdoms, put large amounts of their landed wealth into religious foundations, and the founders of these establishments joined martyrs and important bishops in the ranks of the saints, mediators between God and humanity. A new network was superimposed on the landscape, one in which the nodes were monasteries drawing in and giving out economic and social benefits based on the spiritual power of dead yet ever-present saints. From this time onwards, saints and those who controlled their cults played an important part in structuring group identities and social relationships, from the most intimate to the largest-scale.<sup>5</sup> Celtic Britain and Ireland shared in these developments. Indeed, the Insular Britons may have been ‘early adopters’.<sup>6</sup> The Britons were the only people of Europe whose post-Roman rulers were, from the first, local Catholic Christians endeavouring to maintain their Roman status, rather than the pagan or heretical leaders of incoming armies. Gildas’s account of King Maglocunus’s attraction to the ‘caves of the saints’, *speluncas sanctorum*, considerably pre-dates the wave of monastic vocations among seventh-century Frankish aristocrats.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bowen, *Saints, Seaways*; Bowen, *Britain*. For a deconstruction of some of the ‘evidence’ on which Bowen’s maps were based, see Jankulak, ‘Present and yet Absent’, 166–71.

<sup>5</sup> For a brief account of this process as it affected Celtic Britain, see Pearce, ‘Saintry Cults’, 275–9. The pioneering work on the rise of the cult of saints in the West is by Peter Brown – for an overview, see Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 106–10, 145–65, 219–31. For monasticism, see Dunn, *The Emergence*; Helvétius and Kaplan, ‘Asceticism’. For the scale of ecclesiastical foundation, Wood, ‘Entrusting Western Europe’. For the social role of saints’ cults in the Merovingian kingdoms see, for instance, Fox, *Power and Religion*; Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography*. For churches as foci of social power, see Sánchez-Pardo and Shapland, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>6</sup> Brett, ‘Monasteries, Migration’. Compare Dumville, ‘Saint David’, 38–40; Lewis, ‘The Saints’, 445–6.

<sup>7</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, 34, ed. and transl. Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 33, 102; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 181–9.

Everywhere in western Europe, settlement patterns were affected by the rise of the endowed, rural monastery, the gradual densification of the network of rural churches, and eventually the normalisation of churchyard burial, near the saints. The transformation may have been especially thorough in Atlantic Europe.<sup>8</sup> In Celtic Britain there was a wholesale recasting of place-names.<sup>9</sup> Among the new names were a high proportion containing generic elements meaning, approximately, 'church'. To all appearances, hundreds of explicitly sacred settlements were created between the sixth century and the central Middle Ages. In south-western Britain, Sam Turner has argued that this entailed the fashioning of a new 'Christian landscape'.<sup>10</sup> Brittany shared in this change, but there it was compounded by migration in ways it is a challenge to understand.

Saints, and their cults, travelled. The most famous saints of Brittany, whose Lives were written in the ninth century, were depicted as voyaging from Britain to mainland Europe at the call of God; the names of many less famous saints were preserved in place-names in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany alike. Local historians have long puzzled over related groups of names like Llangollen in Dinbych, Wales, Colan in Cornwall and Langolen in Finistère. How did the migration that created Brittany relate to the alleged travels of these saints? In historiography, Breton saints have sometimes been treated as a sort of 'barium meal', the surviving traces of their travels understood as an indicator of larger migratory movements. Bernard Merdrignac considered that the 'saints' were merely the clerical members of elite families whose power spanned the Channel in the post-Roman period, and that Breton hagiography was a reflection, in clericalised code, of a movement of aristocratic colonisation concentrated in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>11</sup> His views may find some support in the distribution of some of the earliest saints' cults – those evidenced in the earliest type of ecclesiastical place-names, and which seem to have fallen into obscurity by the central Middle Ages – which are geographically the most widely scattered through the Brittonic-speaking regions, implying the support of extensive networks.

It seems unlikely, however, that the sharing of saints' cults between Celtic Britain and Brittany was entirely dependent on political power. Nor was it necessarily constrained by the geography of established sea-routes, as Bowen argued. An ascetic voyaging at the call of God might travel entirely at random, like the three Irishmen washed up on the

<sup>8</sup> Ó Carragáin and Turner (eds.), *Making Christian Landscapes*.

<sup>9</sup> Jackson, *Language and History*, 225–7.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape*; Rose and Preston-Jones, 'Changes'.

<sup>11</sup> DUBALA, 18–22 and *passim*.

Cornish coast who were introduced to King Alfred in 891.<sup>12</sup> He might take an inconvenient route to meet (or avoid) a great king, or to study with a renowned master. As Jonathan Wooding points out, Samson's traversing of the 'transpeninsular route' from the Camel to the Fowey in Cornwall was not part of that saint's original plan but was contingent on the refusal of a particular monastery to accept him, and yet his journey has been taken as a template for the travels of countless others.<sup>13</sup> Secular migratory routes too might be shaped by personal agendas, or by chance. It is somewhat dehumanising to reduce the travels of individuals, however obscure, to points on a distribution map.

Saints' cults are important in the historical relationship of Brittany with the Atlantic Archipelago, as symptoms of movement and contact but also in their own right, for what they reveal about social structure and belief, similarity and difference. The following discussion is aimed at exploring the geographical and chronological dimensions of saints' cults, attempting to tease apart the layers of the cults as they developed over possible successive episodes of contact, and in the process speculating about what kind of cultural communication they reveal.

Some cultural manifestations of sanctity may well have been shared throughout the Celtic world, but there are special difficulties in characterising the nature of saints' cults in Brittany. In Wales and Cornwall, and to some extent in Ireland, the Reformation stifled the development of the cult of saints and, while responsible for the destruction of much hagiological information, simplified matters for the historian by preserving what remained in a 'fossilised' form in the state it had attained at the end of the Middle Ages. This was not the case in Brittany, where Catholic piety continued to flourish in the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries – each generation adding fresh developments and obscuring what had gone before. As late as the 1930s Canon Doble, describing the *pardons* (feast days) and pilgrimages at Breton saints' shrines, was witness to a tradition that had not been fundamentally interrupted since the early Middle Ages, but this does not mean that it had persisted unchanged.

The shortage of early evidence for cult practice is a major obstacle. From the central Middle Ages to the early modern period, successive 'waves' of universal saints were acclimatised and received the lion's share of clerical and elite attention – a measure of Brittany's greater cultural assimilation to the French-speaking world than Wales and Cornwall to English norms. The court poets of medieval Wales who composed highly

<sup>12</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, 891, ed. Bately, 54, transl. Whitelock, Douglas and Tucker, 53; Dumville, 'Echtrae and Immram', 77–8.

<sup>13</sup> Wooding, 'The Representation', 159–60.

wrought vernacular verse in praise of local saints had no recorded counterparts in Brittany. The percentage of existing sub-parochial chapels dedicated to Breton local saints is 36.3 per cent in the westernmost diocese of Quimper, and lower in every other diocese; the proportion of parish churches so dedicated is lower still.<sup>14</sup> For most local saints' cults, it is only in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries that records begin of popular devotions which may – but unprovably – be over a thousand years older.<sup>15</sup> As a result, historians have tended to focus, on the one hand, on the earliest evidence for the careers of saints themselves, in an attempt to grasp the reality of the 'Age of the Saints'; and on the other, on the most recent surviving evidence, as folklorists seek to distil pre-Christian survivals from cult-practices that can be seen as spontaneous and timeless.

Almost certainly, most of the cult-practices that struck observers as distinctive in Brittany from the nineteenth century onwards would once have been recognisable across most of Europe, and were remarkable mainly for the length of their survival. Long-distance pilgrimages such as the *Tro-Breiz* (a circuit of the shrines of the seven founding bishops of Brittany) may not be very ancient in origin, although local devotional processions similar to the *Troménie* of Locronan have archaeologically evidenced counterparts as early as the eighth century in the Gaelic world.<sup>16</sup> The actions of supplicants – bathing in the saint's holy well, placing children in his 'coffin' or their feet in his 'footprint', ingesting soil from near his tomb – were not peculiar to Brittany or to the Celtic world (although holy wells may have been especially numerous in Brittany, Wales and Cornwall).<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the basic pattern of a local shrine, containing a manifestation of divinity that is brought out into the open on an appointed day, which attracts pilgrims, and where adherence is expressed in ritual actions rather than in articles of belief, extends far beyond Christendom: it is characteristic, for example, of traditional Chinese

<sup>14</sup> Provost, *La fête*, 56. In Wales, by comparison, 55 per cent and in Cornwall 61 per cent of parish churches founded before 1800 are dedicated to Celtic saints: Yates, 'The Distribution', 7–8; Padel, 'Local Saints', 332.

<sup>15</sup> For examples, see Hascoët, 'Les troménies' (accessed 13 December 2018); Viaud-Grand-Maraïs, 'Les saints'.

<sup>16</sup> The earliest references to the *Tro-Breiz* may be twelfth-century; abundant documentation appears in the fourteenth. Oheix, 'Le culte des Sept Saints'; La Martinière, 'Le Tro-Breiz'; Cassard, 'Le Tro-Breiz médiéval'. On the *Troménie* see C. Evans, 'Pèlerinages circulaires'. For analogies in Scotland and Ireland, see Carver, *Portmahomack*, 187–8; O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin, *Inishmurray*, 316–48.

<sup>17</sup> For examples, see Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.69–71 (St Mawes); Viaud-Grand-Maraïs, 'Les saints guérisseurs'; for stones associated with saints, Abgrall, 'Les pierres'; for holy wells in England, Wales and Brittany, Rattue, *The Living Stream*; F. Jones, *The Holy Wells*; Audin, 'Une example'; Audin, *Guide des fontaines ... Finistère* and *Guide des fontaines ... Morbihan*; for more comparative material, see G. Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', 223 and references, 210–11.

religion.<sup>18</sup> Possibly, Christian observance in early medieval Brittany had become exceptionally focused on such practices to the neglect of the sacramental liturgy and correct doctrine prioritised by reformers. The paradox that Carolingian churchmen thought ninth-century Brittany ‘un-Christian’, when charter-evidence shows that there were exceptionally large numbers of local priests and churches, may be soluble in this way. If so, these Breton characteristics resisted the best efforts of reformers in the long term.<sup>19</sup> In the whole area west of the *ligne Loth*, as late as the seventeenth century, large parishes subdivided into *frairies* or *trèves*, each with its own chapel, were the centre of local religious and social life, focused strongly on the feast day of the local saint. Other seasonal celebrations like the pre-Lent carnival were less important and other community organisations such as guilds and youth groups (strongly present in Cornwall) were rare.<sup>20</sup> It is perhaps in such questions of emphasis that the true distinctiveness of Breton (and Celtic) religious practice can be found.

If the Breton cult of saints had its unique aspects, in other respects it may have more closely resembled those of Cornwall and Wales. Saints’ relics seem to have been treated rather differently in the Brittonic-speaking churches from the norm of western Christendom, as discussed later.<sup>21</sup> One notable shared feature of the Brittonic-speaking churches is the readiness to use personal names from the Hebrew Bible: John Reuben Davies suggests this was a tenacious tradition handed down from the time of the second-century persecutions in Roman Britain.<sup>22</sup> There is some evidence that in Wales and Cornwall there was a particularly strong development of churches’ rights of sanctuary, conceptualised as the protection extended by their founding saints: similar rights may have existed in Brittany, although most of the evidence adduced belongs to the early modern period, and more research is needed.<sup>23</sup> A fruitful line of inquiry is that of the role, or non-role, of women as saints and in the life of the Church in general. In this respect Brittany, and to an extent Wales, stand out by comparison with the other Insular and the Frankish churches. One of the complaints in the early sixth-century bishops’ letter that opens the

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *The Souls of China*, 16–22.

<sup>19</sup> For later medieval reformers’ efforts to eradicate ‘superstition’ in Brittany see Leguay and Martin, *Fastes et malheurs*, 77–95.

<sup>20</sup> Provost, *La fête*, 29–52.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, ‘Oral and Written’; Pryce, ‘Pastoral Care’, 60; Edwards, ‘Celtic Saints’, 237–8; Padel, ‘Local Saints’, 345–7; Clancy, ‘Columba’.

<sup>22</sup> J. R. Davies, ‘Old Testament Personal Names’, 189.

<sup>23</sup> Pryce, *Native Law*, 163–203; Davies, ‘“Protected Space”’; Padel, ‘Christianity’, 125; Delabigne-Villeneuve, ‘Du droit’; Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 53–5. Gendry, ‘Les *minihi*’, argues that the monastic lands known as *minihi* in Brittany did not acquire rights of sanctuary until the central Middle Ages, before which they were simply property.

history of the Breton Church was that female deacons (*conhospitae*) were allowed to distribute the Eucharist, yet by the ninth century the Church had a markedly exclusionary attitude towards women.<sup>24</sup> The earliest Life of a female Breton saint, the twelfth-century *Vita* of Ninnoc, explores the idea of an ascetic career for a woman as novel, with much emphasis on the proper male authorities to safeguard her and ratify her decisions at every turn.<sup>25</sup> Was this aspect of the Breton Church the result of controversies that are hidden from us, perhaps of the triumph of an ultra-ascetic movement like that apparently led by David in sixth-century Wales?<sup>26</sup> (In Wales, too, convents were few throughout the Middle Ages, and although there were female saints, some were credited with sainthood merely through being the mothers of more famous male saints.<sup>27</sup>) Or was it chiefly a matter of practicality? Most sainted women (and men) in Francia and the Insular world were monastic founders. Convents functioned as part of the land-conservation strategy of aristocratic families: almost all were under royal or noble control.<sup>28</sup> Women's religious communities needed the strong support and protection of an established authority, whether bishop, king or noble. In Brittany, where no very strong authority existed, and the landed elite never consolidated a sufficient 'critical mass' of property to make the ring-fencing of part of it in a convent worthwhile, it may well be that women's monasticism (and therefore sanctity) never flourished, without this necessarily reflecting on the wider role of women in society. But in France south of the Loire, too, convents were rare before the twelfth century presumably for different reasons: here is an opportunity for further comparative study in the future.<sup>29</sup>

Before further examining the sharing of 'saint culture' between Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago, it is necessary to enter a caveat: whom should we count as a 'saint'? As already mentioned, the Celtic-speaking regions seem to have produced them in unusual numbers. Nicholas Orme's dictionary of Cornish saints counts 140 Celtic names associated with particular cult-sites in Cornwall, not including saints without a

<sup>24</sup> Jülicher, 'Ein gallisches Bischofsschreiben', 665 (for comment and references see Stancliffe, 'Christianity', 442). Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, II.5, ed. De Smedt, 220; Jordan, *Nichts als Nahrung*, 255–7. The position of women in the early Breton Church is surveyed by Cassard, 'La femme bretonne', 128–36; see also DUBALA, 23.

<sup>25</sup> *Vita S. Ninnocae*, in *CQ*, 55–68. <sup>26</sup> Dumville, 'Saint David'.

<sup>27</sup> Cartwright, 'The Desire to Corrupt'; Cartwright, 'The Cult of St Non', 204–5.

<sup>28</sup> Foot, *Veiled Women*, vol. 1, 43–9, 202–3; Dunn, *The Emergence*, 162–6, 202–3; Fox, *Power and Religion*, 205–18; Yorke, 'Sisters Under the Skin?', 98–111. For a brief discussion with reference to Brittany, see W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 79–80.

<sup>29</sup> Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past*, 8; Foot, *Veiled Women*, vol. 1, 47–8 and references.

known cult-site such as some of those named in the tenth-century 'Vatican' list.<sup>30</sup> In Ireland, there are about a thousand native saints with feast days of their own noted in medieval sources – although, as Pádraig Ó Riain reminds us, many of these may be doublets of a much smaller number of real people.<sup>31</sup> The other Celtic regions lack modern dictionaries of saints and the counts are therefore more approximate. Figures for Scotland have never been calculated, because of the lack of early source-material and the difficulty of identifying saints in place-names (a large number of the saints of Scotland were shared with Ireland).<sup>32</sup> For Wales, Graham Jones counts 'at least 510' saints; the list of Welsh parishes and their patrons compiled by Arthur Wade-Evans in 1910 gives 346 saints' names.<sup>33</sup> For Brittany, the numbers have been estimated at just over 700.<sup>34</sup> (These figures do not take account of the overlap between the saints of Wales, Cornwall and Brittany which will be an important theme of this chapter.) By way of comparison, John Blair's 'handlist of Anglo-Saxon saints' contains 219 names of persons with a claim to have lived somewhere in England in the period 600–1066 and been venerated as saints – a respectable total, but a much lower density.<sup>35</sup>

Why the difference? It is well known that there was no formal 'canonization' procedure in Western Christendom until the twelfth century; before this time, and even afterwards, the epithet *sanctus* ('holy') could be applied to any individual believed to be specially marked by God's grace – by contemporaries or by successors, since the powers of saints were most reliably revealed in miracles after death. But in the Celtic regions the attitude to saint-making may have been even more inclusive than elsewhere. In England and France, the church hierarchy was strong and for the most part strongly supported by secular rulers. Bishops promoted recognised and respectable cults and suppressed suspect and

<sup>30</sup> Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*; Orme, *The Saints*. <sup>31</sup> Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*.

<sup>32</sup> 'Scotland' here denotes the Pictish, Gaelic and Brittonic-speaking parts of what would become the kingdom of the Scots in the central Middle Ages. Pioneering work was done by Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: Non-Scriptural*, and progress is now being made by the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' project at the University of Glasgow, <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk>.

<sup>33</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 22; Ó Riain, *A Dictionary*, 652–60; G. Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', 244; Wade-Evans, 'Parochiale Wallicanum', 119–22.

<sup>34</sup> Cassard, 'En Bretagne', 55. Deuffic, 'Questions d'hagiographie', 15–22, gives a list of 720 names, described as 'overly enthusiastic' by Smith, 'Oral and Written', 313 note 18. Scholars still rely on Joseph Loth's *Noms des saints bretons* and François Duine's *Mémento des sources hagiographiques*, both over a century old. The late Professor Bernard Tanguy was preparing a dictionary of Breton saints at the time of his death in 2015 (<http://hagiohistoriographiemedievale.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=bernard+tanguy&x=8&y=13>, accessed 18 October 2017). Publication is planned (Bertrand Yeurc'h, pers. comm., 11/06/2018).

<sup>35</sup> Blair, 'A Handlist'.



spontaneous ones, as the writings of Sulpicius Severus and Gregory of Tours show.<sup>36</sup> In the Celtic regions, where such authority was weak or much interrupted, local and sometimes dubious 'saints' could proliferate relatively undisturbed. However, to some extent, the abundance of Brittonic 'saints' may be a mirage caused by the peculiarities of Brittonic place-name formation, the subject of the [next section](#).

### Place-Names, Chronology and Saints' Cults

As already mentioned, ecclesiastical place-names containing the names of supposed saints are a particular feature of the Brittonic-speaking regions. In England, saints' names rarely enter into place-names, and we hear of saints only if they were important enough to receive liturgical commemoration, a relic-cult or a *Vita*.<sup>37</sup> In France, by contrast, 'saintly' toponymy is abundant but most often includes the names of universal or regional saints rather than strictly local ones.<sup>38</sup> In Ireland, 'saintly' place-names are complemented by relatively plentiful sources for liturgical cults that give a good sense of which saints were actually celebrated during the medieval period; but in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, the only evidence of sainthood for many individuals is the appearance of their names combined with generic ecclesiastical elements in the ubiquitous 'hagiotoponyms'.<sup>39</sup> Some of the generic elements used in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany are the same. They include \**lann* (Breton *lan*, Cornish *lan*, Welsh *llan*), 'sacred enclosure, church', from Common Celtic \**landā*, originally meaning simply 'a cleared space'; Breton *merzher*, Cornish *merther*, Welsh *merthyr*, 'burial-place', from Latin *martyrium*; and \**egluis* (Breton *iliz*, Cornish *eglos*, Welsh *eglwys*), 'church', from Latin *ecclesia*.<sup>40</sup> There were also elements confined to one or two of the

<sup>36</sup> For instance, Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*, 13, transl. Goodrich, 35–6; Gregory of Tours, *Liber de gloria confessorum*, 34, ed. Krusch, 318–9. See Geary, *Living With the Dead*, 167–8; Thacker, 'The Making', 72. In France this policing by no means succeeded in stamping out dubious saints, as shown by the thousands of entries in Merceron, *Dictionnaire thématique et géographique des saints imaginaires*; it did, however, succeed in maintaining a line between 'approved' saints and the rest.

<sup>37</sup> An exception is the north-west of England, where Gaelic-Scandinavian influence has given rise to numerous place-names in *Kirk* + saint's name: Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence*, 127–54.

<sup>38</sup> Compare the data assembled in Zadora-Rio, *Des paroisses*, 43–58 and references.

<sup>39</sup> For introductions, see Padel, 'Local Saints'; Tanguy, 'L'hagio-onomastique bretonne'. For saints in Scottish toponymy, see Boardman, 'The Survey', and the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' website, <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk>. For Ireland, see Sharpe, 'Martyrs', 143, and references.

<sup>40</sup> For the origin and meaning of *merthyr*-names, see Parsons, *Martyrs and Memorials*.

Brittonic-speaking regions.<sup>41</sup> Those of greatest interest for Brittany are *loc* (from Latin *locus*, '[sacred] place'), found chiefly in Brittany, but with a single example in Cornwall and a possible few in Scotland; and *plou* (from Latin *plebs*, '[Christian] people'), confined to Brittany, apart (again) from one Cornish example.<sup>42</sup>

In Brittany and Cornwall, there is also a large class of hagiotoponyms consisting of the name of a saint alone, or prefixed only by the word 'saint'. 'Saint + name' place-names seem to be non-existent in Wales except in anglicised versions of place-names; they are also rare in England (chiefly occurring where there is evidence for an imported Celtic saint's cult, as at St Ives and St Neots in Huntingdonshire), but they are common in France and many other parts of Europe. One might ascribe them to French and Anglo-Norman influence, but in Brittany they are attested in Breton-language forms, not merely latinised forms, as early as the ninth century.<sup>43</sup> Since 'saint'-names have continued to be coined into modern times, it is difficult to base any historical argument on their incidence. However, Europe-wide study of these names may have interesting patterns to reveal.<sup>44</sup> 'Name-alone' names are likewise rare in Wales, but also non-existent in England and France, whereas they are common in Brittany and Cornwall.<sup>45</sup> There is a distinction, however, in that early documentation of Cornish 'name-alone' names tends to include other ecclesiastical elements which have subsequently been dropped – *Eglosmelylon* in 1345 has become Mullion, *Lanwenap* in 1199 is Gwennap – whereas a number of the Breton examples are 'name-alone' from the first time they are recorded, for instance *Siz* (a *plebs* named for a St Sixtus) in Redon charters of the mid-ninth century, and *Berriun* and *Buduc* in the eleventh-century Cartulary of Landévennec.<sup>46</sup> There is still

<sup>41</sup> For names derived from Latin *basilica*, see Sharpe, 'Martyrs', 136–41; a Breton example may be Lambézellec (F): *DF*, 99; Oliver Padel, pers. comm., 6/6/2019. For *monachia* names see Largillière, 'Les minihys'; Largillière, 'Le Minihi-Briac'; Guigon, *Les églises*, I.16–18; Tanguy, 'De la treb'; Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 156, 163; Hamon, 'Le Minihi de saint Tugdual'; Gendry, 'Les minihis'. A list of places named *menehi* in Brittany, with maps, can be found in Hascoët, 'Les troménies', II.956–70 (accessed 13 December 2018).

<sup>42</sup> Sharpe, 'Martyrs', 141–7; Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 142–4, 151–2, 187, and references; Guigon, *Les églises*, I.13–15. For the Scottish *loc* names (a small possibly Brittonic-derived group in southern Scotland, and a larger group in eastern Scotland with a possibly Pictish or Gaelic derivation) see Clancy, 'Logie'.

<sup>43</sup> *CR*, 247 (dated 871), Appendix 45 (dated 857/858), pp. 198, 371; Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, II.17, ed. Lot, 496–7.

<sup>44</sup> G. Jones, 'Introduction', 18–19 (Figure 5).

<sup>45</sup> Some of the few names of this type in Wales are Edern (Caern.), Llowes (Maesd.) and Silian (Ceredigion): Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary*, 136, 294, 440.

<sup>46</sup> Jankulak, 'The Many-Layered Cult', 14; Padel, 'Christianity', 117; Orme, *The Saints*, 135–6, 184–5; *CR*, 105, 106, pp. 79–81; *CL*, 17, 19, 35, pp. 557, 558, 567; Tanguy, 'Les noms de lieux', 32; Tanguy, 'L'hagio-onomastique bretonne', 334–6. There are,

room for a full study of their distribution and significance, and a theory as to why they occur in Brittany and (secondarily) Cornwall, but barely anywhere else. Erwan Vallerie argued that in Brittany such names, like *plou*-names, tend to apply to 'parish'-territories, not to individual settlements, and in particular to territories that are large in area and sparsely populated. He saw them as 'a distinct type of formation . . . later creations, perhaps linked to the last waves of [British] immigration'.<sup>47</sup> This conclusion may be valid but, given the uncertainty of the derivation of many such names, it deserves further examination.<sup>48</sup> While it is at present impossible to date most place-names of these types or to use them as evidence for church-organisation, they are vital in locating the cults of particular saints, and will appear frequently in the following pages.

It is debatable whether the prevalence of hagiotoponymy in the Brittonic-speaking regions implies any distinctive social character. It may be that the dispersed settlement-pattern of these regions – characteristic of a 'low-pressure' and semi-pastoral economy – caused church-buildings and their ancillary settlements to be named separately from secular settlements, and that the church-settlements' names tended to have more permanence.<sup>49</sup> However, Oliver Padel points out that in Cornwall, churches were not just physically separate from secular settlements, but many were deliberately founded at a distance from secular administrative centres, and continued to occupy isolated and marginal positions within the parishes they served.<sup>50</sup> One might speculate that an (at least ritual) separation of spiritual from lay power was being sought. In Brittany, however, such a separation is not evident, and there the frequency of ecclesiastical place-names suggests that the Church did not so much separate itself from lay organisation as practically subsume it (as argued in [Chapter 1](#)) – although, as we shall see, this impression may find less support in toponymy than has sometimes been thought.

It has usually been assumed that all the personal names found in Brittonic ecclesiastical place-names belonged to 'saints'. However, caution is needed: some such names may be those of founders, donors, or

however, Breton examples of saint-alone names in which a generic element has been dropped, for instance Gouesnou (F), *Langoeznou* in 1516: Loth, *Les noms*, 47; Largillière, *Les saints*, 33–5.

<sup>47</sup> Vallerie, *Communes bretonnes*, 213: . . . *des formations d'un type distinct . . . des créations plus tardives, en liaison peut-être avec les dernières vagues de l'immigration.*

<sup>48</sup> For instance Vallerie, *Communes bretonnes*, 214, does not hesitate to derive the names *Sizun* and *Spézet* (F) from anthroponyms Sidonius and Expectatus; Tanguy, *DF*, 213–5, expresses doubts.

<sup>49</sup> G. Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', 224. See also Padel, 'Local Saints', 306; Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', 468–71.

<sup>50</sup> Padel, 'Local Saints', 308–10.

one-time occupants of the site, who were not initially remembered as especially holy but, by virtue of being the eponyms of church-sites, eventually came to be thought of as their patrons and dedicatees and dignified by the epithet 'saint'.<sup>51</sup> This kind of saintly 'grade inflation' is probably present in all the Brittonic-speaking regions, but especially in Brittany, where the popular veneration and 'discovery' of local saints continued until modern times. (To make matters worse, in all three Brittonic regions there are examples of 'saints' being created from place-names that do not even contain genuine personal names, through the misinterpretation of toponymic elements: in Brittany, for instance, the word *san*, 'valley, watercourse', can be confused with 'saint'. Saint-Logot, Trémel, CA, is probably *san-logod*, 'valley of mice'.<sup>52</sup>)

When considering how individuals came to be venerated as saints, it is necessary to keep in mind the distinction between eponyms and dedications. Churches at the time of their foundation are most unlikely to be *dedicated* to (i.e. consecrated in the name of) their founder, who cannot fully attain his role of intercessor in heaven for his devotees until he is dead; where dedications to local founding saints can be documented in England and continental Europe, they tend to originate in the seventh and eighth centuries at the earliest.<sup>53</sup> Recent studies of dedications in France suggest that the designation of rural churches by the names of their patron saints did not become the norm until the Carolingian period; many churches did not receive a formal dedication in the name of a saint until much later, if at all.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the *eponym* of an ecclesiastical place-name, perhaps simply a local landowner or cleric, could become an eponym instantaneously, as soon as he became associated with a church-settlement. This process can be seen at work in some of the early charters in the Book of Llandaf from south-east Wales. In two probably seventh-century charters relating to church-sites, the eponyms of the sites appear in person in the records, as priests who were apparently the current and perhaps the first resident clergy on the sites. These individuals, *Guoruo* of *Lann Guorboe* and *Iunabui* of *Lann Iunabui*, do not indeed seem to have developed saints' cults (*Lann Guorboe*, when founded, was dedicated to the Trinity), but a third, a *Custenhin* who was mentioned as a king and a witness (perhaps a royal donor) in a grant of *Lann Custenhinngarthbeni*, had been upgraded from eponym to saintly dedicatee (*Ecclesia Sancti Custennin*) in 1144.<sup>55</sup> Thus, a

<sup>51</sup> For examples of such 'creation' of saints, see Jankulak, 'Present and yet Absent', 166–8.

<sup>52</sup> Trépos, 'Les saints', 396–7, qualified by Tanguy, 'L'hagio-onomastique', 335–6. For similar Welsh and Cornish examples see Jankulak, 'The Many-Layered Cult', 106–7; Jankulak, 'Spondet devotio', 273.

<sup>53</sup> Chadwick, 'The Evidence', 186. <sup>54</sup> Zadora-Rio, *Des paroisses*, 43–4.

<sup>55</sup> *LL*, 162, 73, 72; Parsons, *Warning*, 11–12, 16–18.

time-lag would intervene, not between the foundation of a church and its acquisition of an eponym, but between then and the eponym's development of a saint's cult, if indeed it ever developed. In the not uncommon situation in which the eponym of an ecclesiastical site and the dedicatee of its church are two different individuals, and there is no evidence of a cult for the eponym, it may be safer to suppose that the eponym never had a cult.<sup>56</sup> The conclusion to be drawn is that we must take care not to exaggerate the numbers of 'saints' in the Brittonic-speaking world or to overstate the impact of Christianisation.

Moving from the question of eponyms to the generic ecclesiastical terms in place-names, we may ask: to what extent did the shared use of such terms imply an ecclesiastical organisation which, if not uniform, shared certain assumptions and communicated among its various regions? And at what date might such an organisation have come into being and ultimately diverged into separate parts? This is where the dating of place-name elements might offer crucial insights – if it were not itself so uncertain.

The different Brittonic-speaking regions offer unequal opportunities for chronologically articulated use of place-name evidence. The opportunities are greatest in Brittany. Bernard Tanguy pointed out that the ninth and tenth centuries in Brittany were a watershed in ecclesiastical place-naming, after which some name-elements, among them *plou* and (more gradually) *lan*, went out of use and new ones, notably *loc*, came in.<sup>57</sup> These names can be differentially dated thanks both to documentary evidence and to the geography of language use.<sup>58</sup> The element *plou*, which is found everywhere west of the *ligne Loth*, can be reasonably assumed to be earlier than *loc*, which is mostly confined to west of the Saint-Brieuc-Vannes line where Breton had receded by the thirteenth century.<sup>59</sup> *Lan*-names seem to be an intermediate case: they occur everywhere west of the *ligne Loth*, but are more common west of Saint-Brieuc and Vannes, implying a longer period or a higher density of formation.<sup>60</sup> Nearly all *lan*-names as well as *plou*-names are formed with local Brittonic eponyms, and none with the names of Christ, Mary and Michael, who are the eponyms of the majority of *loc*-names.<sup>61</sup> The gain of *loc* at the expense

<sup>56</sup> Doble claimed in various publications that the eponyms of \**lann*-churches in Cornwall were seldom or never the dedicatees of the churches, but Padel has shown that eponym and dedicatee are the same person for just under half the Cornish \**lanns*: Padel, 'Cornish Names', 15.

<sup>57</sup> Tanguy, 'Du nemeton', 109.

<sup>58</sup> Loth, 'Les langues romane et bretonne', 377; Jackson, *A Historical Phonology*, 21–5; see also Tanguy, 'La limite linguistique', 436.

<sup>59</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 28; Abalain, *Les noms de lieux*, 14, 37–8. See map I.1.

<sup>60</sup> According to the examples given by Loth, *Les noms*, 70–8.

<sup>61</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 2–27.

of *lan* implies the gradual edging-out of one view of ecclesiastical establishment by another, more suited to the era of Gregorian reform; perhaps, also, linguistic divergence and the demise of any ancestral unity between the Brittonic churches.

In Cornwall, as in Brittany, there is good reason for regarding *lan*-names as an early stratum of ecclesiastical place-names, dating from the seventh century to the eleventh at the latest, partly because of their distribution.<sup>62</sup> They are found in every part of Cornwall, and are just as common in East Cornwall where English was predominantly spoken by the central Middle Ages as they are further west.<sup>63</sup> Four *lan*-names are also known in Devon and Somerset, where British-language names are most unlikely to have been formed later than the seventh century.<sup>64</sup> A number of Cornish *lan*-names occur only in a few early records and are then replaced by other names for the same places. This fits with the historical expectation that Cornwall's absorption into Anglo-Saxon Wessex in the tenth century, followed by the Norman Conquest in the eleventh, would create a threshold after which the kind of establishment known as a *lan* (whatever that was) was unlikely to be founded.

In Wales, given that the geographical extent of the Welsh language stayed stable until much later, ecclesiastical place-name elements, especially the ubiquitous *llan*, cannot be used as a chronological marker in this way. *Llan* became the default ecclesiastical place-name element, and *llan*-names certainly went on being formed until about 1100 and perhaps later, Llanddewi Nant Hoddni (Myn.) (Llanthony) being an example.<sup>65</sup> Besides the longevity of the Welsh language, a shortage of early documentary evidence creates problems for dating Welsh place-names.<sup>66</sup> This lack of chronological depth is an obstacle to assessing the relative age of saints' cults: if a saint's name is found in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, there is often a reasonable presumption that Wales was the point of origin of the cult, but this cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the antiquity of place-names.

Breton evidence can, however, shed light on the date of the earliest \**lann*-names in Wales. Charles Thomas pointed to a link between the \**lann*-element and the presence of curvilinear enclosed cemeteries at British church-sites.<sup>67</sup> Some archaeologists, over-generalising from the

<sup>62</sup> Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 142–5; Padel, 'Christianity', 117–8.

<sup>63</sup> For a map and analysis of *lann*-sites in Cornwall, see Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish Churchyards', 115–20.

<sup>64</sup> Padel, *A Popular Dictionary*, 130; Coates and Breeze, *Celtic Voices*, 122.

<sup>65</sup> Padel, 'Generic Place-Name Elements'; Morgan, *Place-names of Gwent*, 139–40.

<sup>66</sup> G. Jones, 'Comparative Research Rewarded', 219.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas, *The Early Christian Archaeology*, 86–8; Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 142–5; Padel, 'Local Saints', 307.

examples, have suggested that as, in Wales, enclosed cemeteries associated with Christian sites cannot be firmly dated earlier than the ninth century, *\*lann*-names may not have come into use until the same period.<sup>68</sup> Against this has to be set the presence of *\*lann*-names in Brittany, as well as in Devon and Somerset. Rather than a name-element being generally adopted both in Britain and in Brittany long after large-scale migration to Brittany had ended, it seems more likely that the coining of *\*lann* as a term for church-sites goes back to the sixth century, the formative period of the British Church.<sup>69</sup>

However, the use of *\*lann*-names in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany does not necessarily imply a closely similar organisation of the Church in all three regions. Definition is difficult. Sites with *\*lann*-names varied in size and function and the element could be translated by various Latin words – *monasterium*, *ecclesia*, *cimeterium*, *podum* 'raised ground'(?). Even so, in Wales and Cornwall the eventual meaning of *\*lann* can in practice be given as 'enclosed church site with its accompanying settlement; church-town'.<sup>70</sup> In Cornwall, a large-scale study by Ann Preston-Jones found that *\*lann*-names were associated with valley-bottom or riverine locations and curvilinear banked enclosures.<sup>71</sup> The translation of *\*lann* by *podum* in early charters in the Book of Llandaf may imply that *\*lann*-sites were, or could be, built on artificially raised areas of ground.<sup>72</sup> Important churches tended to have names in *\*lann*: every substantial pre-Conquest religious house in Cornwall had such a name, and both in Cornwall and in Wales, about half the attested *\*lann*-names designate historic parishes.<sup>73</sup> In Brittany, however, the definition of the *\*lann* is more vague.<sup>74</sup> The absolute numbers of *\*lann*-names are similar to Wales and Cornwall – up to 930, compared with 870 in Wales and about a hundred in Cornwall – but no complete list exists, and problems of identification (such as confusion with the Romance element *landa*, 'rough ground,

<sup>68</sup> Petts in 'Cemeteries and Boundaries' and *The Early Medieval Church*, 123–6, argues thus despite Thomas's explicit statement that 'if British *\*lano-* [recte *\*landā*] begins, as it may, in sub-Roman times, it first describes undeveloped and probably unenclosed cemeteries' (*The Early Christian Archaeology*, 88). See also J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 393–4.

<sup>69</sup> Padel, 'Generic Place-Name Elements'; Padel, 'Brittonic *Lann*'. Parsons, 'Warning', 24–5, after reviewing the evidence, also concludes that *\*lann*-names may be seventh-century or earlier.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas, *The Early Christian Archaeology*, 86–8; Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 142–5; Padel, 'Local Saints', 307.

<sup>71</sup> Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish Churchyards', 115–8. <sup>72</sup> Padel, 'Brittonic *Lann*'.

<sup>73</sup> Kain and Oliver, *Historic Parishes*, 145–9.

<sup>74</sup> Most scholars still accept the definition given by Largillière, *Les saints*, 27: 'Lan- désigne sometimes a monastery and often a simple chapel or oratory' (Lan- désigne parfois un monastère, et souvent une simple chapelle, une oratoire).



*lande*’) make it impossible at this stage to map them with any accuracy.<sup>75</sup> It is clear, however, that some Breton parishes contain three or four sub-parochial settlements with genuine *\*lann* -names; in Landunvez (F) seven have been counted, including the name of the parish itself.<sup>76</sup> Similar concentrations are already seen in the eleventh-century Landévennec charter-collection, in which three *\*lanns* each are recorded for the inland parishes of Lothey and Gouézec.<sup>77</sup> The *\*lann*-element rarely designates an important establishment: only Landévennec, *Landreguer* (Tréguier), *Lanmurmeler* (Lanmeur) and *Landoac* (Saint-Jacut) were above the level of parish churches, and only 90 *\*lann*-names ever designated parishes or communes.<sup>78</sup> No archaeological evidence of the kind associated with *\*lanns* in Wales and Cornwall has yet been discovered at a *\*lann*-site in Brittany. In fact, the precise site of any original *\*lann* (except Landévennec) has yet to be pinpointed: as discussed in [Chapter 1](#), the sites of most existing churches in Brittany, including those of places with *\*lann*-names, lack early physical evidence.<sup>79</sup> Already in the ninth-century charters of Redon, *\*lann*-names varied enormously in their application, from a land-holding with no apparent ecclesiastical associations, to entire parish territories.<sup>80</sup> Several factors seem to be at work. One is that in Brittany, the leading churches of *plous* precociously provided pastoral services for lay communities, so, in contrast with Wales and Cornwall, *\*lann*-churches only exceptionally took on the ‘parish’ role. This may have inhibited the physical development of *\*lann*-sites. Another is the sheer number of small ecclesiastical establishments in Brittany, as we see in the Redon charters, many of them probably short-lived and soon replaced, so that land-units with ecclesiastical names are frequently found in lay ownership and vice versa. The lack of permanence (except at the level of the *plou*), and the absence of a hierarchy of wealth and of large-scale organisation in the early religious landscape of Brittany, stand out. The use of the *\*lann*-element in Brittany, then, seems to suggest that early medieval Bretons conceptualised church-foundations in the same way as Insular Britons, but that in

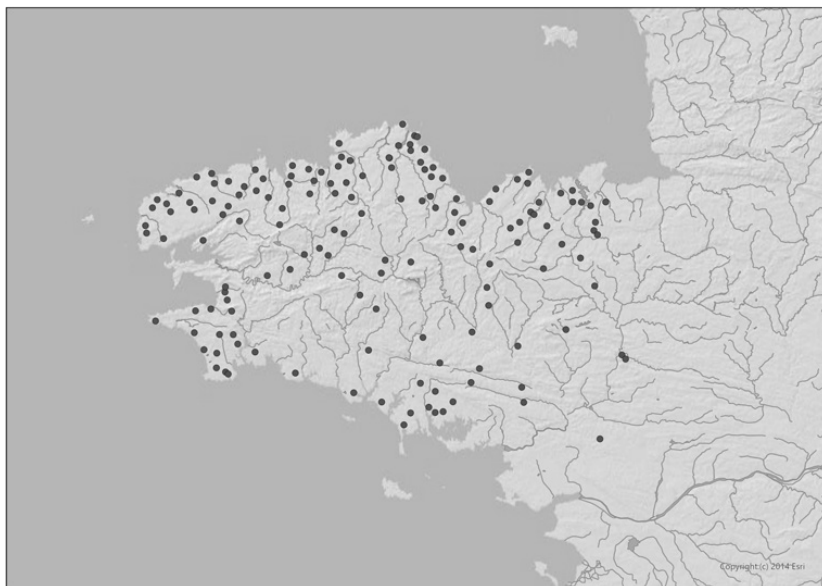
<sup>75</sup> Vallerie, ‘Origines’, 72, gives a total of 930, citing work by Fañch Gourvil; Smith, *De la toponymie*, lists 72, but misses some ‘disguised’ ones that Vallerie and Tanguy (‘L’hagiogonomastique bretonne’, 327) point out. Tanguy, *DF*, 25, provides a map of parishes and *trèves* (divisions of a parish) with names in *\*lann* in Finistère. See also Padel, ‘Christianity’, 118; Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, 142–5; Padel, ‘Brittonic Lann’; Largillière, *Les saints*, 75–7; Richards, *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units*. The ultimate Celtic derivation of Romance *landa* is the same as that of *\*lann*, but the two elements diverged in meaning and usage (Oliver Padel, pers. comm., 05/11/2018).

<sup>76</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 146, note 30; Bernier, *Les chrétientés bretonnes*, 101.

<sup>77</sup> Tanguy, ‘Les noms de lieux’, 34. <sup>78</sup> Vallerie, ‘Origines’, 79–80.

<sup>79</sup> Earthworks at Lannerchen, Plouguerneau, F need further investigation: Tanguy, ‘Les *pagi* bretons’, 374–5.

<sup>80</sup> Tanguy, ‘Les noms d’hommes’, 65.



Map 6.1 Place-names in *Plou*

practice such churches were more numerous, smaller and less permanent than their Insular equivalents.

It is the *plou* place-names of Brittany (Map 6.1) that seem most characteristic of the Breton cult of saints and that have attracted the most discussion. *Plou* derives from Latin *plebs* via Common Neo-Brittonic *\*pluiv*, ‘people, populace’. In medieval Latin, *plebs* acquired the sense of ‘lay Christian community’. In Welsh and Cornish its derivatives, *plwyf* and *plu*, came to denote ‘parish’, but these words were not used as generic place-name elements. In Middle and Modern Breton, the word for ‘parish’ is *parroes*, borrowed from French *paroisse*, and *plou* has come to mean ‘countryside, the rural part of a parish’.<sup>81</sup> This implies that a Breton *plou* was not a parish exactly as the high-medieval and modern Church understood it. The ecclesiastical component of the word was taken over by the loan-word *parroes*, leaving *plou* with a purely territorial meaning.

In place-names, *plou* is always compounded with a Brittonic specific element, sometimes an adjective or a common noun, but most often a

<sup>81</sup> Padel, ‘Generic Place-Name Elements’.

personal name. The 179 *plou*-names of Brittany are concentrated along the north coast and in the far west, but they occur everywhere west of the *ligne Loth*, except in central Cornouaille (as described in [Chapter 2](#)).<sup>82</sup> The great majority of them designate units that have survived as parishes until modern times.<sup>83</sup> The special significance of *plou*-names, aside from their probably early date, is that, unlike other ecclesiastical place-names, they refer primarily not to an individual settlement-site but to a community and the entire territory that it occupied, as far back as these names can be traced.

It is reasonable to suppose that *plou*-names reflect the areas of earliest and most concentrated British-speaking settlement. However, even in parts of Brittany where *plou*-names are absent or rare, the Latin term *plebs* for a territorial unit occurs in charters and hagiography, implying that the organisation of land into such units was general. This suggests that it is legitimate to generalise from the ninth-century Redon documents in listing the defining features of the *plebs*: a community of independent small landowners, the *plebenses*; one or more churches; at least one priest, who usually possessed his own inherited land; and a hereditary secular dignitary called a *machtiern* who, however, was not closely identified with a single *plebs* but presided over two, three or four.<sup>84</sup> By the eleventh century, the civil functions of the *plebs* seem to have fallen into disuse, but it continued to exist as a territorial division, for the word was still used in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to locate places in charters from both east and west Brittany.<sup>85</sup> The author of the Life of Goeznou (late twelfth or thirteenth century?) had noted the ubiquity of *plebs*-units (and also of the secular *\*trev*-element) in the territorial organisation of Brittany, when he wrote of Conan Meriadoc and his Britons ‘dividing all the land by *plebes* and *tribus*’ (*terra illa tota per plebes et tribus divisa*).<sup>86</sup>

A high proportion of the research effort on place-names in Brittany has been expended on the *plous*, and on defining the earliest boundaries of these ‘primitive parishes’ (*paroisses primitives*).<sup>87</sup> The *plous* of the ninth-century charters were not parishes in the strict sense of the eleventh

<sup>82</sup> Plourin, ‘Questions d’onomastique’, 198; Tanguy, ‘Les paroisses primitives’, 129–30; and see [Chapter 2](#).

<sup>83</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 182, 191–5. For ways in which the eponyms of place-names may have developed a ‘saintly’ reputation, see Padel, ‘Local Saints’, 312–314.

<sup>84</sup> W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 63–7, 138–9, 158–9, 172–3, 197–8; W. Davies, ‘Priests’, 177–9, 195–8.

<sup>85</sup> For instance *per plebem Mellac ... per plebem Yuliac* in a twelfth-century list of the possessions of the abbey of Quimperlé: *CQ*, II, p. 135; *villula sita in plebe Gauele*, *CR*, 307, p. 259 (1008 × 1031).

<sup>86</sup> *Vita S. Goeznouei*, 1, ed. La Borderie, ‘*L’Historia Britannica*’, 228.

<sup>87</sup> See especially Vallerie, *Communes bretonnes*; *DF*; *DCA*.

century and after, enforcing defined rights to tithes and burial.<sup>88</sup> However, they were certainly territories, and territories within which the community's principal church (the *ecclesia plebis*) played an important role.<sup>89</sup> The origin of the *plous* is an unsolved problem.<sup>90</sup> Bernard Tanguy saw them as primarily ecclesiastical units, and their eponymous 'saints' as local priests who provided leadership for British immigrant groups in a landscape where social organisation had otherwise broken down.<sup>91</sup> However, La Borderie regarded *plou*-communities as 'modified clans', secular groups under military leadership. Soazick Kerneis proposed that they were units of British soldiers settled by the Roman authorities in the fifth century. Wendy Davies, in the closest analysis of the charter-material to date, emphasised their 'civil' qualities.<sup>92</sup> Anne Lunven suggests that they were a survival from fifth- and sixth-century efforts to christianise rural areas by establishing colleges of priests, common to large parts of the Western Roman Empire, but if so, their strongly Brittonic nomenclature is mysterious.<sup>93</sup> A recent theory which neatly accounts for their combined functions comes from Alex Woolf. He suggests that the British settlers in Brittany may have identified themselves as distinct from the locals in their Christian organisation and liturgy, rather as the Arian members of the Gothic armies of southern Gaul and Spain wore their religious practice as a badge of difference. The *plous* would have originated as the catchment-areas for the self-consciously separate 'chapels' or 'conventicles' of these migrant groups and would then gradually have come to include the entire population and form the 'proto-parishes' seen in the ninth-century sources.<sup>94</sup>

Each *plou* place-name, then, represents a territory occupied by a community that had an ecclesiastical aspect, but was not purely ecclesiastical, and we cannot assume that every eponym of a *plou*, if otherwise unknown, was a 'saint' or even a church office-holder. A high proportion of these eponyms are not dedicatees of the *plou*'s main church and many have no recorded saint's cult. We *can* assume that *plou*-eponyms, saintly or not, were originally names of some significance to the inhabitants of entire rural districts. The names of such territories are more conservative than those of individual settlements, and for a particular eponym to impose

<sup>88</sup> Mazel, 'Introduction', 16, and references; Lunven, 'Christianisation', 326, 342–4.

<sup>89</sup> W. Davies, 'Introduction', 7.

<sup>90</sup> For comparanda elsewhere in Europe, see Kerneis, '*Pieve d'Italie*', 398–9 and references; Gillett, *Envoys*, 59–60; Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 113–6.

<sup>91</sup> Thus Tanguy, 'Les paroisses bretonnes primitives', 29.

<sup>92</sup> La Borderie, *Histoire de Bretagne*, I. 280–1; Kerneis, '*Pieve d'Italie*'; Kerneis, 'Le soin des âmes'; W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 63–7, 138–9, 158–9, 172–3, 197–8; W. Davies, 'Priests', 177–9, 195–8.

<sup>93</sup> Lunven, *Du diocèse à la paroisse*, 115–6. <sup>94</sup> Woolf, '*Plebs*', 232–4.

itself on one must attest to a wider community identification with the eponymous figure than do saints' names compounded with other ecclesiastical elements such as *lan* and *loc*.<sup>95</sup>

At this point we return from the significance of generic place-name elements to the significance of the personal names preserved in them. Where such eponyms are confined to single places (as they are in the majority of *plous*), their sainthood may be in doubt but their reality is not: their very obscurity and attachment to one particular place argues in favour of their existence as real persons, associated with the site in some way at its foundation or during its development.<sup>96</sup> If, however, the same eponym is found in several places, and especially in different regions, this creates a *prima facie* case that we are dealing with a saint's cult, even if the cult-evidence is confined to place-names. Veneration as a saint is a more convincing explanation than any other for a specific individual's name to be applied to rural church-sites in more than one Brittonic-speaking region. Yet this entails other problems of identification and interpretation. Are the names really the same? Even if so, do they necessarily refer to the same individual? If identifications are upheld, what do they suggest about the nature and chronology of contact between regions, especially between Brittany and the Insular world? These questions will be the subject of the rest of this chapter. Before discussing individual saints in detail, some general suggestions will be offered about how early medieval cults may have been propagated in the Brittonic-speaking world (as distinct from the rest of western Europe).

### Brittany and the Celtic World: How Did Cults Spread?

What kind of contact is implied by the sharing of saints' cults? For the earliest students of Breton hagiotoponymy, notably René Llargillière, the answer was clear: in the majority of cases, place-names and dedications to the same saint in different locations were evidence for the travels of the saint himself (or, occasionally, herself) and his or her foundation of communities and churches.<sup>97</sup> This interpretation of the evidence is by no means absurd, given the well-documented cases of early medieval religious leaders travelling widely and founding numerous churches: among Celtic saints, Columbanus and Samson of Dol are examples. However, the best known such cases, awkwardly, did *not* result in a constellation of early place-names commemorating the saint; if anything,

<sup>95</sup> As emphasised by Llargillière, *Les saints*, 217. <sup>96</sup> Padel, 'Local Saints', 312–3.

<sup>97</sup> Llargillière, *Les saints*, 214–5; however, Llargillière conceded the existence of imported cults of Insular British saints: *Les saints*, 135–8, 166.

it tended to be lesser shrines founded after his lifetime that took his name, the older and more prestigious centres like Luxeuil and Dol keeping the earlier names under which they had presumably already grown famous. Indeed, the frequency with which the names of famous Brittonic saints (such as Samson, Cadog, Beuno, Tysilio, Petroc and even David) *failed* to become imprinted upon their main cult-centres might well make one despair of identifying the original centre of a cult which survives only in place-names: in such cases only the fringes of the cult's expansion may remain visible. But in any case, when the earliest evidence of a cult-centre dates from centuries after the saint's death, it obviously cannot be assumed that the saint in person was the founder.<sup>98</sup>

Thomas Owen Clancy has set out the various 'paradigms' that scholars have so far suggested for the inception and spread of saints' cults in the Celtic world: apart from the strictly local 'foundational' and 'proprietary' saint, there is the 'missionary' paradigm, in which the saint and his followers travel in the vanguard of the spread of Christianity, or of a particular Rule or religious practice; 'organisational', where dedication of several churches to one saint reflects a network of ownership or jurisdiction; 'reliquary', where the eponym's cult is established at a new site in connection with the acquisition of relics (by gift, purchase, conquest or theft); 'political, national or ethnic', where the adoption of a saint's cult is a symbolic statement of allegiance or subordination; and 'emigratory', when a population movement occurs for some unrelated reason and devotees of particular saints take their cults with them.<sup>99</sup> (Clancy's examples of this last relate to the Viking Age in Scotland, but its relevance to Brittany, both in the migration period and in the Viking Age, is obvious.<sup>100</sup>) Then there is 'kindred', the propagation of saints' cults together with family links. Finally, Clancy highlights 'individual' and 'devotional' motives for the propagation of saints' cults: taste and fashion, the attributes or powers of a particular saint, and individual religious experience must often have decided the adoption of a saint's cult, and is bound to spoil any over-simple pattern of diffusion based on geography and power.

In practice, of course, these paradigms overlap, and most or all of them may have figured in the transfer of saints' cults between the Insular world and Brittany. Unfortunately the almost complete lack of contemporary information for the formative age of Breton Christianity leaves us

<sup>98</sup> See Chadwick, 'The Evidence', and recent discussions by Clancy, 'The Big Man', 9–14, and Sims-Williams (ed.), *Buchedd Beuno*, 32–7.

<sup>99</sup> Clancy, 'The Big Man', 9–16; Geary, 'Sacred Commodities', 208–13.

<sup>100</sup> For the propagation of Irish saints' cults in northern Britain in the tenth century, see also Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence*, 132–4.

guessing. All that remains in the case of many shared cults is the geography of place-names and dedications. This is enigmatic, not only when one compares the various Celtic-speaking regions but also within individual regions.

As regards the 'missionary' paradigm, conversion from pre-Christian religions is unlikely to have been a motive in the travels of saints between Britain and Brittany: but if 'missionary' activity is defined as the provision of personnel and support by better-resourced churches (in Insular Britain) to those in the process of establishing themselves in a new area (Brittany), this paradigm may have been relevant during the migration period and for some time afterwards.<sup>101</sup> The 'political' and 'organisational' paradigms, where the geographical spread of some of the most successful saints' cults may reflect the promotion of the cult by a regional political power or the proprietary interests of a successful church, are more evident in Wales than in Brittany. Examples are the cults of Germanus and Beuno in north-east Wales, and the saints associated with the diocese of Llandaf in the south-east.<sup>102</sup> Much more enigmatic, however, are saints such as Meugan whose names survive in place-names or parish dedications in two, three or a handful of widely separated places that were apparently in different kingdoms. A twelfth-century *Vita* like that of St Cybi, which describes the travels of the saint between Cornwall, Ireland and several parts of Wales, is clearly a post hoc attempt to account for a widely scattered cult, with no indication that the author had any real knowledge of how it had arisen.<sup>103</sup> The same phenomenon of arbitrarily distributed cults is even more noticeable in Brittany. There, ruling families before the eleventh century cannot be shown to have identified themselves with the cults of any particular native Breton saints. Where saints' Lives claim the patronage of local rulers, this is placed in the remote past. Dioceses and important monasteries did promote the cults of their founding saints, but uptake was haphazard, not closely correlated to the territory claimed by the establishment in question. Many cults spread widely and apparently at random, dotted here and there without any visible institutional underpinning.<sup>104</sup> In such cases, the 'reliquary', 'kindred' and 'individual' paradigms seem more likely to offer an explanation.

<sup>101</sup> Edwards, 'Perspectives', 98–9; Largillière, *Les saints*, 226.

<sup>102</sup> For the geography of Beuno's cult, see Sims-Williams (ed.), *Buchedd Beuno*, 32–79; for David, James, 'The Geography'. For saints of the south-east see J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 391–4.

<sup>103</sup> *Vita I et II S. Kebii*, VSB, 234–51. For an explanation of *Vita Kebii* in terms of twelfth- and thirteenth-century pilgrimage networks, see Bhreathnach, 'Ynys Enlli'.

<sup>104</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 134–9. The cult of Maudez is exceptional in presenting a tidy pattern of diffusion from a centre: Bowen, *Saints, Seaways*, 178–81.



This raises more problems: the importance of corporal relics (the physical remains of saints) in assisting the spread of cults becomes clear in the Viking Age and after but is far from certain earlier. In the Frankish kingdoms, the above-ground enshrinement and the subdivision of saints' bodies was common from the sixth century onwards; the bestowal of relics on a church became an obligatory part of its dedication ritual, and increasingly from the Carolingian period onwards all kinds of ecclesiastical and political relationships were mediated through portable, corporal relics.<sup>105</sup> In England, and to some extent in Ireland, the cult of relics, fostered by contact with Rome and Francia, developed similarly from the seventh century onwards, although less famous saints tended to be left in their original resting places.<sup>106</sup> In the pre-Viking Brittonic world, however, corporal relics rarely appear.<sup>107</sup> The saint's physical presence would be revered, but in situ, at his burial site. Julia M. H. Smith has pointed to the lack of narratives of miracles performed by corporal relics in western Breton hagiography and, more generally, 'the deafening silence about collecting relics that runs throughout almost all Welsh and Breton hagiography'.<sup>108</sup> Similar conclusions have been reached for Cornwall and Scotland as well as Wales.<sup>109</sup> In Celtic Britain, unique secondary relics such as bells, staffs, gospel books and altars, rather than body parts, were the movable objects imbued with the power of the saint, and it was also expressed through his presence in the landscape, in features such as holy wells, stones and trees.<sup>110</sup> A major paradox of early Brittonic Christianity is that this would seem to make saints' cults difficult to transport, and yet, on the evidence of place-names, they were transported early and often.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps, on occasion, secondary relics could reproduce the vital physicality of a cult in a new centre: these are likely to have been modest in material terms, as no shrines, reliquaries or such precious objects survive from early medieval Brittany, but none the less valued.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Crook, 'Enshrinement'.

<sup>106</sup> Wycherley, *The Cult of Relics*; Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', 486.

<sup>107</sup> Doherty, 'The Use of Relics'; Rollason, 'Lists', 80–2.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written'; Smith, *Relics and the Insular World*, 25; Padel, 'Christianity', 115. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, 34, points out that Irish saints, too, are rarely credited with post-mortem miracles.

<sup>109</sup> Pryce, 'Pastoral Care', 60; Edwards, 'Celtic Saints', 237–8; Padel, 'Local Saints', 345–7; Clancy, 'Columba'. Possibly this reflects literary preference rather than real difference in practice: 'Local Saints', 347; 'The Big Man', 12–13. That ninth-century Wales was moving towards the Continental norm may be implied by miraculous relic-provision in the *Mirabilia* section of *HB*: A. Evans, 'The Levitating Altar'.

<sup>110</sup> A. Evans, 'The Levitating Altar', 59–61.

<sup>111</sup> Largillière's insistence (*Les saints*, 133–46) that the great majority of Brittonic saints honoured in Brittany must have visited the places named after them in person was based partly on the absence of early evidence for the transport and veneration of corporal relics.

<sup>112</sup> Edwards, 'Celtic Saints', 237–8, 244–65; Smith, 'Oral and Written'.

A text that may be relevant, despite its late date, is *Vita S. Golveni*, probably composed at Saint-Pol-de-Léon in the thirteenth century.<sup>113</sup> The Life relates how the saint, the eponym of Goulven (F), was miraculously provided with gold which he fashioned into three crosses, three bells and one chalice. One of the bells, explains the author, was kept in the saint's own church at Goulven, another at Lesneven (8 km away), and the third at Rennes, where the saint's body was buried.<sup>114</sup> This recalls the passage in the 'Tripartite Life' of Patrick in which the saint distributed fifty bells, fifty chalices and fifty altar-cloths to his church-foundations.<sup>115</sup> Bells in particular, which appear in many Celtic-Latin hagiographical texts, often in the role of valued gifts (see Chapter 3), may have played a part in creating and maintaining connections between cult sites. Interestingly, the six early medieval handbells that have been found in Brittany are thought to be of Welsh or Cornish manufacture.<sup>116</sup>

The 'kindred' paradigm for the transmission of cults is highly relevant in the Celtic-speaking world. In medieval Ireland, where political relationships were expressed pre-eminently in familial terms and where rich early genealogical records survive, it is possible to trace the implantation of particular ecclesiastical families in various parts of the country, taking the cults of their favoured saints with them: such family groups of saints may explain the phenomenon of 'recurrent adjacency', where two or more cults that are found next to one another in the place-names or dedications of one region also appear close together in a different region.<sup>117</sup> This kind of family relationship is impossible to trace in the Brittonic-speaking world: in Wales, the genealogical records of saints are late and artificial, and in Cornwall and Brittany (and Scotland, except for the saints of Iona) they barely exist. Yet, given the emphasis placed on family connections in the earliest Life of a Breton saint (the particularly well-travelled Samson), it is highly probable that similar processes took place there.<sup>118</sup> The presence of \**lann* place-names and Brittonic saintly eponyms in Somerset and Devon

<sup>113</sup> The *Life* is preserved in a seventeenth-century manuscript, Paris BnF Fr. 22321, and in Albert Le Grand's *Vies des saints de la Bretagne*: Morice, 'La vie latine', 173–4. For discussion, see Merdrignac, 'Saint Goulven'; Smith, 'Oral and Written', 325–6; for a tentative attribution to William Le Breton (ca 1165– ca 1215), Bourguès, 'Saint Goulven'.

<sup>114</sup> *Vita S. Golveni*, 17, ed. La Borderie, 'Saint Goulven', 224; ed. Morice, 'La vie latine', 181–2; Smith, 'Oral and Written', 325–6.

<sup>115</sup> *Vita Tripartita*, ed. Stokes, *The Tripartite Life*, I.147–8.

<sup>116</sup> Bourke, 'Early Breton Hand-Bells', 280.

<sup>117</sup> The phrase 'recurrent adjacency' was coined by Oliver Padel: Olson and Padel, 'A Tenth-Century List', 67. See also Jankulak, 'Adjacent Saints' Dedications'. For Irish examples see Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Cults', 296–7; Bhreathnach, 'The Genealogies of Leinster'; Thacker, 'Loca Sanctorum', 34–7.

<sup>118</sup> Sowerby, 'A Family'.

points to the possibility of a phase of cult-sharing going back to the first half of the sixth century, when Gildas paints a picture of clergy apparently able to travel freely and obtain ecclesiastical preferment in different parts of the Christian Celtic world, and perhaps beyond.<sup>119</sup> At this stage, before the entire lowland zone of Britain came under non-Christian English leadership, ecclesiastical dynasties like those of southern Gaul may have had wide-ranging influence, and scattered saints' cults may reveal its traces. Later, 'family saints' may have been promoted at more modest social levels, perhaps helping to account for the scatters of cults within Wales and Brittany mentioned earlier. (Local traditions in Brittany often include claims of kinship between saints of neighbouring parishes, but unfortunately these are so late and contradictory that one must suppose that the relationships are artificial.<sup>120</sup>)

A paradigm for the spread of saints' cults that Clancy does not consider directly is 'educational'; another, related to it, is 'doctrinal'. Saints' Lives of all periods from Brittany, Wales and Ireland make much of the saint's education, which connects him with a living, apostolic stream of doctrine: to further it, he often travels (or plans to travel) to study with venerable masters.<sup>121</sup> This is of course a literary convention, but it reflects reality. There is no evidence that formal dependency of any kind – jurisdictional or proprietorial – extended between churches in the Insular world and Brittany for any length of time in the early Middle Ages. However, it seems plausible (and manuscript-evidence suggests) that leading churches in Wales, in particular, may have offered higher education to Breton clerics, and that such scholarly interchange fostered the movement of saints' cults. Especially between the mid-seventh and late eighth centuries, when the British churches were isolated from their neighbours by the Easter controversy, the need to maintain solidarity and access to a sufficiently large talent pool would encourage such interchange. Another factor may have been the desire to follow the example or, in a loose sense, the Rule of successful churches. During the age of European monastic reform beginning in the tenth century, many monasteries were re-founded or reformed with the help of personnel from famous institutions like Cluny or Fleury, or more modestly innovative ones nearer at hand – contacts which also often involved the sharing of cults and relics. Similar initiatives on a smaller scale may have occurred repeatedly in the Brittonic-speaking world of the sixth to ninth centuries, accounting for part of the complex pattern of cult-sharing.

<sup>119</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, 67, ed. and transl. Winterbottom, *Gildas*, 54, 120.

<sup>120</sup> For examples, see *DF*, 86; *DCA*, 131–2. <sup>121</sup> See, for instance, Guy, 'The Life', 3–4.

However, in the last resort, cults need not be thought of as things that needed much transporting or implanting. To some extent, how local cults were 'labelled' was accidental, the product of circumstance. Everywhere in early medieval Christian Europe, cults were built of similar raw materials: springs, groves and other natural features; people who needed help or healing; a perception of the immanence of divine power and its readiness to intervene in daily life; and religious professionals determined to cater to this perception. Particular 'saints' did not create this combination of forces but merely served as their focus: hence, the choice of a particular saint's name may sometimes have been quite arbitrary.

Keeping these general features of saints' cults in mind, we now move on to the evidence for particular shared cults in the Brittonic-speaking world.

### **Saints' Names and Insular Links**

As noted earlier, the names of several hundred putative local Breton saints survive, many only as eponyms embedded within place-names. A large number of these names occur at more than one site in Brittany, quite a few of them in Cornwall and Wales too, and a handful in England or Scotland. Interpretation of these shared cults is hampered by the late date of much of the evidence and by the doubtfulness of identifications. Names may occur in a variety of forms and spellings. This is more markedly the case in Brittany than it is in Wales or Cornwall, because active veneration of saints continued much longer, and names have been distorted by centuries of interaction between the Breton, 'Gallo' and French languages, as well as the usual effects of generations of oral transmission and guesswork.<sup>122</sup> (In Scotland, where any individual name may have passed through any or all of the mediums of Pictish, Norse, Gaelic and English, matters are even worse.) The prevalence of hypocorism – the application of diminutives or 'pet-names' to Celtic saints, so that a saint's name may genuinely appear in two or more early forms – is a further complication.<sup>123</sup> In one respect, hypocorism makes things easier for historians: it seems to have been confined to the ecclesiastical sphere, so that if an eponym is hypocoristic, it is an indication that the person in question was thought of as a saint. There is also some evidence that persons in the Brittonic-speaking regions entering religious life might take new, biblical names, creating at least a partial divide between 'saintly' and 'secular' names.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Tanguy, 'L'hagio-onomastique bretonne'.

<sup>123</sup> For the use of hypocoristic names, see Russell, 'Patterns'; Harvey, 'Some Observations'.

<sup>124</sup> Sowerby, 'A Family', 35; Sharpe, 'The Naming'.

In dealing with the problem of apparently multiple cult-sites for the same saint, there is a long-running tension among hagiologists between so-called 'lumpers' and 'splitters': those who favour the idea that saints with similar names venerated in widely separated places are likely to be manifestations of a single original 'saint', and those who prefer to think that such names refer to originally different individuals, even if their identities eventually merged.<sup>125</sup> 'Splitters' included René Largillière, who believed that even place-names incorporating the names 'Peter' and 'John' referred to real local saints, rather than the apostles;<sup>126</sup> a noted 'lumper' is Pádraig Ó Riain, whose view is that most local Irish and Welsh saints 'had no existence as historical persons. They represented either surrogate pagan deities ... or localised manifestations (in other words, doublets) of originally single and sometimes genuine cults.'<sup>127</sup> The British-speaking regions are somewhat different from Ireland in this respect: British saintly nomenclature is more varied over a smaller number of 'saints', and there does not seem to have been such an impulse towards the creation of multiple saints from a single prototype – if anything, the historically discernible impulse was to meld separate saints together. However, it is necessary to approach each case individually.<sup>128</sup>

To test how likely it is that a recurrent name stands for a shared cult, a statistical approach might be promising. One might, for instance, compare the occurrence of personal names in secular and in ecclesiastical place-names. If the appearance of the same personal name in more than one region were significantly more frequent in the case of ecclesiastical than of secular place-names, this would strengthen the argument that the reappearance of such a name indicates the spread of a single saintly cult, rather than separate cults coincidentally based on the same name. Comparison of the mainly secular personal names occurring in charters of the period 850–1050 in Wales and Brittany in fact shows little overlap between the two regions: 10.3 per cent of the names of this period in the Book of Llandaf are found in the Cartulary of Redon, 4.5 per cent of those in the Cartulary of Redon occur in the Book of Llandaf, giving a shared average of 7.8 per cent; a more limited comparison of earlier material, the Redon charters pre-dating 850 and the charters appended to the Life of Cadog of Llancarfan (*ca* 650 × 765), gives a larger overlap, but still only

<sup>125</sup> Padel, 'Local Saints', 352; Jankulak, 'The Many-Layered Cult', 103; Thacker, '*Loca Sanctorum*', 34–5.

<sup>126</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 139–40. <sup>127</sup> Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Genealogies', 24–5.

<sup>128</sup> Jankulak, 'Carantoc', 147. Ann Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish Churchyards', 109, suggested that any name that occurs twice only should be regarded as referring to two different individuals. If a name has more than two avatars, the likelihood of it representing a single successfully transplanted cult increases.

about 12 per cent. Of the tenth- and eleventh-century Brittonic names recorded in the Bodmin Manumissions from Cornwall, a good number are found also either in Wales or in Brittany (about a quarter in each), but very few in all three regions.<sup>129</sup> This low baseline suggests that names recurring as those of 'saints' in Wales and in Brittany reflect a sharing of cults, not coincidental duplication. The frequency or rarity of individual names also has to be taken into account. For example, the biblical name Daniel was in regular use both in Wales and in Brittany during the early medieval period; this reduces the probability that the Daniel(s) remembered in Pleudaniel (CA) and Ploudaniel (F) was (or were) the Welsh saint Deiniol, the first bishop of Bangor in Gwynedd (d. 583 according to *Annales Cambriae*).<sup>130</sup> Other names known to have been borne by various saints and reputed saints are the biblical Aaron, the Roman or Latinised names Columba, Donatus, Justus, Constantine and Helena, and the British name-element *gwynn* (masculine), *gwen* (feminine), 'white'.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand it seems more plausible to suggest that the eponym of Plœrdut (M), and of the hamlet of Saint-Idult in the same parish, is indeed Illtud, or Elltud, the eponym of Llanilltud Fawr (Morg.), given that the name is not definitely known in Celtic Britain except as that of this particular saint.<sup>132</sup>

How easy is it to determine the point of origin of cults? From studying the better-evidenced saints, one is led to expect that those shared between Wales and Ireland, between Wales and Cornwall, or between Cornwall and Brittany, might originate in either area, but that most cults shared between Brittany and Wales or Brittany and Ireland originated in the Atlantic Archipelago. Very few saints whose main cult was in Brittany had any following in Wales that we know of before the Norman Conquest, and none in Ireland.<sup>133</sup> The impression created by Breton hagiography is of a Breton Church in a strongly dependent relationship with the Atlantic Archipelago. To what extent is this borne out by the saints' names contained in place-names?

<sup>129</sup> *VSB*, 125–44; Russell, 'Facing Different Ways'; Cane, 'Personal Names'; Padel, *Slavery*, 1–2 and references.

<sup>130</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, MS 'B', ed. Gough-Cooper, [www.heroicage.org/issues/15/gough-cooper-ac.php](http://www.heroicage.org/issues/15/gough-cooper-ac.php) (accessed 06 November 2018); Henken, *Traditions*, 187–8. Daniel is the most common biblical name in the Cartulary of Redon, occurring some sixty times: J. R. Davies, 'Old Testament Personal Names', 180.

<sup>131</sup> For the literary influence of Gildas on the cult of Aaron, see Sims-Williams (ed.), *Buchedd Beuno*, 37, note 87.

<sup>132</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 144. For variant forms of the name, see Ó Riain, 'The Saints of Cardiganshire', 378.

<sup>133</sup> For a possible small-scale cult of Samson in Ireland, see Ó Riain, 'Samson *alias* San(c)tán'.

One opportunity for tracing the trajectory of shared cults lies in noting the saints whose names occur in the earliest types of ecclesiastical place-name. As argued earlier, it is difficult to separate place-name elements into periods in Wales, but this can be done to some extent in Cornwall and Brittany. Who are the saints who appear in the *plou*- and *lan*-names of Brittany and the *lan*-names of Cornwall, and/or in Welsh sources?<sup>134</sup>

Discussing *plou*-names first, it is necessary to begin with some caveats. Only a relatively small proportion of these names contain the names of known saints. Of the total of 179 *plou*- place-names in Brittany identified by Tanguy, forty-seven – over 26 per cent – are compounded with adjectives or common nouns. Another forty, 22 per cent, contain personal names not otherwise attested as those of saints. Forty-seven *plou*-names, again, contain 'saints' names that are known as such in more than one ecclesiastical toponym, but not otherwise, leaving forty-five that contain 'saints' who are attested as such in other sources. In other words, only just over half of *plou*-names contain a personal name that is demonstrably 'saintly', and little more than a quarter contain the names of saints for whom it is possible to build any sort of historical picture of their cult. Less than 20 per cent of the eponyms of *plou*-names are also the dedicatees of their parish churches.<sup>135</sup> These figures reinforce the doubt, expressed earlier, that *plou* is necessarily an ecclesiastical name-element or that *plou*-eponyms can be assumed to be 'saints'.

However, where eponyms are shared over long distances, the case for the existence of a saint's cult is strengthened. Bearing this in mind, Tanguy's discovery of a rather high proportion of possibly Welsh and Cornish names among the eponyms of *plous* is interesting. Twenty eponyms of *plous* have names that are similar – though not always phonologically identical – to figures with significant cult information from Wales, and seven or eight others have similar counterparts from Cornwall (Brioc, Columb, Sulien, Fingar/Guigner/Gwinear, Ia, Iti/Issey, Sezni/Sithney, and possibly Meoc/Feoc). These numbers, if correlated with the numbers of attested local saints in Wales and Cornwall (between 350 and 500 for Wales, 140 for Cornwall), suggest that saints found in Wales and Cornwall were approximately equally likely to manifest themselves in early place-names in Brittany. 'Welsh-named' saints form 21.7 per cent of the number of 'attested saintly' eponyms of Breton *plous*, and Welsh and Cornish-attested saints together, 30 per cent: a considerably greater overlap than the 12 per cent calculated for names shared by the Welsh and Breton cartularies before 850. In the case of the

<sup>134</sup> Irien, 'Saints du Cornwall', applied this method to Cornish and Breton saints.

<sup>135</sup> DF, 20.



Cornish eponyms, it may be argued that their Breton cults were primary and that they were imported into Cornwall; for the Welsh saints, however, such an interpretation seems less likely. This sharing of saints' names seems to cast doubt on the view that *plous* originated in the 'crystallisation' of a community around an intensely local founder-figure.<sup>136</sup> Possibly the influence of the early Insular British churches on Brittany went beyond the careers of individual, respected 'holy men' and was felt at the most basic level of community organisation. Largillière was aware of the high proportion of Welsh names among the eponyms of *plous*, and explained it by suggesting that the great monasteries of Wales provided numerous church-founders to the struggling pioneers in early Brittany.<sup>137</sup> He may well have been right – with the proviso that some at least of the shared names will have arrived as those of already-revered saints rather than living men, while the living men who brought them remained unrecorded.

Table 6.1 gives the eponyms of Breton *plous* who can credibly be identified with Welsh saints; Table 6.2 those for whom an identification has been rejected. Many of the Welsh names in Table 6.2, although they cannot be shown to be the names of saints, are still linguistically equivalent to the Breton names: thus the *plou*-eponyms taken as a group suggest a high level of involvement – whether 'saintly' or not – of Brittany with Insular Britain at the time (or in the situations) when the *plou*-names were formed. The 'Cornish' *plou*-names will be treated separately in a subsequent section.

How credible are the identifications of these Breton *plou*-saints with their Welsh counterparts? It is over-optimistic to assume that the names refer to the same historical characters. Although the name of Cynog of Wales may correspond linguistically to the *Conec* who gave his name to Plogonnec (F) in Brittany, their respective hagiographical traditions – one a royal martyr of Brycheiniog, the other, Tégonnec (*Toquonocus*, a hypocorism, 'thy *Conec*') a monastic companion of Paul Aurelian – do not argue for a common origin.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, even the Breton cult is so diffuse that more than one saint may be involved.<sup>139</sup> The same is true of Melec, a saint who makes many appearances in Breton toponymy and had an active cult into modern times. His name corresponds to a Welsh Maelog, a name which occurs at Llanfaelog (Môn) and places named

<sup>136</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses bretonnes primitives', 29–30; however, Tanguy highlights the presence of 'non-founding saints' as *plou*-eponyms in 'Les paroisses primitives', 154.

<sup>137</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 226.

<sup>138</sup> Although the fame of Cynog of Wales was sufficient in Cornwall for him to appear in the twelfth-century 'Cornish' list of the 'Children of Brychan': Orme, *The Saints*, 82.

<sup>139</sup> *DF*, 20, 149, 207; *DCA*, 83, 272, 277.

Table 6.1 *Eponyms of Breton plous: probably or possibly to be identified with Welsh saints*

(Unless indicated otherwise, information is from Tanguy, ‘Les paroisses primitives’, and Bonedd y Saint (ByS), in EWGT 51–67.)

Saint’s name	Plou-name(s)	Toponymy in Wales	Cult in Brittany	Cult in Wales
Brioc (Briomaglus, Briavel)) Bronvel <sup>1</sup>	Plonivel F (+ dedication, Brioc) Guipronvel F	Llandyfriog (Cer.) None	<i>Vita S. Brioci</i> (s.xi); reputed founder of see of Saint-Brieuc None	<i>Thyriawc</i> , ByS 18 Brochwel Ysrithrog, Powys ruler, father of Tysilio, ByS 33; his son Mawn appears in <i>Buchedd Beuno</i> <sup>2</sup>
Cadog	Pleucadeuc M	About 22 place-names and dedications <sup>3</sup>	Île Cado; many place-names and dedications <sup>4</sup>	Founder of Llancarfan (Morg.); <i>Vitae</i> by Lifris (late s.xi) and Caradog (s.xii)
Cof	Plogoff F	None	Place-names Lescoff F, Saint-Coff, Plouay, M	Son of Caw, hence brother of Gildas ( <i>Bonedd yr Arwyr</i> 3); son of Ceidio ( <i>Bonedd Gwr y</i> <i>Gogledd</i> 6) <sup>5</sup>
Conec/ Tégonnec	Plogonnec F; Pleugueneuc IV	Llangynog (Brych.); Llangynog (Caerf.); Llangynog (Tfn.); Merthyr Cynog (Brych.)	6 place-names and dedications in F and CA. <sup>6</sup> Wrmonoc, <i>Vita Pauli</i> <i>Aureliani</i> , s.ix; Angers BM 477 calendar s.ix/x	<i>De Situ Brecheniauc</i> , 10; Gerald of Wales, <i>Itinerarium</i> <i>Kambriae</i> , I.2.
Convelen	Plougouvelin F; Plougoumelen M	Llangynfelyn (Cer.)	None	Cynfelyn ap Bleiddud, ByS 8, or Cynfelyn ap Meirion, Jesus College 20 no. 47? <sup>7</sup>
Conueur <sup>8</sup>	Plougouner CA	None	Possible eponym of Trégomeur CA; possible cult at Saint-Senoux, IV	Cynmur, a disciple of Dyfrig and Teilo, <i>LL</i> , 115
Cunwal	Planguenoual CA	None	<i>Vita</i> (s.xi?); <sup>9</sup> village and chapel of Saint-Gonval, Penvénan, CA;	Conval, patron of church at Inchinnan, Renfrewshire,

Table 6.1 (*cont.*)

Saint's name	Plou-name(s)	Toponymy in Wales	Cult in Brittany	Cult in Wales
Daniel	Pleudaniel CA	Deiniol, dedicatee of Bangor cathedral and several Gwynedd churches	chapel of Saint-Conval, Hanvec, F. Eponym of Coat-Daniel and Kerdaniel at Pleudaniel, CA; Douer-Sant-Daniel, Bourbriac, CA. No cult information in Brittany; identification uncertain	Scotland in s.xii; lections in <i>Aberdeen Breviary</i> <sup>10</sup> <i>Annales Cambriae</i> 584; Rhygyfarch, <i>Vita S. David</i> 50; <i>ByS</i> 12; <i>LL</i> , 71; vernacular <i>Vita</i> ; other information <sup>11</sup>
Edern	Plouédern F	Bodedern (Môn); Edern (Caern.); Llanedern (Morg.)	Eponym and patron of Lannédern F (his claimed burial site) and Edern F. Dedicatee of a former chapel at Pléguien CA. Late medieval art and popular tradition	<i>ByS</i> 10; connected to royal dynasty of Gwynedd. Mentioned as a disciple of Cybi in poem <i>Teulu Cybi</i> (s.xv?) <sup>12</sup>
Gourai	Plouray M	<i>ByS</i> 60 associates him with Penystrywaid (Penstrowed) (Tfn.)	None	Gwrhai son of Caw (hence brother of Gildas?): <i>ByS</i> 60
Iestin <sup>13</sup>	Plestin-les-Grèves CA	Llaniestyn (Môn); Llaniestyn (Caern.); Nantllaniestyn (Caern.)	Gives way to Euflam in <i>Vita S. Efflami</i> ; chapel, <i>pardon</i>	<i>ByS</i> 27, 76: son of Gereint ab Erbin
Illtud	Ploërdut M	Llanilltud Fawr (Morg.)	<i>Vita I. S. Samsonis</i> ; Wrmonoc, <i>Vita Pauli Aureliani</i> ; <i>Vita Gildae</i> (Rhuys); dedications at Lanildut F, Coadout CA, (formerly) Troguéry CA. Toponymy: Saint-Ilud, Pabu CA, Kerilud, Pédernec CA; Loc-Ildut, Sizun F. Statue at Squiffiec CA. Reputed relics at Landébaëron CA by 1683.	Sculpture at Llanilltud Fawr from s.viii; <i>HB</i> , s.ix; <i>Vita S. Ituti</i> , s.xii
Louan	Poullaouen F	Llanllawen, Aberdaron (Caern.)? <sup>14</sup>	None	Llywen, companion of 'Letavian' Cadfan, <i>ByS</i> 20

Mael	Ploemel M	None	None	Mael and Sulien joint dedicatees of churches at Corwen (Meir.) and Cwm (Fft.). Both described as companions of Cadfan from Llydaw, <i>ByS</i> 19.
Melec <sup>15</sup>	Pleumeleuc IV; Plumélec M	Llanfaelog (Môn); Llandyfaelog (Caerf.); Llandyfaelog Fach (Brych.); Llandyfaelog Tre'r-graig (Brych.); <sup>16</sup> <i>Lann Meilic</i> , Llowes (Maesd.) ( <i>LL</i> 149, 255)	<i>Vita Gildae</i> 2 (Mailloc, brother of Gildas, son of Caunus). Toponymy: Lanvellec, CA; Lomélec, Lanvaudan, M; Nomélec, Surzur, M (and more) <sup>17</sup>	<i>Vita S. Kebii</i> 5, 10 (Maelog, a disciple of Cybi); <sup>18</sup> <i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i> ('Meilig son of Caw') <sup>19</sup>
Merin	Plomelin F; Plumélin M	Bodferin (Caern.) (incorporated into Aberdaron parish); Llanferin (Myn.) (?)	Dedication at Mantallot CA. Toponymy Lanmérin CA; Sainte-Marine, Combrit, F.	<i>ByS</i> 40 (brother of Tudno)
Rien Sulien/Suliau	Plurien CA Plussulien CA	Llanrhian (Penf.) Llandysilio (Môn)	Toponymy: Lanrien, Landudec F <i>Vita S. Maglorii</i> (Suliau); <i>Vie de saint Suliau</i> by Albert Le Grand; two <i>Vitae</i> from lost Saint-Malo breviary; <sup>21</sup> Saint-Suliac IV; Lanzulien, Cléden-Cap-Sizun, F; Lossulien, Relecq-Kerhuon, F.	Leland, William Worcestre <sup>20</sup> Tysilio, patron of Meifod (Tfn.): <i>Canu Tysilio</i> , s.xii; <i>ByS</i> 33
Teilo	Plédéliac CA	Llandeilo Fawr (Caerf.)	Dedication at Leuhan F, chapels at Plogonnec and Dinéault F. Toponymy: Landeleau F; Saint-Thélo CA, and <i>lieux-dits</i> . <sup>22</sup>	'Teilo Gospels' charters s.ix; adopted founder of see of Llandaf, <i>LL</i> , s.xii; <sup>23</sup> <i>Vita S. Teliavi</i> , s.xii
Tunou	Pluduno CA	Llandudno (Caern.)	Toponymy: Lothunou, Lannilis F	Tudno: <i>ByS</i> 40 (brother of Merin)

- <sup>1</sup> Included despite lack of an attested *plou*-name, on Tanguy's grounds that a *gui*-name (from Latin *vicus*) indicates an equally old parish unit. For Brochwel as father of Tysilio, see Miller, *The Saints*, 80.
- <sup>2</sup> Sims-Williams (ed.), *Buchedd Beuno*, 46–50. For other characters named Brochwel, see *WCD*, 66.
- <sup>3</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 80–1; Davies, 'The Saints', 378–9 and references.
- <sup>4</sup> Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 159–67.
- <sup>5</sup> *EWGT*, 85, 73. *Bonedd yr Arwyr* is a section of the thirteenth-century 'Llywelyn ap Iorwerth' genealogies, now edited and discussed as a whole in *MWG*, 159–231, 349–89; *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd*, 'The Lineage of the Men of the North', is a tract that appears in the fourteenth-century Peniarth MS. 45 (*MWG*, 427–8). In neither tract is Cov called a saint, but as a son of Caw he is a member of a saintly family. Rees, *Essay*, 208, stated that he was a member of the congregation of Illtud; this has been repeated by Loth and Tanguy.
- <sup>6</sup> *DCA*, 276–7.
- <sup>7</sup> *WCD*, 198; *EWGT*, 55, 49.
- <sup>8</sup> *LBS*, II.245.
- <sup>9</sup> *Vita S. Cunuali*, ed. Oheix, 'Vie inédite'; Bourgès, 'De la *vita* de saint Cunwal'.
- <sup>10</sup> *Aberdeen Breviary*, ed. Macquarrie, *Legends*, 239–40, 347–9.
- <sup>11</sup> Miller, *The Saints*, 52–3.
- <sup>12</sup> Miller, *The Saints*, 54; *WCD*, 181.
- <sup>13</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 144; *DCA*, 190–1; *LBS*, III.293–5; Miller, *The Saints*, 58, 69.
- <sup>14</sup> *WCD*, 469.
- <sup>15</sup> Miller, *The Saints*, 58–9.
- <sup>16</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 85. Wmffre, *Place-Names*, I. 372, suggests that the church of Llannarth, Ceredigion, first recorded as dedicated to St Vylltig in 1742, was originally dedicated to Meilig, son of Caw.
- <sup>17</sup> *DCA*, 124.
- <sup>18</sup> *Vita S. Kebii* 5, 10, *VSBB*, 236–41.
- <sup>19</sup> *WCD*, 529.
- <sup>20</sup> *LBS*, IV.110–11.
- <sup>21</sup> Duine, 'Mémento', 347; Bourgès, 'En tournant les pages', 156–8.
- <sup>22</sup> For a full list, see Hascoët, 'Les troménies', I. 68 (accessed 13 December 2018).
- <sup>23</sup> For an eleventh-century list of Teilo churches, see *LL*, 124; Davies, 'The Saints', 366–7.

Table 6.2 *Eponyms of Breton plous: identification with Welsh saints unlikely or mistaken*

Saint's name	Plou-name(s)	Toponymy in Wales	Why rejected
Balai	Ploubalay CA	Llandyfalle (Brych.) (hypocoristic * <i>To-Ballei</i> ?) <sup>1</sup>	No further cult information in Wales: dedication of Llandyfalle is to Maelog.
Car	Plougar F	Llangar (Dinb.)	No known cult; <i>Car</i> may be a common noun. <sup>2</sup>
Devet	Plozévet F	St Dyfed (Penf.)	Welsh eponym has been mistaken for saint: no cult information.
Doe	Plouay M	Llanddw (Brych.)	Welsh site: the modern spelling is Llandew and the dedication is to Dewi (David). <sup>3</sup>
Dunet	Pluzunet CA	Llandunwyd (Morg.), dedicated to St Donat	No early information on Dunet or Dunwyd. Current dedications at St Donat's are to Donatus. The abbot of Bangor, <i>Dinoot</i> , mentioned in Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> , II.2 has no evident saint's cult.
Ener, Eneour	Plounéour-Lanvern F; Plounéour-Ménez F; Plounéour-Trez F	None; secular identity as Ynyr Gwent, a father of saints, <i>ByS</i> 44–5.	No apparent Welsh saint's cult. Name derived from Latin <i>Honorius</i> may have been common.
Gwenn	Pleuveu F; Saint-Pierre-de-Plesguen IV	None definite	Gwyn, co-dedicatee of Llanpumpsaint (Caerf.)? Cult evidence is late, and name-element is common.
Kian	Pléguen CA	Llangian (Caern.)	Late cult evidence for Cian in Wales. <sup>4</sup>
Kin	Plouguin F	Llangain (Caerf.)	Eponym of Llangain is more probably to be identified as Kein or Keyne, daughter of Brychan. <sup>5</sup>
Lin	Pleslin CA	Llanelen (Myn.)	Identification of Breton eponym as a St Helen is uncertain.
Mahouarn	Plomodiern F	St Mordeyrn, Nantglyn (Dinb.)	Identification rejected by Tanguy. <sup>6</sup>

Table 6.2 (*cont.*)

Saint's name	Plou-name(s)	Toponymy in Wales	Why rejected
Modan	Plumaudan CA (and Lanvaudan M <sup>7</sup> )	None	Evidence for a St Mydan in Wales is confined to the 'Iolo MSS'. <sup>8</sup> An <i>ecclesia sancti Modani</i> at Kilmodan, Argyll and Bute, is attested from 1299. <sup>9</sup>
Rivou, Riou	Plourivo CA	Caeriuw (unidentified); Trefriw (Caern.)	No evidence of a saint's cult in Wales.

<sup>1</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 12.<sup>2</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 18.<sup>3</sup> <https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/placenames/recordedname/103762fe-2540-4ce6-a41a-32d6bd8ffd12> (accessed 17 July 2018).<sup>4</sup> *LBS*, II.118; *WCD*, 144.<sup>5</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 162–3.<sup>6</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 148–9.<sup>7</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 88.<sup>8</sup> *LBS*, III.507.<sup>9</sup> [https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1329220809&name\\_id=28166](https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1329220809&name_id=28166) (accessed 07 October 2019).

Llandyfaelog (\**ty-Faelog*, 'thy Maelog') in Caerfyrddin and Brycheiniog.<sup>140</sup> Some convergence can be seen between Welsh and Breton traditions of this saint or saints: *Mailocus* was a reputed brother of Gildas in the eleventh-century Rhuy's Life of Gildas, as was *Meilig* in the Welsh tale *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and the geography of his cult in Brittany is similar to that of Gildas; however, he does not appear in other Welsh genealogical material relating to Gildas, and any original relationship between the Welsh Maelogs and the Breton Melec remains conjectural.<sup>141</sup>

There are other saints' cults that can be seen converging in the central Middle Ages from possibly separate origins in Wales and Brittany. Sulien with his various hypocoristic forms, Suliau, Suliac, Sulin and Tysilio, may not have been one original saint, even in Brittany, where 'his' cult is very

<sup>140</sup> *DCA*, 124; Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 147.<sup>141</sup> The map of the cult of the 'Gildas family' in Bowen, *Saints*, 172, relies upon a highly conjectural conflation of medieval and modern genealogies and dubious identifications of names by Baring-Gould and Fisher in their family tree and map in *LBS*, IV.103–4 and 114–5.



scattered.<sup>142</sup> In Wales there are two candidates for identification with a Breton Sulien: Sulien, companion of Mael, who is stated in the twelfth-century *Bonedd y Saint* to be one of the 'Letavian' group of saints who accompanied Cadfan from Brittany to Britain in the Age of the Saints; and Tysilio, 'thy little Sulien', son of Brochwel or Brochfael, a member of the royal line of Powys.<sup>143</sup> Tysilio, in a Welsh praise-poem composed in his honour by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, probably in the 1160s at or for his church of Meifod in Powys, is described as having 'a church in Llydaw' (Brittany). Thus, both avatars of Sulien in high-medieval Wales had claims to Breton connections; and written medieval texts from Wales must form the basis of the surviving late medieval hagiography of Sulien in Brittany, which gives names in Old Welsh orthography and agrees with some details of Cynddelw's poem.<sup>144</sup> However, the respective companion-saints of the Welsh Sulien and Tysilio, Mael and Brochwel, also occur in Breton toponymy, but with no clear connection with Sulien. Whether the identification between the Welsh and Breton Suliens antedated the Norman Conquest seems impossible to determine. André-Yves Bourguès has suggested that the Breton Life was composed at Saint-Suliac in the diocese of Alet and made use of Welsh material as ammunition to preserve the see's independence from Dol.<sup>145</sup> Sulien also occurs in Cornwall, as the eponym of Luxulyan; this is the unique appearance in Cornwall of the place-name element *loc*, common in Brittany. The place-name, first recorded in 1282, suggests influence or small-scale migration from Brittany, but there is no further evidence of a cult of Sulien there.<sup>146</sup>

Individually, most of the shared *plou*-saints have insufficient cult-information either in Brittany or in Wales to push the possibilities of an identification further. Collectively, however, they may be more suggestive, for instance when they seem to fall into geographical groups.

<sup>142</sup> List in *DCA*, 235. See Tanguy, 'De l'ancienneté des cultes'; Ó Riain, 'The Saints', 396.

<sup>143</sup> For these saints and their sites see *WCD*, 677, 720–2. The saint *Sulbiu* to whom a dedication (now Llancillo) is mentioned in *LL*, 31, 43, 90, 160 is not apparently identifiable with any of these and is otherwise unknown: *WCD*, 676.

<sup>144</sup> *Canu Tysilio*, lines 149–51, ed. Parry Owen, [www.seintiaucymru.ac.uk/edition/texts/verse/TysilioCBM/edited-text.eng.html](http://www.seintiaucymru.ac.uk/edition/texts/verse/TysilioCBM/edited-text.eng.html) (accessed 03 October 2019). The Breton hagiography of Sulien consists of lections from the lost portion of the Léon Breviary of 1516, preserved in a seventeenth-century copy, Paris BnF Fr. 22321; two short texts published in *AA SS Octobris I*, 1916–7, in 1765, probably derived from a Saint-Malo breviary; and Albert Le Grand's 'Vie de Saint Suliau' in his *Vies des Saints* of 1637. Doble, 'Saint Sulian', 6–30, 35–40; Jones and Owen, 'Twelfth-Century Welsh hagiography', 48–51, 59–60; Sims-Williams, *Buchedd Beuno*, 49–53; Duine, 'Memento', 346–7; Bourguès, 'En tournant les pages', 156–8.

<sup>145</sup> Bourguès, 'En tournant les pages', 157.

<sup>146</sup> Padel, 'Generic Place-Name Elements'; Doble, *Saint Sulian*, 30–1; Orme, *The Saints*, 238–9.

There is a concentration of names of saints with Breton associations in the Llŷn peninsula in Wales, a long way from the southern Welsh saints whom hagiography suggests as the most obvious candidates for Breton cults (Map 6.2). Among *plou*-saints these include Edern, Iestyn, Merin, Cian and Llewén (Louan): the first three of these names are Latin in origin, which in itself may suggest an early date for the saints.<sup>147</sup> Among non-*plou* saints one may add Aelhaiarn of Llanaelhaearn, tentatively identified with the Breton Alouarn, eponym of Saint-Alouarn, Guengat, F; and Ceidio, eponym of Ceidio in Llŷn (a rare, Breton-style ‘saint-alone’ name) and also of Rhodogeidio (Môn), perhaps to be identified with Quijeau, eponym of an *ecclesia sancti Kigavi* at Carhaix given to Quimperlé abbey in 1081 × 1084, and dedicatee of several chapels in Finistère and Morbihan.<sup>148</sup> Welsh genealogical sources give Ceidio family-connections with two more ‘Breton’ saints, Gildas and Cof.<sup>149</sup> This may be coincidental, and it must be noted that in Brittany these eponyms are widely scattered: only Ceidio/Quijeau and Llewén/Louan form a suggestively close pair. The possibility remains, however, that there was some earlier contact behind the twelfth-century construct, in the *ByS* genealogies, of a group of Breton (‘Letavian’) saints associated with the island of Enlli at the tip of Llŷn.

But not all *plou*-saints are equally obscure. There are *plous* named after three of the leading monastic saints of South Wales: Cadog, Illtud and Teilo (Map 6.3). (Paulinus, the teacher of St David, may be a fourth, if Paul Aurelian of Léon and/or the place-name Pléboulle CA are to be associated with him.<sup>150</sup>) If the identification of their names in Pleucadeuc, Ploërdut and Plédéliac is correct, it is uneconomical to suggest that these places were named for obscure local homonyms rather than their well-known Welsh counterparts.<sup>151</sup> In the case of Cadog, although the picture in Brittany is complicated by a possibly separate cult of a Breton saint Cado < *Catbodu*, centred on the Île Cado (M), the eponym of Pleucadeuc (*Plebs Catoc/Cadoc*) is likely to be the Welsh saint: the ninth-century Life of Machutus by Bili attests to Breton communication with Cadog’s foundation of Llancarfan in Wales.<sup>152</sup> In the case of

<sup>147</sup> Parsons, *Warning*, 22–4.

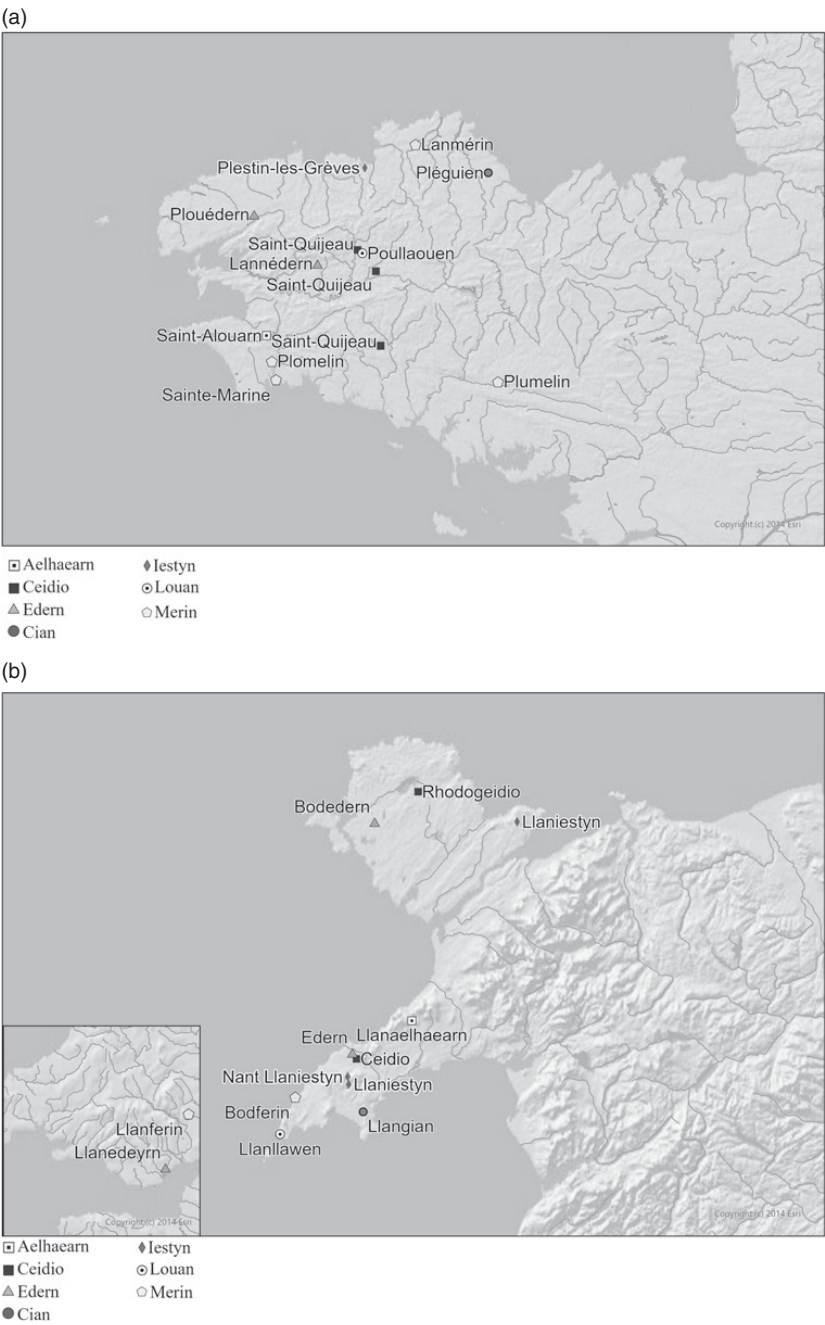
<sup>148</sup> *DF*, 143, 49; Miller, *The Saints*, 23, 33, 50, 97; *ByS*, 87, *EWGT*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> *Bonedd yr Arwyr*, 3, *EWGT*, 85; *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd*, 6, *EWGT*, 73.

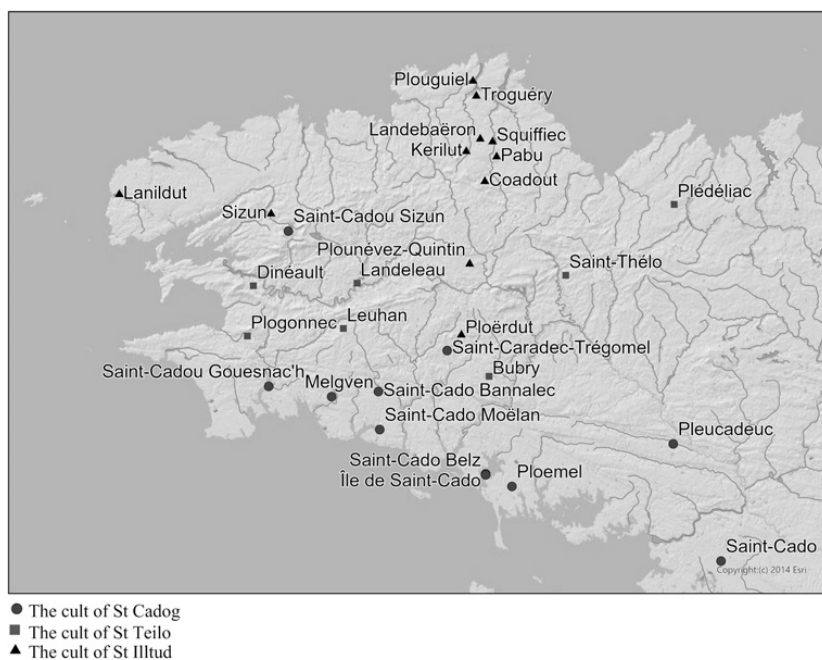
<sup>150</sup> Paul Aurelian is unique among Breton saints with an early *Vita* in that he may also be the eponym of a *plou*, Pléboulle, CA, as well as of three Lampauls F, Lamballe CA, Paule CA and his episcopal centre, Saint-Pol-de-Léon F: Tanguy, ‘L’itinéraire religieux’.

<sup>151</sup> Tanguy, ‘Les paroisses primitives’, 136, 144, 152. However, in *DCA*, 174–5, Tanguy suggested that the eponym of Ploërdut was a local saint, Idult.

<sup>152</sup> Tanguy, ‘De la Vie’, 165–7; Jankulak, ‘Cross-Channel Intercourse’; Bowen, *Saints*, 93–9.



Map 6.2 Eponymous saints shared by Llŷn and Brittany, with an inset of South Wales



Map 6.3 The cults of Cadog, Illtud and Teilo in Brittany

Illtud, the Lives of Samson and Paul Aurelian indicate that his reputation as a teacher was high in Brittany as early as the seventh century and certainly in the ninth. Illtud and Cadog are also named together (*Illtute* and *Catoce*) in the ‘Salisbury’ litany of Breton saints, dating from *ca* 900.<sup>153</sup> In the case of Teilo, such early evidence is lacking, but Teilo’s twelfth-century Life in the Book of Llandaf claims that he visited Brittany while Samson was archbishop of Dol, and that his sister married Budic, an exiled Breton ruler.<sup>154</sup> This episode seems to draw on a Cornouaille pseudo-historical tradition as it had developed in the eleventh century: however, the *plou*-name may suggest earlier contact which was re-activated after the Norman Conquest. Breton place-names thus seem to provide supporting evidence for the wide influence, before the ninth century, of the three best known early Welsh monasteries; extrapolating, we may guess that some of the other *plou*-names containing names of ‘Welsh’ saints may

<sup>153</sup> Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanyes*, 292–3; Tanguy, ‘De l’origine’, 44–5.

<sup>154</sup> *LL*, 97–117.

be traces of the influence of other Welsh monasteries that did not survive into the post-Viking period.

The appearance of famous Welsh saints in *plou*-names may indicate early contact, but there is also evidence that such contact was reinforced over a long period of time. Recalling Pádraig Ó Riain's suggestion that literary contact between Wales and Ireland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries led to fresh Irish identifications for Welsh saints whose cults may have been 'naturalised' Irish ones in origin, a similar argument can be made for some shared Welsh and Breton cults. Rather than 'lumping' or 'splitting' one should perhaps envisage a 'braiding' process, whereby cults, possibly unitary at their inception, drifted apart, then were reunited – or factitiously united – by a new episode of contact. This may have happened with Cadog in the ninth century and again in the post-Conquest period (and perhaps with Sulien/Tysilio and even Gueltas/Gildas). The cults of Teilo and Illtud were relatively unitary, but they too may have come to Brittany in more than one 'wave'. To judge by the place-name elements used, the two earliest cult centres of Illtud were Plœrdut and Lanildut, the first in central Brittany, part of the early (seventh-century?) establishment of the Breton Church, the second in Léon, perhaps reflecting the respect paid to Illtud by the devotees of Paul Aurelian. A more recent series of place-names (in *Ker*, *Loc* and *Saint*), dedications and claimed relics of Illtud are clustered on the central north coast in the diocese of Tréguier, perhaps dating from the post-Norman period when Illtud was re-categorised by his Welsh hagiographer as a saint who was born and died in Brittany.<sup>155</sup> For Teilo the evidence is less clear-cut, but the oldest place-name, Plédéliac (CA), is far distant from the active centre of the saint's cult in Brittany, Landeleau (F), from which some subsidiary centres in Finistère seem to radiate.<sup>156</sup> The case of Teilo (Telo in Breton) is rather remarkable: as stated, his Llandaf *Vita* claims that he visited Dol, but local stories about him in Finistère are not recorded until the end of the nineteenth century, and have nothing in common with his *Vita* except the bare fact that he came from Britain. His local cult is still active, including the designation of a Gallo-Roman sarcophagus as his 'bed' and an annual *troménie* procession with his relics, first recorded in 1555.<sup>157</sup> One might suggest that his cult in Cornouaille became established as a reflex of the process by which Llandaf obtained information about the Cornouaillais ancestor Budic in the twelfth

<sup>155</sup> *Vita S. Iltuti* (perhaps by Caradog of Llancarfan), 1, 24, *VS*B, 194–5, 226–9; Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 143–5.

<sup>156</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 152.

<sup>157</sup> Hascoët, 'Les troménies', I.65–90 (accessed 13 December 2018).

century, but this is only a guess. All that can be said is that this, and other widely diffused cults, probably took shape over a considerable period.

To sum up, it seems that as a group the *plou*-saints are more pan-Brittonic than the average for Breton saints, and certainly their names are pan-Brittonic by comparison with Breton anthroponymy over the whole of the early Middle Ages. In the case of the three famous Welsh saints, their eponymous *plous* are in isolated sites, in hilly and wooded country at a distance from the coast. It is tempting to suggest that they were established some time after the initial migrations and in some sense sponsored by leading ecclesiastical establishments of the 'old country'.

The eponyms of the *lan*-names of Brittany may be discussed more briefly: the conclusions to be drawn from these names are even more tentative, since their chronology is even less clear and they have not been defined and studied as a group as the *plou*-names have. Loth, in *Les noms des saints bretons*, listed 218 *lan*-names, but his derivations of their eponyms are not altogether secure. Tanguy, in his two toponymic dictionaries and his discussion of the Landévennec cartulary, has treated ninety *lan*-names in Finistère and seventy-three in Côtes-d'Armor (a few of them no longer in use);<sup>158</sup> there are eight probably genuine *lan*-names of *Ancien Régime* parishes in Morbihan and another ten in Ille-et-Vilaine;<sup>159</sup> and one additional, non-parochial *lan*-name in Ille-et-Vilaine, Langavan, is discussed by Tanguy, making a preliminary data set of 182 names, summarised in Table 6.3.<sup>160</sup>

Table 6.3 *Hagionyms in lan-names in Brittany*

Département	Total number of <i>lan</i> -names studied	Number probably formed with personal names	Number with possible primary saints' cults in Wales/Cornwall
Finistère	90 (28 communes)	71	16
Côtes-d'Armor	73 (36 communes)	43	5
Morbihan	8 (all communes)	6	1
Ille-et-Vilaine	11 (10 communes)	8	1

<sup>158</sup> The 'historic' *lan*-names are: in Finistère, Gouesnou (formerly *Landa Goeznovei*, *Langoeznou*, *Lannoznou*); Trébabu (*Lanpabpu*); Keramperchec in Nizon (*Landudegan*); Saint-Urbain (*Lanurven*); in Côtes d'Armor, La Harmoye (*Lanharmoet*, *Lanarmoit*); La Malhoure (*Lamallor*, *Lamalar*); La Méaugon (*Lameaugon*); Saint-Jacut-de-la-Mer (*Landoac*); Saint-Laurent (*Lanlouren*); Tréguier (*Landreguer*). See *DF* and *DCA*, s.v.; Tanguy, 'Les noms de lieux'.

<sup>159</sup> Information from Vallerie, *Communes bretonnes*, and Wikipédia. <sup>160</sup> *DCA*, 44.



Like *plou*-names, *lan*-names can be formed with adjectives or common nouns as well as with personal names. Of the *lan*-names studied, 128 (71 per cent) probably contain personal names; of these, twenty-three (18 per cent) contain eponyms with possible primary Welsh or Cornish cults (excluding Paul/Paulinus), a rather smaller proportion than the *plou*-names, perhaps reflecting the slightly later and more thoroughly local profile of *lan*-establishments. The majority of Welsh/Cornish saints' names that occur in *lan*-names are also found in *plou*-names. These data confirm that contact with Insular Britain had a considerable effect on Breton toponymy up to the ninth century. However, a more thorough investigation of the *lan*-names might disrupt this impression. Loth's fuller list (in *Les noms des saints*) of 218 *lan*-names was less weighted than Tanguy's towards important, parochial names; listing a higher proportion of small and obscure places, he was able to propose eponyms for only 101 (less than half) of the total number, even taking a hopeful view of what might count as a personal name. Only further large-scale research is likely to resolve the question of how far the *lan*-names of Brittany are comparable with their equivalents in Cornwall and Wales.

Place-names imply an early phase of Breton ecclesiastical history when Brittany was more closely involved with Wales than subsequently. (In the late fifth and early sixth centuries it may have been equally involved with large parts of southern Britain, but the almost complete disappearance of British saints' cults from subsequently Anglicised areas leaves us with no material for comparison.<sup>161</sup>) They also imply that this phase was fairly long-lasting. As suggested earlier, place-names containing eponyms that are exclusively local may be formed instantaneously, during or just after the eponym's lifetime, but place-names containing saintly eponyms whose main cult-sites are elsewhere must imply a time lag. A saint whose cult became important enough to be propagated, like Illtud or Teilo, would first have to acquire a reputation as a saint at his primary cult-site, which might take a generation or more after his death; then some specific impulse would have to intervene to establish his cult elsewhere. This suggests that the strong influence of western Britain, not just on purely ecclesiastical toponymy but on the naming of *plous*, important territorial units, continued for some time after the initial period of migration.<sup>162</sup> (A saint could, of course, become the eponym of secondary

<sup>161</sup> A point not considered by Baring-Gould and Fisher when they wrote that 'whereas Armorica may have been, and probably was, colonised by refugees from all the south coast of Britain, nevertheless its ecclesiastical organisation should be due solely to the Welsh. There is no trace whatever of saintly founders from other portions of Britain': *LBS*, I.63.

<sup>162</sup> Sharpe, 'Martyrs', 153; J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 394.



cult centres without ever becoming the eponym of his primary foundation. But he would have to be well established *as a saint*.)

At the same time, the fact that so many of the possibly Welsh and Cornish saints who are eponyms of *plous* and *lans* are not (or are no longer) the dedicatees of churches at the places named after them, and lack any but the most minimal evidence of cult in both Britain and Brittany, tends to support the antiquity of the place-names: the implication is that many of these cults, if cults they were, were obsolescent before the opening up of the Breton Church to the Carolingian world in the ninth century, or were swept away during that phase. Again, one questions to what extent most eponyms of *plous* were ever culted. Largillière emphasised that the eponym of a *plou* was associated with the whole territory of the *plou*, not primarily its religious centre, which could be left free for a different saint.<sup>163</sup> In Brittany that saint is very often Peter, the chief of the apostles, who is the dedicatee in 53 per cent of all Breton parishes with *plou*-names, rising to 84.8 per cent in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc.<sup>164</sup> Given Peter's popularity throughout the Christian West from late antiquity onwards, these dedications may have been in place from the churches' foundation, inviting the question of what exactly was the role of the *plou*-eponym in the community's life – a question that cannot yet be answered.<sup>165</sup>

In addition to the saints whose names appear in Breton *plous* and *lans*, there are numerous individual 'pan-Brittonic' saints with cults in Brittany which, while they are not in evidence in the oldest types of place-name, show similar signs of separation and re-fusion of identities over several centuries. (See [Map 6.4.](#)) Carantoc, with manifestations in Ceredigion, Somerset, Cornwall and Brittany and perhaps also Ireland, is one of the most interesting.<sup>166</sup> Congar (Cyngar) and Ke (Quay), too, appear in Devon and Somerset place-names as well as in various locations in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, suggesting that their cults may be particularly ancient.<sup>167</sup> Space does not permit a full discussion of their cults here,

<sup>163</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 216–7. <sup>164</sup> Tanguy, 'Les paroisses primitives', 163.

<sup>165</sup> Ewig, 'Der Petrus- und Apostelkult'. For early dedications to Peter in Scotland and Ireland, see Clancy, 'The Big Man', 14.

<sup>166</sup> Jankulak, 'Carantoc'; Orme, *The Saints*, 83–5. *Vita I Sancti Carantoci*, VSB, 142–7; *Vita II Sancti Carantoci*, VSB, 148–9, including genealogy. A Breton-Latin version is preserved in the printed Breviary of Léon from 1516: *Vita S. Caradeci*, ed. La Borderie, 'Les deux saints Caradec', 210–15; see Bourguès, 'En tournant les pages', 158–61. Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, II.17, ed. Lot, 496–7, mentions a *dominatio Sent Carantoc*.

<sup>167</sup> Congar: Orme, *The Saints*, 94; Henken, *Traditions*, 185–6; Rollason (ed.), 'Lists', 92; Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, 102, ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 88–9; Robinson, 'A Fragment'; Costen, 'Pit-Falls', 96–7. Ke: Padel, 'Saint Kê'; Padel, 'Brittonic Lann'.



Map 6.4 Cults of four 'pan-Brittonic' saints: Carantoc, Congar, Ke and Maugan

but they illustrate the multidirectional and multiphase contacts implied by the palimpsest of early British hagiography and place-names.

### **Brittany and Cornwall: A ‘Special Relationship’**

If the early relations of the Breton Church with western Britain in general show signs of having been interrupted relatively early and forgotten – or mythologised – from the ninth century onwards, there are signs of a longer-lasting and more continuous relationship with the Brittonic-speaking region that stood closest to Brittany, namely Cornwall.

After the early evidence of the Life of St Samson, the hagiological relationship between Brittany and Cornwall takes some time to manifest itself. None of the ninth-century Breton saints’ Lives mentions Cornwall, and written source-material from Cornwall itself does not appear until the tenth century. Thus, attempts to trace the history of cult-sharing are difficult. As many as sixty-four Celtic saints may be culted both in Brittany and in Cornwall (of whom fifteen or so are pan-Brittonic saints also known in Wales).<sup>168</sup> In most cases the Cornish evidence consists of place-names, and sometimes dedications, first recorded after 1200. In some of the better documented cases, however, it is possible to hypothesise the approximate date and even sometimes the process of the adoption of a Breton cult in Cornwall or vice versa. The meticulous work carried out on Cornish saints’ cults and place-names over many years by G. H. Doble, Oliver Padel, Nicholas Orme, Karen Jankulak and others puts these efforts on a relatively firm foundation.

Given that both in Brittany and in Cornwall there is an identifiably early stratum of ecclesiastical place-names – *lan*-names in Cornwall, *plou*- and *lan*-names in Brittany – one might suppose that an early, pre-Viking phase of cult-sharing is represented by saints’ names that appear in these types of place-name in both Cornwall and Brittany (Map 6.5). However, a comparison of these names gives slightly frustrating results.<sup>169</sup> There is no certain case of a *plou*-saint of Brittany who was also a *lan*-saint in Cornwall, and little overlap of *lan*-eponyms.<sup>170</sup> It is preferable to discuss these name-elements as part of an integrated treatment of the source-material. The earliest substantial opportunity to compare Breton cults with Cornish ones comes in the

<sup>168</sup> For discussion and map, see Orme, *The Saints*, 29, 54. Padel, ‘Christianity’, 113, gives ‘34 saints [in Cornwall] honoured primarily in Brittany, as well as ... about 15 more saints known in both countries’.

<sup>169</sup> Irien, ‘Saints du Cornwall’.

<sup>170</sup> Possible examples are Wethinoc, Feoc/Meoc, Conet, Maudez, Moren, *Sioch*; less likely are Guenoc and Livri: Orme, *The Saints*, s.v. Oliver Padel (pers. comm., 30/11/2018) thinks the Cornish place-name Feock (*Lamfioc* ca 1167, \**Lan-veoc*) explicable as a back-formation from a mutated form of Meoc.



Map 6.5 Cults of some Breton saints in Cornwall

tenth century. By then, two factors had intervened to complicate any pre-existing relationship between Brittany and Cornwall: the absorption of Cornwall into the kingdom of Wessex, and the arrival of the Vikings, which caused the exile of many Bretons to England.<sup>171</sup> As Susan Pearce put it, 'contact between the south-west and Brittany moved into the area of high politics, which has left useful traces'; as so often, we are left guessing whether there was really a step-change in the relationship at this point, or whether all that changes is its visibility.<sup>172</sup> Pearce has argued that the establishment of a number of Breton saints as patrons of Cornish churches not only dates from the 'Breton diaspora' of the tenth century but may have been a result of King Æthelstan's policy of housing Breton relics in south-western churches.<sup>173</sup> In particular, Æthelstan's gift of Breton relics to Exeter ensured the promotion of Breton saints by the bishops of Exeter and thus encouraged their veneration in Cornwall.<sup>174</sup> One possible example of more direct royal influence on the implantation of a Breton cult at parish level involves Winwaloe and Corentin, patrons of the adjacent parishes of Gunwalloe and Cury in the Lizard peninsula. As the founding bishop and the leading abbot of Cornouaille, Corentin and Winwaloe are associated in Wrdisten's *Vita S. Winwaloei* and are named side by side in all four extant early Breton litanies. They may have been brought to Cornwall together in the context of the creation of a large royal estate, Winnianton, in the Lizard peninsula in the tenth century.<sup>175</sup> The name Winnianton may itself reference Winwaloe, and the manorial centre was at Gunwalloe, which has Winwaloe as eponym and dedicatee. Cury church, *Egloscuri*, dedicated to Corentin, is first recorded in 1219: its name seems to preserve a hypocoristic form of Corentin's name not found elsewhere.<sup>176</sup> The churches of Gunwalloe and Cury (which both have twelfth-century fabric) were probably originally estate-churches of Winnianton. Winwaloe appears at eight sites throughout Cornwall, none with direct evidence before 1279: Winnianton could have been the original point of diffusion of his cult.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>171</sup> For the former see Insley, 'Athelstan'; Insley, 'Kings and Lords'.

<sup>172</sup> Pearce, 'Sainly Cults', 272.

<sup>173</sup> Pearce, 'The Dating', 95–100; 'Sainly Cults', 272–4.

<sup>174</sup> For saints venerated at Exeter who may have been either Breton or Cornish, see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, 69–70, 166; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, II.39; Orme, *The Saints*, 139, 159–60, 195; *DCA*, 167–8.

<sup>175</sup> Padel, 'Predannack', 13. <sup>176</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 96.

<sup>177</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 22, 256–9. However, if the name Landewednack, near The Lizard, incorporating Winwaloe's hypocoristic name, was formed as a *lan*-name in situ (as opposed to being borrowed as a complete name from Landévennec in Brittany), this would probably place the arrival of Winwaloe's cult earlier than the tenth century: Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish Churchyards', 72; Oliver Padel, pers. comm., 25/10/2018. For possible early contact between the Lizard area and Brittany, see Padel, 'Predannack'.

An interesting question is whether Æthelstan made use of Breton personnel (as well as cults) in his efforts to incorporate Cornwall into the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Oliver Padel and Lynette Olson have drawn attention to a Count Maenchi son of *Drehguoret* who at some time during Æthelstan's reign granted land at *Lanlovern* (Lanlawren?) to a local church, according to a record which survives in the cartulary of Athelney Abbey.<sup>178</sup> No official named Maenchi is otherwise known at this time in England, but in Brittany *Menki*, unlike in Cornwall, is a common name. The fact that in 931 a *Menki vicecomes* attests a charter of Redon leads one to wonder whether Maenchi may have been a Breton expatriate in Æthelstan's court circle, and if so, one who owned land in Cornwall.<sup>179</sup> Exiled Breton clergy, too, may have found preferment in Cornwall under Æthelstan, given their ability to speak the local language.

However, even if royal approval was a factor encouraging Breton cults in Cornwall, the actual work of promoting them must have been done by many humbler participants. A particular group of sources allows us to make a fuller comparison of the repertoire of saints in Brittany and in Cornwall during the tenth century. On the Cornish side, there is a list of saints in (probably) tenth-century script which survives on the flyleaves to a book from Rheims now in the Vatican Library (BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 191).<sup>180</sup> The context of the list, in Cornish script on fragments of a Breton manuscript in Caroline script, in itself suggests communication between Cornwall and Brittany. There are forty-eight names on the list: thirty-three are identifiable as names of Brittonic saints, and of these, twenty-one are certainly those of eponymous saints of Cornish church-sites. The purpose of the list is likely to remain obscure given that it consists of bare names. Its most interesting feature is that it places the saints at least partly in geographical order: some saints who are, to this day, the patrons of adjacent parishes are listed side by side. This confirms that the saints are, for the most part, genuinely 'local' to Cornwall. (Fifteen of the definitely placed saints are patrons of an almost continuous block of parishes on the central south coast of Cornwall from the Fal to Carlyon Bay, implying, perhaps, an early development of long-lived saints' cults in this sheltered and accessible subregion.) The dating of the list, though not precise, is more secure than that of *\*lann* place-names, and underlines that while a *\*lann*-name in Cornwall may suggest antiquity, the absence of the

<sup>178</sup> Padel, 'The Charter'; Lynette Olson, pers. comm., 20/11/2017.

<sup>179</sup> *CR*, 305, p. 258.

<sup>180</sup> Olson and Padel, 'A Tenth-Century List'; see also Padel, 'Local Saints', 316–8. Bernhard Bischoff, in a personal communication to the editors of the text, dated the script 'saec. ix–x, or perhaps later in the tenth century', suggesting he thought the earlier date more likely: Olson and Padel, 'A Tenth-Century List', 36, notes 6 and 7.



element does not prove the reverse, since only six of the saints on the 'Vatican' list are associated with a *\*lann* place-name, yet the cults of twenty-one at least were fixed in their permanent locations before the end of the tenth century.

On the Breton side, there are four tenth- and eleventh-century litanies of Breton saints preserved in manuscripts from the tenth-century 'diaspora'. The earliest is probably the 'Salisbury' litany, in Salisbury Cathedral MS 180, of *ca* 900, which contains forty-three Breton saints, and may have been created in Brittany or by Breton exiles in Wessex. The 'Rheims' litany from a lost Rheims manuscript survives only in an early modern printed edition. It juxtaposes a list of thirty-eight Celtic, mostly Breton saints with a prayer for 'the English' which implies that it, too, is the product of Bretons in England. The 'Limoges' litany, containing forty-two relevant saints, in the eleventh-century manuscript Paris BnF Lat. 1154 from Saint-Martial de Limoges, has been tentatively connected with Redon.<sup>181</sup> Finally, the 'Saint-Vougay' litany of thirty Breton saints is found in a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century missal from Saint-Vougay (Finistère, Archives départementales 1 J 346).<sup>182</sup> Each litany shows some overlap with each of the others, but also contains some unique names: Bernard Tanguy has shown that each has a regional bias towards a different part of Brittany.<sup>183</sup>

Comparison of the Cornish and Breton sources gives interesting results. Seven of the saints' names in the Cornish 'Vatican' list also appear in one or more Breton litanies. If we broaden the enquiry to all the available evidence from Brittany, we find that fully half the names on the Cornish list have Breton parallels of some kind (Table 6.4), but the information varies greatly in quality. Little can be made of the saints who appear only in late or doubtfully identified toponyms in Brittany: Barmot, Filii, Sibillon, Niorth, [Cig]uai, Bie, Elenn, Crite and Guron. *Cioc* and *Iust* cannot be firmly identified with their apparent counterparts in the Breton litanies.<sup>184</sup> For the others, however, the parallels are more convincing.

This level of overlap gives a powerful general impression of connection between Cornwall and Brittany. Admittedly, although the 'Vatican' list

<sup>181</sup> Merdrignac, 'La perception', 145.

<sup>182</sup> 'Salisbury Litany', ed. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, 259–64; 'Rheims Litany', ed. Mabillon, *Vetera Analecta*, 168–9, and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, 288–95; 'Limoges Litany', ed d'Arbois de Jubainville, 'Quelques noms', 449–50; 'Saint-Vougay Litany', ed. Deuffic, 'Corpus', 19–69. All four litanies (rearranged into alphabetical order) are printed by Loth, 'Les anciennes litanies', 136–8.

<sup>183</sup> Tanguy, 'De l'origine'. <sup>184</sup> For *Cioc* see, however, Loth, *Les noms*, 17 *s.v.* *Ciaoc*.



Table 6.4 *Saints of Cornwall from the 'Vatican' list with cult-information from Brittany*

(Unless otherwise stated, information is from Olson and Padel, 'A Tenth-Century List', and Orme, *The Saints*, s.v.)

'Vatican' List	Cult in Cornwall	Cult in Brittany
1 Salamon	Patron of St Levan	<i>Salmon</i> , Limoges litany; dedications <sup>1</sup>
3 Barmot	Otherwise unknown	* <i>Barvet</i> or * <i>Barvoet</i> , eponym of Plouaret CA? <sup>2</sup>
4 Cuncar	Eponym of St Inguner, Lanivet; also culted in Somerset and Wales	Eponym of Langongar, Plouzané F and Saint-Congard M; possible dedicatee of Landéda F
5 Cioc	Hypocoristic form of Congar or Ke? <sup>3</sup>	<i>Caoc</i> , Salisbury and Limoges litanies
9 Iust	Patron of St Just in Penwith and St Just in Roseland	<i>Iust</i> , Limoges litany; patron of Saint-Just in Langourla CA and Bignan M?
11 Gerent	Patron of Gerrans; royal saint connected with Buryan in Exeter martyrology	<i>Geran</i> is patron of a chapel near Dol; <sup>4</sup> mentioned (as <i>Geren</i> , a Cornish friend of the saint) in <i>Vita S. Turiavi</i> (Clermont) (s.xi?) <sup>5</sup>
12 Fili	Patron of Philleigh	Eponym of Kerfily, Elven, M; Lamphily, Concarneau, F; Lanvily, Argol, F? <sup>6</sup>
13 Rumon	Patron of Ruan Lanihorne, Ruan Major, Ruan Minor; relics translated to Tavistock in s.x/xi? <sup>7</sup>	Former dedicatee of Audierne F; eponym of Saint-Jean-Trolimon F ( <i>Treff Rumon</i> 1389) <sup>8</sup>
15 Meler	Patron of Mylor (the churchtown was <i>Lantwythek</i> in 1278, now Lawithick, 'wooded lan'); Linkinhorne; eponym of Barrymailor in St Martin in Meneage, <i>Merthermeylar</i> in s.xiv	<i>Meler</i> Rheims litany; <i>Meleor</i> Limoges litany; <i>Passio Melori</i> calendar in Angers BM 477 (s.ix/x), <i>Meler</i> calendar in Angers BM 91 (s.x); various toponyms and cults; <i>Vitae</i> of Maglorius and Melor.
16 Sibillon	Possibly patron of St Veryan, anterior to its present patron Symphorian.	Possibly eponym of Lansevilien, Penvénan, CA
17 Maucan	Patron of Mawgan-in-Meneage and St Mawgan in Pydar. Also culted in Wales.	Eponym of Saint-Maugan IV, Lomogan, Saint-Sève, F and other places
19 Berion	Patron of St Buryan	Eponym of Berrien F
21 Guidian	Patron of Gwithian	<i>Guoidian</i> in Rheims litany; <i>Guidian</i> in Saint-Vougay litany; eponym of <i>Goezian</i> , earlier name of Audierne; relic-cult mentioned in Cartulary of Quimperlé

Table 6.4 (*cont.*)

'Vatican' List	Cult in Cornwall	Cult in Brittany
23 Nioth (reading uncertain: could be <i>Rioth</i> )	(If Nioth) patron of St Neot	Possible eponym of Plénée-Jugon CA
28 Geuedenoc	Wethinoc, <sup>9</sup> reputed founder and former eponym of Padstow ( <i>Languihenoc</i> 1086)	Wethinoc, brother of Winwaloe in Wrdisten, <i>Vita S. Winwaloei</i> . Eponym of Lanvézennec, Pleyben, F
29 [Cig]uai?	Identifiable with Cywa, patron of St Kew?	Eponym of Languivoa, Plonéour-Lanvern, F?
37 Bie	Otherwise unknown	Patron of Saint-Bihy, CA; chapel of St Bihy in Trégomeur, CA; eponym of Bieuzy, M. Reputed disciple of Gildas.
38 Elenn	Eponym of Egloshellings ( <i>Eglosselans</i> in 1297), churchtown of St Stephen in Brannel?	Possible eponym of Saint-Hélen CA; Lanhelin IV
39 Austoll	Patron of St Austell	Appears in <i>Vita S. Mevenni</i> , s.xi
40 Megunn	Patron of St Mewan	Salisbury, Rheims and Limoges litanies; founder of Saint-Méen; numerous dedications; <i>Vita S. Mevenni</i> , s.xi
41 Iodechall	Otherwise unknown	Salisbury, Rheims and Limoges litanies; numerous hagiographical mentions; <i>Vita</i> (s.xi?)
42 Crite	Patron of Creed	Dedicatee of Saint-Cry chapel, Nivillac, M?
43 Guron	Patron of Gorran and of a well at Bodmin; possible eponym of <i>Dinuurrin</i> (Bodmin?)	Eponym of Lannouron, Lambézellec, F?
47 Iti	Joint-patron of Mevagissey ( <i>Memai</i> , i.e. Meva, is adjacent on the list); patron of St Issey	Eponym of Plouisy CA; Lannidy, Plouigneau, CA (with a chapel of 'Saint-Didy'); Lannidy, Lannéanou, CA <sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the cult of Salomon in Brittany see Tanguy, 'De l'origine', 58; Plaine, 'Saint Salomon'; *DF*, 130. For the cult of royal saints in Brittany in the later Middle Ages, see Vauchez, 'Le duc Charles de Blois' (for Salomon, 610–11). That the *Salmon* of the Limoges litany represents the ruler Salomon who was murdered in 874 and subsequently developed a martyr's cult is perhaps unlikely, since in the litany he is placed among confessors rather than martyrs.

<sup>2</sup> *DCA*, 202–3.

<sup>3</sup> As suggested by Tanguy, *DCA*, 113 and 'De l'origine', 49. For Ke see Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III, 89–104.

<sup>4</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.78.

<sup>5</sup> For Cornish and Breton traditions of King Gerent see Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales', 142–5.

<sup>6</sup> Loth, *Les noms*, 14, suggests a Bili or Bily rather than a Filii as eponym of Lanvily.

<sup>7</sup> Padel, 'Saint Rumon'.

<sup>8</sup> *DF*, 34–5, 199–200.

<sup>9</sup> Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 43 and note 13, gives this spelling as a standard form of the various forms found in the sources. See also Jankulak, 'Cross-Channel Intercourse'.

<sup>10</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 79–80; *DCA*, 216.

deals principally with Cornish local saints, it is likely to have been created in Brittany and influenced by knowledge of Breton saints: this may, for instance, account for the inclusion of *Iodechall*, Judicael, the seventh-century royal saint who otherwise has no known cult in Cornwall. However, in the case of some of the names, notably *Megunn*, *Meler*, *Guidian* and *Iti*, there is sufficient information on the saints both in Cornwall and in Brittany to strongly suggest early shared cults. Méen (*Meuennus*) was the reputed founder of an important monastery in the diocese of Saint-Malo by the early ninth century. That the Cornish *Megunn* was at least believed by the list's compiler to be identical with the Breton *Meuennus* is indicated by the inclusion beside him of his Breton associate *Iodechall*.<sup>185</sup> The name Melor, unusually for a Breton saint's name, belonged to several clearly distinct saints (a bishop, an abbot and a boy martyr) and it is not clear which of them, if any, was the one originally established at Mylor in Cornwall; but it is likely to be the most obscure of them, the abbot, eponym and dedicatee of Tréméloir, given their shared feast day in the last week of August.<sup>186</sup> Méen and Melor are better known as saints in Brittany than they are in Cornwall, yet the Cornish list shows saints of these names apparently established as local patrons in their lasting locations at St Mewan and Mylor, respectively. Mylor has an additional sign of antiquity in being a *lan*-church, evidently an important one with a large enclosure, and acquired a dependent church which was also a *lan*, Mabe (*Lavabe*). Guidian, the patron of Gwithian, appears in hagiography and toponymy in south-western

<sup>185</sup> The presence of Austell, *Austoll*, in the list on the other side of *Megunn*, noted down for a Breton readership, may have played a part in his adoption into the eleventh-century hagiography of Saint-Méen, as Méen's devoted nephew who was buried with him. For a different interpretation, see Jankulak, 'Adjacent Saints' Dedications', 115–6.

<sup>186</sup> On the identities of Melor, see Bourguès, *Le dossier*, 132–7, 185–7; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.20–52 at 34; *DCA*, 342–3; Orme, *The Saints*, 185–7.

Brittany.<sup>187</sup> Iti or Issey (*Iti* on the 'Vatican' list) is patron of two Cornish sites, St Issey near the Camel estuary on the north coast, and Mevagissey, formerly known as *Levorrick* (a *lan*-name), directly opposite on the south coast.<sup>188</sup> In Brittany this saint is eponym of three places in the diocese of Tréguier: Plouisy and two places named Lannidy (CA). This unusually coherent cult may well be early in both Cornwall and Brittany, its very obscurity arguing for its antiquity (the saint has no *Vita* or substantial traditions in either region).

It seems unlikely that the presence of all these Breton cults in Cornwall is due to the 'Viking diaspora' of the tenth century and English royal influence. Such recently introduced cults would scarcely have 'bedded down' sufficiently to be placed in the tenth-century list alongside unique Cornish saints as the patrons of small local churches. Moreover, none of the Breton saints whom we know to have been brought to England in the reign of Æthelstan – Samson, Branwalatr, Winwaloe, Guenael, Budoc, Conocan, Melanius, Machutus, Tugdual – appears in the 'Vatican' list, even though several of them had become local patrons and eponyms in Cornwall by the central Middle Ages. The argument is not conclusive, as the list has no clear principle of selection: we do not know how many saints may have been omitted by mere accident. Nevertheless, it may stand as a hint that some Breton cults arrived in Cornwall earlier (perhaps centuries earlier) than Æthelstan's initiative, or at the least through different channels.

Indeed it is quite possible that these Cornish-Breton cults and others moved in the opposite direction, from Cornwall to Brittany, in line with the older idea of 'missionary' saints. The evidence, weighted as it is towards Brittany, is not sufficient to allow us to prove Cornish priority for any pre-Viking cults. Guidian and Iti/Issey are possible candidates. So also are saints who are the patrons of early monastic communities and Domesday collegiate churches in Cornwall, whereas their cults in Brittany are small-scale. Maugan, as a pan-Brittonic saint who was established in Cornwall by the tenth century, is one such.<sup>189</sup> Goran, who is present in the 'Vatican' list and in the First Life of Petroc, and is patron of

<sup>187</sup> He is the original eponym of Audierne (F), previously known as Goezian: *DF*, 34–5. His relics were the object of a discovery on the Île de Groix in the eleventh century commemorated in the Cartulary of Quimperlé: *CQ*, 45–6.

<sup>188</sup> Largillière, *Les saints*, 79–80.

<sup>189</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 182–3; *LBS*, III.449–53 (Mawgan), 478–81 (Meugan). For cult-sites of Meugan in Wales see Wade-Evans, 'Parochiale Wallicanum', 39, 56, 58, 94, 97; Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, I.72–3, 348; for place-names in Brittany, *DCA*, 146. For the saint's career and afterlife, see Howlett, 'Orationes Moucani'; Breeze, 'Rosnat', 46–7; Rhygyfarch, *Vita Sancti David*, 1, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 108–9; Owen, *Description*, ed. Miles, 301.

a collegiate church in Domesday Book (*Sanctus Goranus*, recorded as *Langoron* in 1376) may be another, if the place-name Lannouron in Brest commune refers to him; however, the evidence for his Breton cult is exiguous.<sup>190</sup> Slightly stronger is the evidence for the Cornish saint Rumon in Brittany, but it does not appear until the fourteenth century.<sup>191</sup> The cults of Petroc and Piran became known in Brittany, but almost certainly not until the Viking Age.<sup>192</sup> Petroc is exceptional among Cornish saints in being widely recognised in the English Church from the tenth century onwards, and the extensive presence of his cult in Brittany therefore cannot be taken as representative of the uptake of Cornish cults in general. Other founding saints of important churches in Cornwall, for instance Achobran (St Keverne) and Probus, go unremarked in Brittany.

One interesting case of early adoption of a Cornish cult in Brittany may be that of Buryan, or *Berion* as she appears in the 'Vatican' list. Her community near Penzance was the beneficiary of a royal charter dated 943 that seems to have an authentic basis, and was still an important establishment in Domesday Book.<sup>193</sup> The saint's feast day was given as 1 May in the twelfth-century Exeter martyrology, with an indication of hagiographical tradition about her: 'St Berriona, virgin, by whose merits the son of King *Gerentus* was cured of the disease of paralysis'.<sup>194</sup> The same saint seems to be the eponym of Berrien in Finistère, recorded as *plebs Berriun* in the Landévennec cartulary.<sup>195</sup> This is an 'immense parish', as Tanguy said, and although he regarded it as a subdivision of an even larger early *plou*-unit, Plouéneze, its own status as a *plebs* (although the element did not become part of its name) may imply that it was formed in the pre-Viking period. No cult-information about Buryan seems to have survived in Brittany itself, but the place-names *Feunteun-Verrien* (referring to a well) and *Lanverrien* in the adjacent parish suggest that the name was understood as a hagionym.<sup>196</sup>

Equally interesting are the lesser-known Breton *plou*-saints whose names also occur in Cornwall, but not in the earliest sources: Fingar/Guigner/Gwinear, Ia/Hya, and Sezni/Sithney. These three form a suggestive group in some ways. Although their cult-sites in Brittany are a long way apart – Pluvigner in Morbihan, Plouyé in central Finistère and

<sup>190</sup> Exon Domesday 72 a 3. The manor of Langoron is referenced in *Cornwall Feet of Fines*, I, no. 673, ed. Rowe, 415. Further references to it as *Lanworan* and *Laworan* are found in estate rentals of 1385, 1463 and 1499; Fox and Padel (eds.), *Cornish Lands*, 11, 51, 52, 118, 119. See Padel, 'Christianity', 117; Orme, *The Saints*, 131; Olson, *Early Monasteries*, 90.

<sup>191</sup> *DF*, 34–5, 199–200. <sup>192</sup> Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*; Orme, *The Saints*, 222.

<sup>193</sup> *The Register*, ed. Hingston-Randolph, I.84–5; Olson, *Early Monasteries*, 78–84.

<sup>194</sup> *Ordinale Exon*, ed. Dalton and Doble, IV.10; Orme, *The Saints*, 78.

<sup>195</sup> *CL*, 35, p. 567; *DF*, 40. <sup>196</sup> *DF*, 40.

Guissény in Léon – in Cornwall, they are close together between the Hayle estuary and Helston (Gwinear, St Ives and Sithney).<sup>197</sup> The saints have it in common that their Lives are preserved in late medieval and early modern Brittany (Ia appears in the Life of Fingar/Guigner), but make use of Cornish traditions which in turn identify the saints as Irish.<sup>198</sup> The Breton *plou*-names would suggest that their cults are original to Brittany, and independent from one another; however, their secondary (?) cult-sites in Cornwall have given rise to interconnected traditions which, in turn, have been used to fill out the picture of their cults in Brittany where, apparently, little information about them survived. This in itself may suggest an early propagation of their cults, or at least propagation that took place on an intimate local level, without the ‘back-up’ of an international cult like that of Winwaloe. Ia raises special questions. She is a female monastic saint, a type almost unknown in Brittany before the eleventh century, yet Tanguy thinks that the *plou* named after her, Plouyé, pre-dates the eighth century, when it was split to create Plonévez-du-Faou and, eventually, the parishes of Landeleau and Collorec.<sup>199</sup> Does this imply that her cult was, in fact, introduced from Cornwall to Brittany (as has been argued for Buryan), but at a very early date? She has no attested cult in Brittany outside the Life of Fingar, and her case illustrates the tantalising nature of arguments from place-names alone.

The ‘Fingar’ group are not the only Breton cults to (arguably) form a geographical pattern in Cornwall. Nicholas Orme pointed to a concentration of Breton names on the Camel estuary (where there are also a number of Welsh and pan-Brittonic cults).<sup>200</sup> In particular, St Breock and St Tudy, both in the Camel area, may have been introduced from Brittany as a pair, given that in Brittany they are adjacent twice over. Brioc’s *plou*, Plonivel, is adjacent to the Île Tudy, the focal point of Tudy’s

<sup>197</sup> Guissény was originally a *plou*, recorded as *Plebs Sidni* in 1207 and *Ploe Sizni* in ca 1330: *DF*, 83. It is tempting to identify Gwinear also with Guengar, eponym of Languengar in Lesneven (F) and patron of Pieric, formerly Cornou (M), but Jankulak (‘Fingar’, 131–2 and 137–9) shows that this is linguistically impossible. Oliver Padel suggests that Helston (an active harbour until about 1300) may have been the route for the import or export of this group of saints’ cults (pers. comm., 30/11/2018).

<sup>198</sup> For ‘Irish’ saints in Cornwall see Thomas, ‘Irish Colonists’; Jankulak, ‘Fingar’, 136–7 and references.

<sup>199</sup> *DF*, 102, 153, 174; Hascoët, ‘Les troménies’, 73–4 (accessed 13 December 2018).

<sup>200</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 29, 250. Jankulak, ‘Adjacent Saints’ Dedications’, 96–9, points out that Doble’s argument for a historical group of pilgrim saints co-adjacent in north Cornwall and Brittany, consisting of Carantoc, Columb, Enoder, Ervan, Merryn, Breock, Eval and Cubert, artificially combined identifications of very variable reliability. However, the general point that this part of Cornwall gives evidence of communication with Brittany over a considerable period may be allowed.

cult; and (accepting, with Tanguy, that the names Tudy and Tugdual denote the same saint), Brioc and Tugdual were patrons of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier, the episcopal sees of central northern Brittany founded in the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>201</sup> (The cult of Tudy was certainly present in north Cornwall before the Norman Conquest, as Exon Domesday states that *Eglostudic* was seized from the monks of Bodmin by Robert, count of Mortain.<sup>202</sup> It may indeed have been the Bodmin community that introduced it, given their known contact with Landévennec, and the promotion of their patron Petroc in western Brittany.<sup>203</sup>) Another group, of less well-known saints from Léon in north-west Brittany, is found in a cluster north of the Camel: St Teath, St Breward and St Clether, corresponding to Landéda, Loc-Brévalaire and Cléder in Léon.

It seems likely that the 'Viking diaspora' of the tenth century was an impetus to the arrival of Breton cults in Cornwall, and a lesser 'backwash' of Cornish cults to Brittany, notably that of Petroc. It is not so clear whether the Norman Conquest resulted in the introduction of yet more. The great majority of Breton cults in Cornwall are associated with western Brittany; however, most of the Bretons who came to England, including Cornwall, after 1066 were from the Norman borderlands. Some of the most popular saints of this area, such as Machutus, Leonorius and Jacut, have no Cornish cults at all. However, the most important Breton landholding family in post-Conquest England, that of Alan 'Rufus' of Richmond, had interests extending further west in Brittany. Alan Rufus and his brothers were sons of Eudo 'of Penthievre' and grandsons of Duke Geoffrey I of Brittany. Their power bloc in central northern Brittany extended from Rennes to the border of Léon. Their family were patrons – if not actual creators – of the sees of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier, whose founder-saints had secondary cults in Cornwall. Alan Rufus himself had no direct interest in Cornwall, but his elder brother Brien may briefly have held the title of count of Cornwall after the Conquest before returning to Brittany. Katharine Keats-Rohan suggests that a number of Bretons of uncertain origin who held small amounts of land in Domesday Cornwall had originally been endowed by Brien.<sup>204</sup> One was Blohin Brito, whose holdings (Delamere, Trefreock, Dannonchapel and Trewethart in North Cornwall and Truthwall near Penzance) are in places with a high density

<sup>201</sup> Tanguy, 'Hagionomastique et histoire'.

<sup>202</sup> *Exon Domesday* 204 b 4, ed. Thorn and Thorn, *Domesday Book 10: Cornwall*, E 4.21.

<sup>203</sup> Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 73–114. For the 'Bodmin Gospels' as a Landévennec manuscript see [www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8620&CollID=27&NStart=9381](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8620&CollID=27&NStart=9381)

<sup>204</sup> Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, I.48; Golding, 'Robert of Mortain', 127–8.



of saints shared with western Brittany.<sup>205</sup> Another was Wihomarc or Wihumar, the steward of Alan Rufus, who held land in Winnianton hundred and at Treroosel on the north coast, near St Breock; he may have encouraged the veneration of Brioc and other Breton saints in Cornwall.<sup>206</sup> (Incidentally, the introduction of Brioc in Gloucestershire, at St Briavels, was almost certainly the work of the Breton Baderon family of Monmouth, who held the estate, previously named Lydney, in Domesday Book.<sup>207</sup>) The hints provided by Domesday Book remind us that if we knew more about the history of landownership in the Celtic-speaking regions, the mechanisms of cult-sharing might be more easily seen.

Throughout the central and later Middle Ages, continued Breton-Cornish contact is seen in the transmission of hagiographical texts. The arrival of the *Vita I* of Petroc at Saint-Méen, where it was uniquely preserved, was probably connected with the theft and transport there of his relics in 1177 – a politically sensitive episode which was recorded in a dedicated text, *De Reliquiarum Furto*.<sup>208</sup> This account by a canon of Bodmin does not explain why one of his colleagues chose to take the stolen relics to Saint-Méen, but the implication is that Petroc was already recognised there, and that direct travel between Cornwall and Brittany was commonplace. Such connections must have intensified in the early twelfth century when more north-east Breton landowners acquired land in Devon or Cornwall. Roland of Dinan, King Henry II's leading official in Brittany, to whom the thief allegedly offered the relics, belonged to a family that owned estates at Hartland, close to several probably early centres of Petroc's cult. The author, however, prefers to emphasise the 'official' channels through which the relics were recovered, and the important people who became involved: the bishop of Exeter, the abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel, and the king himself. The incident highlights how local contacts between the Brittonic-speaking regions became visible when overlaid by the long-distance bureaucratic networks of the Angevin Empire. Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter may have hailed from Brittany originally: however, his overt role in the affair was not that of a

<sup>205</sup> Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, I.168; [www.pase.ac.uk/jsp/Domesday?op=5&nameinfo\\_id=2969](http://www.pase.ac.uk/jsp/Domesday?op=5&nameinfo_id=2969) (accessed 09 October 2018).

<sup>206</sup> Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, I.466. On Alan Rufus and his family, see Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 46–9. For their possible involvement with the sees of Saint-Brieuc and Tréguier, see Bourguès, 'Les origines diocésaines' (accessed 14 December 2017). A grant by Alan of land in Cambridgeshire to Saint-Serge, Angers, the resting-place of St Brioc, is recorded: Farrer and Clay (eds), *Early Yorkshire Charters*, IV.1.

<sup>207</sup> Victoria County History, *A History*, 85–92, online at [www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol5/pp85-92](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol5/pp85-92) (accessed 25 November 2019).

<sup>208</sup> Grosjean (ed.), 'Vie et miracles ... I', 174–88; Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 153–201.

Breton reconciling his Cornish and Breton neighbours, but a Paris-trained canon lawyer promoted by an Anglo-French monarch.<sup>209</sup>

Even so, other Lives indicate that such a *cause célèbre* was only the most visible aspect of continuing contact. The Life of Fingar/Guigner (both names are used in the text) composed by one 'Anselm' in Brittany in about 1300 is thought to have been based on a Cornish source-text about the eponymous saint of Gwinear, since it is says much more about Cornish traditions than Breton ones.<sup>210</sup> The biographical materials about Sezni of Brittany, preserved in liturgical lessons and in Albert Le Grand's collection, are influenced by the twelfth- or thirteenth-century Life of the Cornish St Piran (itself based closely on the Irish Life of Ciarán of Saighir, also known as Seirkieran).<sup>211</sup> Le Grand's Life of St Quay (Ke) likewise drew on a lost Cornish-Latin Life which was also the source for *Bewnans Ke*, a Cornish-language play about the saint dating from around 1500.<sup>212</sup> In turn, Breton texts were used to create Lives for Cornish saints. A Life of Rumon, eponym of Ruan Major and Minor and Ruan Lanihorne, whose relics rested at Tavistock, was based on the Life of Ronan of Locronan (both texts are very uncertainly dated, but the fourteenth-century date of the Gotha manuscript containing the Life of Rumon forms a *terminus ante quem*).<sup>213</sup> A late-medieval Breton Latin Life of Meriadec, a local saint of the Vannetais, was drawn upon for a Cornish play, *Beunans Meriasek*, of similar date to *Bewnans Ke*, perhaps composed for the parish church of Camborne where Meriadec was first recorded as patron in 1329.<sup>214</sup> The typology of texts in Cornish and Breton is very similar: the texts produced in both languages between 1450 and 1600 consist almost entirely of religious dramas.<sup>215</sup> In both series, the travels of founding saints between Brittany, Cornwall and Wales are emphasised, assuming an audience for whom such origin-legends were an integral part of local identity.<sup>216</sup> Information deriving from Latinate, scholarly sources – saints' Lives and Geoffrey of Monmouth – was effectively popularised and oralised in these works.<sup>217</sup>

<sup>209</sup> For the origins of Bartholomew of Exeter see Morey, *Bartholomew*, 3. For the Bodmin relic theft, see Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, especially 141–6 and 153–89.

<sup>210</sup> Jankulak, 'Fingar'; Orme, *The Saints*, 136–8. Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, I.100–10.

<sup>211</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 220–3, 236–7.

<sup>212</sup> Padel, 'Saint Ké'; Padel, 'Oral and Literary Culture'; *Bewnans Ke*, ed. Thomas and Williams.

<sup>213</sup> Gotha Forschungsbibliothek Mm.I.81: Grosjean, 'De codice', no. 45 (98); *Vita S. Rumoni*, ed. Grosjean, 'Vie de S. Rumon'; Padel, 'Saint Rumon'.

<sup>214</sup> Orme, *The Saints*, 188–9. For the development of the cult of Meriadec in Brittany see Bourguès, 'Le contexte idéologique'.

<sup>215</sup> For general introductions, see Murdoch, 'The Cornish Medieval Drama'; Guyonvarc'h, 'Le théâtre breton'.

<sup>216</sup> Scherb, 'Situating the Holy'. <sup>217</sup> Padel, 'Oral and Literary Culture'.

Brittany and Cornwall, peripheries of the states to which they formally belonged, apparently forged their own relationship without much official attention. The detectable similarities in settlement patterns and land use made this easier.<sup>218</sup> Anecdotal claims that the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel controlled a valuable trade in Cornish tin from the late Saxon period to the later Middle Ages, and that the green and rose granite used in the Norman pillars of the font in St Keverne Church came from Brittany, feed the untestable, but plausible hypothesis that the ease of contact between Cornwall and Brittany seen in the early modern period – the travel for work recorded in the sixteenth-century Lay Subsidy rolls, the smuggling that was rife in the eighteenth century – can be assumed for the early medieval period too.<sup>219</sup>

### Conclusions

Some conclusions about the cult of saints in Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago can be briefly stated. The overwhelming presence of ecclesiastical toponymic elements and Brittonic personal names in the place-names of Brittany, as in Wales and Cornwall, is evidence of a close relationship between these regions in the first centuries of the Middle Ages. Almost certainly, the vast majority of the obscure Brittonic saints' names present in Breton toponymy must have established themselves in toponymy before the Viking Age and the ensuing inflow of French influence. The sharing of specific saints' names is probably evidence of contact between particular churches in Britain and Brittany in the sixth to eighth centuries. The Breton Church was loosely organised and had few of the large-scale establishments that only rich elite support could maintain; as a result it may have depended heavily on Britain, for education and perhaps sometimes for the services of bishops. However, it was thoroughly embedded in society and the clergy comprised a large proportion of what social elite there was in Brittany. Under Carolingian rulership, Breton church leaders negotiated a compromise between past loyalties and current necessities: on the one hand, immortalising their dependence on Britain in high-status hagiographical texts and, on the other, relegating it firmly to the past and consigning many poorer and smaller-scale saints' cults to near-oblivion. The Viking Age probably had a similar effect in

<sup>218</sup> Tonnerre, 'Une terre celtique'; Walsham, 'Antiquities'.

<sup>219</sup> Long, 'Tonsures, Tin, Bronze and Bells'; [www.christopherlong.co.uk/oth/msm-smmtin.html](http://www.christopherlong.co.uk/oth/msm-smmtin.html) (accessed 23 November 2018); [www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/CON/StKeverne#Churches](http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/CON/StKeverne#Churches) (accessed 22 November 2019); Allan, 'Breton Woodworkers'; [www.englandimmigrants.com](http://www.englandimmigrants.com) (accessed 29 March 2018); Mattingly, 'Smuggling', [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/smuggling](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/smuggling) (accessed 23 November 2018).

Wales. Conceivably, the close association between Brittany and King Æthelstan's England also played a part in disrupting links between Welsh and Breton churches, while strengthening Breton links with Cornwall. The oblivion was not total, however; many small cults must have continued active on a local and non-literate level, to reappear in the written (and artistic) record centuries later and to attract to themselves re-oralised versions of higher-profile saints' legends.

The relationship between Brittany and Cornwall, facilitated by language, was always especially close. By comparison, the hagiological relationship between Brittany and Ireland seems more distant. Unlike Wales, Brittany underwent no detectable large-scale or aristocratic Irish settlement in the post-Roman period, and it would be very difficult to make a case, as Ó Riain does for Wales, that any appreciable number of Breton saints' cults were early 'naturalised' Irish ones (except those arriving from Wales already thoroughly cambricised). Apparently the scholarly contacts that existed were not of a nature to lead to the adoption of large numbers of saints' cults in either direction. Those Irish cults that were adopted in Brittany, notably those of Patrick, Brigit and Brendan, may have come via British or Continental intermediaries: the absence of Breton saints' cults in Ireland may reinforce the argument that most Breton-Irish contact took place on the Continent and outside Brittany itself. In general, the cult of saints in Brittany affirms the cultural cohesion and separateness of the British-speaking world in the formative centuries of western Christendom.

## 7 Bretons and Britons in the Norman and Angevin Empires, 1066–1203

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### Bretons and the Norman Conquest

During the late ninth century and the first half of the tenth, Bretons became involved in English politics and culture, but in the later tenth and early eleventh centuries, they disappear from English sources. During the reigns of Æthelred II (978–1016) and his Danish successor Cnut (1016–42) any Breton relationship was eclipsed by, and eventually subsumed in, the intimate yet tense relationship that the kings of England developed with Normandy as that Scandinavian settlement took political shape. The marriages of Æthelred and Cnut in turn to Emma of Normandy, sister of Duke Richard II, while Richard himself and Duke Geoffrey of Brittany married each other's sisters, were the first sign that the relationship between Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago would soon be dominated by the Normans.

Onomastics and cult-evidence, although difficult to interpret, suggest that a number of Bretons had become assimilated in western Normandy by the time of the Norman Conquest.<sup>1</sup> Some moved on to England: during the reign of Edward the Confessor, or even earlier, several held land there, most notably Radulfus Anglicus, or Ralph the Staller, whose East Anglian interests suggest sponsorship by Emma of Normandy.<sup>2</sup> However, it was only the unforeseen events of 1066 that led to the establishment of large numbers of Bretons in England. The participation of Bretons in the 'non-Norman Conquest' has been thoroughly studied.<sup>3</sup> Politically, the ramifications were considerable and the effects were felt until the early thirteenth century at least. Culturally, the Bretons established in England by the Anglo-Norman kings were largely assimilated to the other incomers from France. There is no evidence that they

<sup>1</sup> Van Torhoudt, 'Les Bretons'.

<sup>2</sup> Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 50; Keats-Rohan, 'Le rôle des Bretons', 182, note 17; Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, 42. For sources relating to Ralph the Staller and discussion of his family connections, see Keats-Rohan, 'A Question of Identity', 182, Keats-Rohan, 'Raoul Anglicus', and Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, 44–7.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the series of articles by Keats-Rohan listed in the bibliography.

introduced any tenurial, ecclesiastical or other practices that differed from those of their Norman peers. However, the expansionary Anglo-Norman, then Angevin 'empire' came into conflict at times with both Continental Bretons and Insular Britons, as no other single polity had done before. This encouraged the revival of the classical ethnographic stereotypes that Carolingian writers had used against the Bretons, now applied to both Bretons and Welsh, as well as to the other peoples of the north-western periphery of high-medieval Europe – Scots, Irish and Scandinavians.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the twelfth century, Bretons found themselves uneasily poised between civility and barbarism in the eyes of their neighbours; they might consider themselves, and indeed for all practical purposes might really be, members of Francophone knightly society, and yet be lumped together with other 'barbarians' in the estimation of court intellectuals.

According to Katharine Keats-Rohan's analysis, two principal groups of Bretons were established in England by William I. The first consisted of the sons of Eudo 'of Penthievre', nephews of Duke Alan III of Brittany and second cousins of William, and their associates. The 'honour of Richmond', covering a large stretch of Yorkshire and other scattered lands, was created for their leader Alan Rufus. With English property at their disposal, the members of this prolific junior branch of the Rennes dynasty were able to challenge or disregard the dukes of Brittany. The second group consisted of minor landowners from north-eastern Brittany. William's priorities were apparently to undermine the count of Rennes, his long-standing rival, and to consolidate his power on the Breton border. In the next generation, under King Henry I, more Bretons arrived in England: Henry, holding only the county of Cotentin while his brothers Robert and William II were respectively duke of Normandy and king of England, benefited from the support of Bretons and, once he became king in 1100, rewarded them with land in England as a counterbalance to the established, east Norman barons who had mostly supported Robert.<sup>5</sup>

Though the English interests of Breton landowners were destabilising to the unity of Brittany under its dukes, the dukes also benefited from dynastic relationships with the English crown. In 1087 Alan Fergant (1084–1112), the second duke of Brittany of the Cornouaille dynasty, married Constance, daughter of William I. Constance died in 1090, but relations between Alan and Henry I (1100–35) were mostly good (and Henry's relations with the Richmond dynasty, the dukes' rivals, correspondingly

<sup>4</sup> Gillingham, 'The Beginnings', 398.

<sup>5</sup> Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 64; *Domesday People*, 56–7.

lukewarm). Alan's heir Conan III married Henry's daughter Maud before 1113, and Alan's illegitimate son Brian Fitz Count (Brian of Wallingford) became a favourite of Henry and subsequently a leading supporter of Henry's daughter Matilda in her battle with her cousin Stephen of Blois for the English crown. At this point, for the first time, important men from western Brittany became involved in England: Brian Fitz Count's backing for Matilda was balanced by the entry into the fray on Stephen's side of Hervé of Léon, and his marriage to Stephen's daughter (although his English career ended ignominiously).<sup>6</sup> Of other Bretons established in England, Alan II of Richmond backed Stephen, while Matilda's supporters included the Baderons of Monmouth; Josce of Dinan, who held the castle of Ludlow in the 1140s, changed sides.<sup>7</sup> Welsh and Bretons played an important political role during the English civil war which was reflected in contemporary culture, especially the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

It was only after 1154, when Matilda's son Henry II (d. 1189) became king of England, bringing with him his paternal and marital inheritances of Anjou and Aquitaine, that Brittany found itself caught in a now much more effective Anglo-Continental vice, with Henry exploiting the English interests of the Richmond family (now united by marriage to the Breton ducal line) to gain power in Brittany. He obliged Duke Conan IV to abdicate in 1166 in favour of his only child Constance, who was to marry Henry's son Geoffrey. This precipitated repeated revolts, which continued intermittently until 1179. Even then, Henry's success was short-lived, since Brittany became the flashpoint of conflict between the Angevins and the rising power of the king of France. Arthur, the son of Geoffrey and Constance, rival to his uncle, King John, youngest son of Henry II, as heir to the English throne, died in John's custody, presumed murdered, in 1203, and this caused the Breton nobility to transfer their allegiance to King Philip Augustus of France.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, rather than Brittany re-establishing its ancient relationship with Britain independently during the great medieval acceleration of Europe's economy and culture, Bretons owed their presence there to a dynastic and military coup that bound Britain to France in a wider and more intense web of connections for a century and a half. Did the Norman Conquest breathe fresh life into Brittany's earlier, preferential links with western Britain and the Gaelic-speaking world, or did the new

<sup>6</sup> Crouch, *The Reign*, 117, 168; Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 54, note 74.

<sup>7</sup> Crouch, *The Reign*, 115–6, 158; Keats-Rohan, 'The Bretons and Normans', 71; M. Jones, *The Family of Dinan*, 20–1.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed account of these events see Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, together with Chedeville and Tonnerre, *La Bretagne féodale*, and Morin, *Trégor, Penthièvre, Goëlo*. For the Dol affair see Conklin, 'Les Capétiens'.



Brittany's 'feudal' and Francophone identity entail an entirely new and different relationship?<sup>9</sup>

Originating as they did in the mixed Franco-Breton society of north-eastern Brittany, it was not inevitable that the English Bretons would feel a particular affinity with the Welsh or Cornish, or even necessarily understand their languages. Even if they had done so, the parts of England where they settled were determined more by the availability of land and the political exigencies of the moment than by linguistic or cultural considerations. For instance, Alan Rufus, as a relative and trusted military backer of William I, was given Richmond to assist in quelling northern rebellion, and land in East Anglia as the spoils of Ralph the Staller's forfeiture. Other Bretons settled in the south-west and in the Welsh marches, not as Bretons seeking out Britons, but as followers of William's half-brother Robert of Mortain, and of Count Hugh of Avranches, earl of Chester, whom William had strategically placed in those regions.<sup>10</sup> However, scraps of evidence that Cornwall was briefly given as a lordship to Brien, the brother of Alan Rufus, until he returned permanently to Brittany in 1069 (and the fact that Alan Rufus's successor, Alan II of Richmond, was equally briefly made earl of Cornwall in 1140) may suggest that there was a pan-British dimension to the settlement of Bretons in Cornwall and the south-west.<sup>11</sup> And one particular Breton establishment on the Welsh border, Monmouth, became one of the main nodes of cultural exchange between Wales and Brittany and the centre for the elaboration of the mythology of Breton origins.

### **Britons and Bretons: Literary Contact in the Twelfth Century**

#### *Hagiography and Welsh-Breton Contact*

Wales produced no surviving hagiography between the mid-ninth century and the late eleventh.<sup>12</sup> In the century after 1066, however, the Church in South Wales responded to the invasion crisis with an outpouring of hagiography. Much of this was influenced by clearly identifiable Breton models, in contrast to the earlier apparent lack of Welsh interest in Breton saints. Apparently the settlement of Bretons in the Welsh borderlands

<sup>9</sup> For the term 'feudal' see Introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Keats-Rohan, 'Le rôle des Bretons', 185–6; Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, 54–5.

<sup>11</sup> For discussion of the evidence, see Golding, 'Robert of Mortain'; Keats-Rohan, 'Le rôle des Bretons', 185. For Alan II, see Crouch, *The Image*, 67.

<sup>12</sup> J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 384. However, for the possibility that more hagiographical texts existed, see Guy, 'The *Life*', 2–4.

after 1066 galvanised ecclesiastical relationships that had lapsed to some extent after the Viking Age.

Most of the surviving hagiography composed in late eleventh- and twelfth-century Wales is preserved in two manuscript-collections: the Book of Llandaf or *Liber Landavensis* (Aberystwyth National Library of Wales 17110), compiled between about 1120 and 1134 for (and partly by) Bishop Urban of Llandaf (1107–34); and BL Cotton Vespasian A. XIV, written in the last third of the twelfth century.<sup>13</sup> The Book of Llandaf is an assemblage of documents supporting the effort to create a territorial see of Llandaf in south-east Wales, by appropriating the property of several older churches.<sup>14</sup> Cotton Vespasian A. XIV, by contrast, is a miscellaneous collection containing some saints' Lives with connections to particular religious houses, and others with none. It was probably written at Monmouth, preliminary collecting having taken place at Gloucester Abbey, which owned several of the Welsh churches concerned.<sup>15</sup> The first and longest item in the manuscript, the Life of St Cadog by Lifris, extended by genealogies and charters, is from Llancarfan, Cadog's foundation, members of which also contributed to the Book of Llandaf. The manuscript also contains Lives of David and Padarn, written in the interests of the see of St David and the monastery of Llanbadarn Fawr in Ceredigion, both of which were dominated at the time by the learned family of Sulien. Rhygyfarch, son of Sulien, composed the Life of David, and the Life of Padarn has been attributed to his brother Ieuan.<sup>16</sup>

The visions of a sacred past put forward at post-Conquest Llandaf, St Davids and Llanbadarn were influenced by the see of Dol in Brittany, and by the Life of its patron saint Samson. This influence must be due in the first instance to the connections of Wihenoc, a Breton who was put in charge of Monmouth Castle by William I, perhaps as early as 1070–71.<sup>17</sup> Wihenoc belonged to a minor noble family in the orbit of the Dol-

<sup>13</sup> Guy, 'The Life', 6–8 and note 17.

<sup>14</sup> For its creation, see Huws, 'The Making of *Liber Landavensis*'; W. Davies, '*Liber Landavensis*'; Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf*, 9–10 and references. For Bishop Urban's claims see Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf*, 17–21. For the Book of Llandaf as a historical source, see also W. Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*; W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, 'A Possible Provenance', 4–7; Hughes, 'British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A. XIV', 54; Harris, 'The Kalendar'; Smith, *Walter Map*, 109–16.

<sup>16</sup> Howlett and Thomas, '*Vita Sancti Paterni*', 65–77. I here follow Sharpe, 'Which text . . .?', in crediting Rhygyfarch with the Life in the Cotton manuscript. For the dating of Rhygyfarch's Life, see J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 387–90; Guy, 'The Life', 2–3, note 7; J. Wyn Evans, 'St David'.

<sup>17</sup> Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People*, 54–5; Guillotel, 'Une famille bretonne'; Guillotel, 'Combours'.

Combours dynasty, which dominated the bishopric of Dol during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. The families' links may be traced through their association with the monastery of Saint-Florent de Saumur. Wihenoc founded a priory of Saint-Florent at Monmouth, and in 1081 became a monk at Saint-Florent itself, leaving Monmouth to his nephew, William fitz Baderon. Meanwhile, the Dol-Combours dynasty provided an abbot of Saint-Florent: William, abbot from 1070 to 1118.<sup>18</sup> William visited Monmouth in 1101–2 to receive a grant of land; such journeys would have provided opportunities for hagiographical exchange.<sup>19</sup> Monmouth Priory soon acquired several local churches with dedications to Welsh saints: Cadog, Custennin, Maughan and Tydwg. It also owned a church of the Breton saint Guingalois (Winwaloe): the orthography of the name, which is otherwise found only at the saint's cult-centres in the Loire valley, suggests that the cult was introduced by the incomers.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1070s and 1080s, the Dol-Combours dynasty in Brittany was engaged in a struggle to get one of its members recognised as archbishop of Dol. Abbot William's uncle Jungeneus had held the office, and his brothers Gilduin and John were proposed for it at various times.<sup>21</sup> Popes from the ninth century onwards had ruled that the bishops of Brittany owed allegiance to Tours as their metropolitan see, but King William I (mindful of the military support he had received from Rivallon of Dol, Abbot William's father) supported Dol's bid for independence. Crucial to the controversy was the status of Dol's founding saint, Samson, whose ninth-century Life claimed that he had been consecrated bishop in Wales and had become archbishop of Dol. In Wales Samson's cult had apparently been forgotten before the Norman Conquest, but thereafter the saint became a linchpin of the claims to ecclesiastical pre-eminence of the churches of St Davids and Llandaf.

St Davids, already one of the leading churches of Wales, did not immediately make use of the Samson precedent: Rhygyfarch's Life of David does not mention Samson or Brittany.<sup>22</sup> However, in 1125 × 1130, the St Davids chapter wrote to Pope Honorius II arguing that their see

<sup>18</sup> Beech, *Was the Bayeux Tapestry Made in France?*, 21–31.

<sup>19</sup> Round, *Calendar*, no. 1136, p. 408; Keats-Rohan, *Domesday Descendants*, 813.

<sup>20</sup> The foundation-charter of Monmouth is printed in Dugdale, *Monasticon*, IV.496. Further charters from the archives of Saint-Florent de Saumur are catalogued in Round, *Calendar*, nos. 1124–48. For the church of St Guingalois, see Round, *Calendar*, nos. 1126, 1129, 1134, 1148, pp. 403–4, 407, 412–3; Doble, *Saint Winwaloe*, 46–7. For the other churches, see J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 48, note 19. For the name-form *Guingalois*, see Charles, 'Saint Guingalois', 263, note 1.

<sup>21</sup> De Fougerolles, 'Pope Gregory VII'; Guillotel, 'Bretagne et papauté'.

<sup>22</sup> *WAB*, 591–2. For a summary of early evidence relating to St David's cult see J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 376–8.

ought to be recognised as an archbishopric, and would always have been if St Samson had not taken the pallium (the insignia of an archbishop) to Brittany when he founded the see of Dol.<sup>23</sup> The initiative may have come from Bernard, a royal chaplain of King Henry I and bishop of St Davids 1115–48, who understood the problem from two angles: until 1125 he had been working for the archbishop of Canterbury in support of Canterbury's primacy over York; when that claim failed in the court of Pope Honorius in 1127, he saw potential for the creation of a metropolitan see for the western British churches.<sup>24</sup> He had been acquainted with the Bretons at Monmouth since 1101–2 and was doubtless aware of Dol's claims.<sup>25</sup> The claim that Samson was archbishop before his departure for Brittany may have been a Breton idea taken up at St Davids: it appears in the ninth-century *Vita S. Maglorii* from Léhon, and was reproduced in a tract composed for Dol's benefit, probably before 1143.<sup>26</sup> At the end of the twelfth century, Gerald of Wales, engaged in a legal battle for the archbishopric of St Davids, quoted some lines of liturgical verse in use at Dol asserting that 'he [Samson] who had earlier been bishop of Menevia [St Davids], on crossing the sea transferred the pinnacle of dignity to Dol'.<sup>27</sup> The archiepiscopal claims of both Dol and St Davids eventually failed, but at a crucial juncture, the two sees encouraged one another.

Rather different use was made of the Dol controversy in the Life of Padarn. Llanbadarn Fawr was one of the most important religious communities of Wales and its eponymous saint, Padarn (Paternus in Latin), was reputed to be buried on the isle of Enlli.<sup>28</sup> However, his extant Life (composed before 1136, perhaps before 1081) states that Padarn was born in Brittany and returned there after a monastic career in Wales,

<sup>23</sup> Brooke, *The Church*, 21–2; Gerald of Wales, *De Invectionibus*, II.10, ed. W. S. Davies, 143–6; Conway Davies, *Episcopal Acta*, I.190–2; discussion in J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 110; J. Wyn Evans, 'Transition and Survival', 34–6. Barry Lewis argues against the authenticity of this letter, suggesting that it was authored by Gerald of Wales himself and based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's History: 'Religion and the Church', 407–9. See also Pryce, 'Gerald of Wales', 39–43.

<sup>24</sup> J. R. Davies, 'Cathedrals', 103.

<sup>25</sup> Round, *Calendar*, no. 1138, p. 408; J. Wyn Evans, 'St David', 17–18. J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 110, points out the similar treatment of the 'Lucius legend' of the conversion of Britain in the Book of Llandaf and in the St Davids letter. Dumville, 'Saint David of Wales', 69–70, suggests that Bernard was inspired by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>26</sup> *Vita S. Maglorii*, 1, ed. Van Hecke, 782; *De dignitate Dolensis ecclesiae*, 6, ed. Duine, 'La métropole de Bretagne', 27.

<sup>27</sup> *Praesul ante Meneuensis / dignitatis in Dolensis / transfertur fastigium*: Gerald of Wales, *De Invectionibus*, II.1, ed. W. S. Davies, 132.

<sup>28</sup> Doble, *Saint Patern*, 6–8; *LL*, 3. For Llanbadarn's importance, see J. Wyn Evans, 'The Survival'.

became bishop of Vannes, and came off best in a dispute with the clergy of St Samson of Dol over their claim to a *census*.<sup>29</sup> The Life of Padarn seems to have fused a Welsh saint (or saints) with the Gallo-Roman Paternus of Vannes, a recorded fifth-century bishop.<sup>30</sup> The likeliest explanation is that the Llanbadarn author had access to a lost Life of Paternus of Vannes composed in the late eleventh century, at a time when the church of Vannes was transferring its allegiance from the archbishopric of Dol to that of Tours.<sup>31</sup> He chose to depict his saint as a Breton – not merely in order to appeal to Breton settlers in Wales, but also to show Padarn's episcopate as equal to and independent from Llandaf and St Davids and their alleged archiepiscopal predecessor, Samson.<sup>32</sup> The author also took the opportunity to metaphorically 'colonise' Brittany from Wales, reversing the movement that was taking place in his lifetime and, for the first time in a Welsh text, claiming for Wales the founding role in Breton Christianity that it had long been given in Brittany.<sup>33</sup> The foundation of Vannes, in particular, is attributed to a British legendary king, Caradog Freichfras ('Strong-arm') (*Caradauc, cognomento Brechbras*) – the earliest mention of this character, who is associated with Arthur in later medieval Welsh tradition.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the twelfth century, the story of Caradog's foundation was accepted at Vannes, in a sermon composed there between 1198 and 1213.<sup>35</sup>

It is the churches of south-east Wales, however, whose post-Conquest access to Breton scholarship is most visible, in the literary production of the interconnected communities of Llandaf, Llancarfan and Monmouth. Members of the old-established community of canons at Llancarfan dominated the clerical following of the bishops of Morgannwg who were attempting to create a new kind of bishopric at Llandaf; they also had an entrée at Monmouth, which owned two churches of Cadog, Llancarfan's founding saint, and thus had an interest in promoting his

<sup>29</sup> *Vita S. Paterni*, VSB, 252–69; for the dating see Howlett, 'Vita Sancti Paterni', 76–7 and references; Russell, 'The Englyn', 11–14; Hughes, 'British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A.XIV', 58–9. Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 44, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 138–9, states that a written Life of Padarn was already extant.

<sup>30</sup> *Concilia Galliae A. 314–A. 506*, ed. Munier, 151. For the composite nature of Paternus (and Samson) in this Life, see Jankulak, 'Present and yet Absent', 169.

<sup>31</sup> Duine, 'La métropole de Bretagne, chapitre II', 33–5, 56–9; Doble, *Saint Patern*, 26–7; Lot, 'Caradoc et Saint Patern'; Bourges, 'Production hagiographique' (accessed 23 March 2016); La Borderie, *Saint Patern*, 16–19.

<sup>32</sup> Howlett and Thomas, 'Vita Sancti Paterni', 76; Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David*, 53, ed. Sharpe and Davies, 147; *Vita S. Paterni*, 20, 30, VSB, 261, 267.

<sup>33</sup> *Vita S. Paterni*, 4, VSB, 255. <sup>34</sup> *Vita S. Paterni*, 22, VSB, 260–1; WCD, 115–6.

<sup>35</sup> Lot, 'Caradoc', 568–9; Bourges, 'La Bretagne et les Mérovingiens' (accessed 29 April 2016). For late medieval and early modern witnesses to the Life of Padarn in Brittany (Paris BnF Lat. 1148, s.xv, and the printed Breviary of Saint-Malo of 1537) see La Borderie, *Saint Patern*, 1–2.

cult.<sup>36</sup> The Book of Llandaf contains an abridged version of the First Life of Samson as well as Lives of three saints – Dyfrig (Dubricius), Teilo and Euddogwy (Oudoceus) – whom the authors claimed as the first three bishops of Llandaf. (Teilo's cult had been appropriated from an older establishment, Llandeilo Fawr.<sup>37</sup>) Breton influence is everywhere visible. The Llandaf Life of Dyfrig was interpolated with an episode from the Life of Samson.<sup>38</sup> The Life of Teilo asserted that Teilo, travelling from Llandaf to Brittany to escape plague (a motif already used by the St Davids clergy), had accepted the archbishopric of Dol before being recalled to Britain – a rebuttal of St Davids's claim to Samson's pallium.<sup>39</sup> The episode is partly drawn from another piece of Dol hagiography, the Life of Turiaw, Samson's second successor as (arch)bishop of Dol.<sup>40</sup> The theme of Llandaf and Dol as 'twin' sees recurs in a charter attributed to the time of Bishops Euddogwy and Berthwyn, which mentions a penitent sent on pilgrimage to Dol on account of the friendship between Teilo and Samson, who were 'of the same language and nation'.<sup>41</sup> The hope of capturing the good will of the Monmouth Bretons is revealed in a passage where Teilo blesses the warriors [*milites*] of Brittany with 'prowess on horseback' – suggesting the impression made in Wales by the return of the long-departed Armorican Britons as fully fledged French knights.<sup>42</sup> The same view of the Armoricans, as *equites* (knights) by definition, is found in the genealogies attached to Lifris's Life of Cadog, in a revealing variation from *Historia Brittonum*.<sup>43</sup>

The link with Cadog brings us to the contribution made to the Book of Llandaf by the clergy of Llancarfan, who brought other (possibly long-standing) Breton contacts.<sup>44</sup> Llancarfan and its lands were seized and granted to Gloucester Abbey by Robert fitz Hamon, the Norman conqueror of Morgannwg, between about 1095 and 1100, but Llancarfan clerics remained active *littérateurs*. Lifris, named as *magister sancti Catoci* in a charter of 1075, was the author – probably between 1081 and 1104 – of the Life of Cadog, a text that has been discussed in earlier chapters as

<sup>36</sup> J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 48, 105–8; Guy, 'Explaining the Origins'.

<sup>37</sup> J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 365–9; Strange, 'The Rise and Fall'.

<sup>38</sup> Guy, 'The Life', 12–16. <sup>39</sup> *LL*, 97–117.

<sup>40</sup> *Vita S. Turiavi*, ed. Duine, 'Vie antique'; see DUBALA, 94–6; Marquand, 'Le milieu politique'; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 65; Jankulak, 'Present and yet Absent', 167–8.

<sup>41</sup> ... *ipse Guidnerth et brittones et archiepiscopus illius terrae essent unius linguae et unius nationis* ... *LL*, 180–1. The charter and its counterpart attached to Lifris's Life of St Cadog are discussed in W. Davies, *The Llandaf Charters*, 110; *WAB*, 258–61.

<sup>42</sup> *LL*, 113; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 19–20.

<sup>43</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 45, *VSAB*, 116–19.

<sup>44</sup> For the Llancarfan community's connection with Llandaf, see J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 105–8; *MWG*, 92.

a comparandum for Breton hagiography.<sup>45</sup> Among other episodes in the Life, in locations ranging from Scotland to Benevento, Cadog is credited with building a church in Brittany, on the island called *Inis Catbodu* (Île Cado, Belz, near Lorient), and restoring its collapsed bridge.<sup>46</sup> Whether or not the original saint of Île Cado was the Welsh Cadog, Lifris thought that he was and had visited Brittany to investigate him. As Bernard Tanguy showed, it was almost certainly at Quimperlé abbey – which acquired Île Cado in 1089 – that Lifris obtained his information.<sup>47</sup>

Contact with Cornouaille is seen more generally throughout the Book of Llandaf as it took shape during the following generation. In its arrangement of hagiography and charters the Book strongly resembles the cartularies of Landévennec and Quimperlé.<sup>48</sup> Its Lives of Teilo and Euddogwy both introduce Budic, a king of *Cornugallia* in Armorica, exiled in Wales. After his triumphant return to Armorica, henceforth called *Cerniu Budic*, he extends his rule ‘as far as the Alps’ (a reminiscence of *Historia Brittonum* or a prefiguring of Geoffrey’s King Arthur?).<sup>49</sup> The story must be related to the note about the exile of Budic in the comital list in the cartularies of Landévennec and Quimperlé, perhaps based ultimately on the histories of Gregory of Tours.<sup>50</sup> The Llandaf compilers were aware of – and were perhaps contributing to – the origin-tales of the Cornouaille dynasty, a tradition that may or may not have been known in Wales before the Norman Conquest. Another possible example of Cornouaille influence is found in the Life of Elgar the Hermit that was added at the beginning of the Book of Llandaf, probably in Bishop Urban’s own hand.<sup>51</sup> Elgar was the most recent saint in the Llandaf pantheon, an Englishman (Ælfgar) from Devonshire who spent the last years of his life as a hermit on Enlli (Bardsey Island) at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>52</sup> (His story of piracy and penitence recalls the hermit Gulstan – likewise English? – in the Rhuy’s Life of Gildas.<sup>53</sup>) In Elgar’s case, his teeth were translated to Llandaf as relics in 1120 (together with the relics of St Dyfrig); the translation report includes a description of Enlli as the resting-place of many saints, where the members of the hermit community died in strict order of age: no brother could die as long as any senior to him was still living.<sup>54</sup> This closely parallels a passage in

<sup>45</sup> *LL*, 271. For *Vita S. Cadoci* see W. Davies, ‘Property Rights’, 518–29 and note 16; the dating given here is that suggested by Brooke, *The Church*, 73 and 89.

<sup>46</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 35, *VSB*, 96–9. <sup>47</sup> Tanguy, ‘De la vie’; *MWG*, 89.

<sup>48</sup> Brett, ‘Hagiography as Charter?’, forthcoming. <sup>49</sup> *LL*, 130–1.

<sup>50</sup> Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 210; *DUBALA*, 96–8; and see [Chapters 2 and 5](#).

<sup>51</sup> *LL*, 1–5; *Vita S. Elgari*, ed. and transl. Jankulak and Wooding, ‘The Life’; see J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 124–8; J. R. Davies, ‘*Liber Landavensis*’, 11.

<sup>52</sup> For discussion of the Life and its background, see Jankulak and Wooding, ‘The Life’.

<sup>53</sup> *Vita Gildae*, 45, transl. Williams, 76–9. <sup>54</sup> *LL*, 5, 84; Guy, ‘The Life’, 12.



Wrdisten's Life of Winwaloe, and may suggest that this Life had recently become available, perhaps at Monmouth Priory, which possessed a church of St 'Guingalois'.<sup>55</sup> The role played by Enlli as a home of saints and storehouse of relics is similar to that of the Île de Groix in the Cartulary of Quimperlé. If these similarities could, as Bernard Merdrignac suggests, be due to the long-standing passage of oral traditions between Britain and Brittany, they could equally well be due to textual or personal transfers of information between the leading monasteries of Cornouaille and Wales during the literary ferment of the early twelfth century.

Such a contact at the earliest traceable point in the history of Enlli as a pilgrimage centre might also help to account for the passage in the *Bonedd y Saint* (ByS) genealogical tract where Enlli is made the home of a group of saints from *Llydaw*, Brittany, led by Cadfan, the central figure of a cousinhood which also included Paternus.<sup>56</sup> The Life of Paternus had already asserted that Cadfan was a cousin (*consobrinus*) of Paternus and a leader of the group of Bretons with whom he came to Wales.<sup>57</sup> In ByS, Cadfan is presented as the son of Gwen Teir Bronn, whose name translates as *Alba Trimammis*, the mother of Winwaloe, Wethinoc and Jacob in *Vita S. Winwaloei*. The presence near Llandaf of a living Wethinoc (Wihenoc), the founder of Monmouth castle and priory, may have encouraged the association. Cadfan's Breton descent as well as his Enlli connection was sufficiently accepted to be included in a poem composed in his praise by the Gwynedd court poet Llywelyn Fardd (*fl.* ca 1150–75).<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the influence of the Llandaf/Llancarfan school of hagiography spread widely in Wales. One of its practitioners, Caradog of Llancarfan, even extended his career to England. Caradog, priest and brother (*germanus*) of Bishop Urban of Llandaf, who accompanied Urban on his journey to Rome in 1134, is one candidate for authorship of the Book of Llandaf.<sup>59</sup> He is probably to be identified with the Caradog mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth as 'my contemporary' at the end of *HRB* (1136–8) but is otherwise known only by his writings.<sup>60</sup> Two saints'

<sup>55</sup> Wrdisten, *Vita S. Winwaloei*, II.26, ed. De Smedt, 241–5; Merdrignac, 'Folklore and Hagiography', 75.

<sup>56</sup> ByS, 19–25, EWGT, 57–8. For the origin of the name *Llydaw*, see Koch, 'Ériu', 21; Koch, 'New Thoughts', 17–19; Koch, *Celtic Culture*, s.v. Litavis; [www.dil.ie/30037](http://www.dil.ie/30037) (*Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. *Letha*) (accessed 28 June 2018).

<sup>57</sup> *Vita S. Paterni*, 4, VSB, 254–5; WCD, 405.

<sup>58</sup> Jones and Owen, 'Twelfth-Century Welsh Hagiography', 47.

<sup>59</sup> Brooke, *The Church*, 39, note 93; 40, note 96; 40–44; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 105.

<sup>60</sup> *HRB*, XI.208, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 280–1.

Lives carry manuscript attributions to him: a Life of Cadog (a shortened and toned-down version of Lifris's Life) and a Life of Gildas, written for the monks of Glastonbury.<sup>61</sup> On stylistic grounds, Lives of Cyngar (written for Wells and partially extant in a twelfth-century manuscript), and Illtud, Gwynllyw and Tatheus (all in Cotton Vespasian A.XIV), have also been attributed to him.<sup>62</sup> If all these attributions are correct, many of the repeated tropes of Welsh hagiography, rather than representing a lasting and widespread tradition, should perhaps be regarded as representing the taste of a single centre, and a small group of authors.

Caradog's attitude to Brittany and Breton source-material was flexible and perhaps conditioned by the preferences of those who commissioned his Lives.<sup>63</sup> It is not clear whether he had access to the Rhuys Life of Gildas; his own Life of Gildas has very little material in common with the Rhuys Life, instead using Welsh hagiographical anecdotes and concentrating on Glastonbury interests, yet his Life of Illtud contains two episodes (shared with Wrmonoc's *Vita Pauli Aureliani*), versions of which also appear in the Rhuys Life of Gildas.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, in his Life of Illtud he claimed that Illtud was born in Brittany and returned to die at Dol, although the Life of Samson, known and used at Llandaf, placed Illtud's entire career in Wales. Caradog's emphasis on Brittany and treatment of King Arthur in this Life suggests the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth.<sup>65</sup> Geoffrey, in turn, though he may have parodied the aspirations of the clergy of Llandaf in his 'historical' treatment of the early British Church, drew on the same sources as Caradog and used them in similar ways: the two men were in a very real sense colleagues as well as 'contemporaries'.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Caradog, *Vita S. Cadoci*, in Gotha Forschungsbibliothek, Mm.I.81, ed. Grosjean, 'Vie de saint Cadoc', 67; Caradog, *Vita Gildae*, in Corpus Christi College Cambridge 139 and others, transl. Williams, 'Vita Gildae'. For Glastonbury's promotion of Celtic saints see Lapidge, 'The Cult'; Padel, 'Glastonbury's Cornish Connections'.

<sup>62</sup> The Life of St Cyngar is edited in Robinson, 'A Fragment', and Caradog's authorship demonstrated in Robinson, 'The Lives', 15–18. For Caradog's probable authorship of the Lives of Tatheus and Gwynllyw (*Vita S. Tathei* and *Vita S. Gundlei*) see Brooke, *The Church*, 40–3; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 108, 133–6.

<sup>63</sup> Jankulak and Wooding, 'The British Cult', 32–9. For the development of Glastonbury's origin legend and relic holdings in the twelfth century see Gransden, 'The Growth'.

<sup>64</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, 4–5, ed. Cuissard, 422–5; Vitalis, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani*, I.6–7, ed. Henschen and Papebroch, 'De sancto Paulo', 112; *Vita Gildae*, 5, transl. Williams, 22–3. The 'birds' miracle is also found in the Book of Llandaf version of the Life of Samson: *LL*, 7. For discussion see Doble, *Lives of the Welsh Saints*, 93–100; J. R. Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 128–31, 194. Brooke, *The Church*, 81–2, suggests that 'Caradog had access to hagiological legends which are also represented in the Breton Life of Gildas'.

<sup>65</sup> Tatlock, 'The Dates', 355–6; Padel, 'Geoffrey', 1–3. For Arthur's role in hagiography, see Loomis, 'King Arthur'; Breeze, 'Arthur'; Rider, 'Arthur'.

<sup>66</sup> Brooke, *The Church*, 16–44; *MWG*, 90–2, 98–9.

If traditions of Landévennec and Quimperlé found their way into Welsh hagiography, so too was lore from Wales borrowed in Cornouaille. Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé was a Benedictine monastery founded by Count Alan Canhiart of Cornouaille between 1046 and 1050.<sup>67</sup> Its cartulary – created by a certain Gurheden between about 1120 and 1133, just as the Book of Llandaf was being assembled – contains the Lives of two ‘British’ saints, Gurthiern and Ninnoc.<sup>68</sup> Gurthiern was presented as the founder of an early monastery on the site of Quimperlé.<sup>69</sup> Both Lives are notable for their use of elements of medieval Welsh tradition, as is the Rhuys Life of Gildas; in their exuberant inventiveness, they are similar to Llandaf/Llancarfan productions.

Gurthiern’s Life begins with a genealogy giving the saint’s ancestry on his father’s and his mother’s side, which, although it has often been discussed, is worth quoting in full.

Gurthiern son of Bonus son of Gleu son of Abros son of Dos son of Jacob son of Genethauc son of Judgual son of Beli son of Outham the Old son of Maximianus son of Constantius son of Constantinus son of Helena who is said to have possessed the cross of Christ. This is the genealogy of Gurthiern on his mother’s side: Gurthiern son of Dinoi, daughter of King Lidingin who held the principate of all Greater Britain. Beli and Kenan were two brothers, sons of Outham the Old. This same Kenan held rulership when the Britons set out for Rome, and as a result they held *Leticia* [Letavia?], etc. Beli was the son of Anna whom they say was the cousin of Mary the mother of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

The relationship of Gurthiern (beginning with his name) to the literary character of Vortigern in *Historia Brittonum* is evident, if baffling.<sup>71</sup> The paternal genealogy contains three names (*Bonus*, *Gleu* and *A[m]bro*s) found in Vortigern’s pedigree in *Historia Brittonum*. Its upper reaches, meanwhile, (*Outham senis filii Maximiani filii Constantii filii Constantini filii Helene*) are related to the genealogies of Cadog in their successive versions, closely associated with Llancarfan and probably the work of the

<sup>67</sup> Henry, Quaghebeur and Tanguy, *Cartulaire*, 60–2.

<sup>68</sup> For the date, see Henry, Quaghebeur and Tanguy, *Cartulaire*, 28–9; MWG, 86 and references.

<sup>69</sup> Jankulak, ‘Breton *Vitae*’, 233–5. For the toponymy of Gurthiern’s cult see Debary, ‘Saint Gurthiern’.

<sup>70</sup> CQ, fol. 4v, p. 42: *Gurthiern filii Boni filii Glou filii Abros filii Dos filii Jacob filii Genethauc filii Judgual filii Beli filii Outham Senis filii Maximiani filii Constantii filii Constantini filii Helene qui crucem Christi habuisse refertur. Haec est genealogia Gurthierni ex parte matris suae: ergo Gurthiern filius Dinoi filiae Lidingin regis qui tenuit principatum totius Britanniae Maioris. Beli et Kenan duo fratres erant, filii Outham Senis. Ipse Kenan tenuit principatum quando perrexerunt Britones ad Romam. Illic tenuerunt Laeticiam et reliq . . . Beli filius Anne quam dicunt esse consobrinam Mariae genetricis Christi.*

<sup>71</sup> Chadwick, ‘A Note’; Fleuriot, *Les origines*, 278–9.

hagiographer Caradog.<sup>72</sup> In Gurthiern's maternal pedigree, the statement that 'Beli was the son of Anna ...' is a direct quotation from the base-text of the 'Harleian' Genealogies, also available at Llancarfan in the early twelfth century.<sup>73</sup> The names *Genethauc* and *Kenan* in the Gurthiern genealogy are given in Welsh rather than Breton spelling, and the author introduces it with the statement: 'This is the genealogy of Saint Gurthiern, of noble birth ... which a certain faithful layman, by name Iuthael son of Aidan, has revealed, not for an earthly but for a heavenly reward.'<sup>74</sup> 'Iuthael son of Aidan' may have been Welsh (a known priest of Llancarfan called Aeddan could be his father); but there were also Iuthaels among the local patrons of Quimperlé.<sup>75</sup> Conceivably there was a long-standing relationship between clerical families of this area and south Wales. In any case it seems that some Breton material, as well as Welsh, has been folded into the Gurthiern genealogy. Judgual may have found his way in from the 'Riwal genealogy' of Domnonia. The names of son and father Jacob and Genethauc are equivalent to the names of the two brothers of St Winwaloe, Jacob and Wethinoc. The same two names (as *Iago map Guenedauc*) are found interpolated into the pedigree of Cunedda, the ancestral figure of the kingdom of Gwynedd, in the Jesus College 20 collection of Welsh genealogies and other late medieval genealogical collections. Conceivably this may be an example of reverse borrowing of Breton information into Welsh genealogical lore.<sup>76</sup>

Gurthiern's mother is given as *Dinoi filia Lidinin regis*, who may be identified with Teneu, daughter of Leudonus, the mother of St Kentigern of Glasgow according to his anonymous Fragmentary Life (1147 × 1164).<sup>77</sup> The narrative of the Life of Gurthiern, as well as the genealogy, has associations with north Britain and with Kentigern.<sup>78</sup> Gurthiern's retreat to the wilderness 'in the northern part of Britain' (*in septentrionali parte Britanniae*) to do penance after he has inadvertently killed his

<sup>72</sup> Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 169, 174; *MWG*, 81–90, 98–9. The textual arguments, fully rehearsed by Ben Guy in 'Constantine', 390–4, are complex. Inasmuch as the Gurthiern genealogy includes the sequence Maximinian-Constantius-Constantine-Helena, it corresponds to the version of St Cadog's genealogy appended to Lifris's Life of Cadog in Cotton Vespasian A.XIV. Inasmuch as it includes Outham (Eudaf) and Kenan, it corresponds to the version in the Jesus College 20 collection, no. 4, *EWGT*, 44, ed. Guy, 'Jesus College 20, 340.

<sup>73</sup> *MWG*, 87–8.

<sup>74</sup> *CQ*, fol. 4v, p. 42: *Haec est genealogia sancti Gurthierni nobilis genere incliti officio quam quidam laicus fidelis nomine Iuthael filius Aidan demonstravit non pro terreno munere sed pro celesti.*

<sup>75</sup> *LL*, 268, 271–3; Guy, 'Explaining the Origins'; Guy, 'Medieval Welsh Genealogy', I.33–5; *MWG*, 89–90; Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 173–5; *CQ*, 25, 102, 107, pp. 160, 257, 262.

<sup>76</sup> *MWG*, 234–5 and note 8; 'Jesus 20 Genealogies', section 6, *MWG*, 341.

<sup>77</sup> *Vita S. Kentegerni imperfecta*, 1–2, ed. and transl. Forbes, 125–7, 245–7.

<sup>78</sup> *ByS* 14, 18, *EWGT*, 56–7.

nephew in battle is similar to the stories told of Lailoken in the Latin fragments about him found alongside the ‘Fragmentary Life’ of St Kentigern, and of Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Vita Merlini*.<sup>79</sup> The author of *Vita Gurthierni* may have had direct contact with the promoters of Kentigern’s cult, but it seems more likely that the immediate source of this material, too, was Llancarfan. There is reciprocal evidence for contact with Llancarfan in the later Life of Kentigern by Jocelin of Furness (1174 × 1199): the author describes Kentigern founding a monastery at *Nautcharvan* on a visit to Wales, and includes several miracles with clear parallels in Lifris’s *Vita Cadoci*.<sup>80</sup> (Interestingly, these miracles also have parallels, although less close, with the Anonymous Lives of Machutus, reminding us that the ninth-century biographers of Machutus of Saint-Malo, too, had had links with Llancarfan. Various appearances of the cult of Machutus in medieval Wales and northern Britain may be due to this chain of contacts.<sup>81</sup>) The name Leudonus reappears in the guise of ‘Loth of Lodonesia’ in *HRB*, and as ‘Duke Laudunet’ in the romance *Yvain* by Chrétien de Troyes (composed 1177 × 1181): Llancarfan and the interests of Geoffrey of Monmouth were at the centre of a web that, in this case, drew northern British traditions into the mainstream of romance, and a prominent thread in the web led from Llancarfan to Quimperlé.<sup>82</sup>

It is remarkable that royal ancestry associated with Powys and northern Britain was chosen for the founding saint of Quimperlé, in what must have been a conscious departure from the ancestry of other Breton saints whose *Vitae* survive; place-names may hint at a pre-existing connection between this part of Cornouaille and Powys.<sup>83</sup> The most famous aspect of the Gurthiern genealogy, however, is that it contains the first direct and datable statement that Brittany was founded by *Kenan* (Cynan), son of Outham. This comes very close to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account,

<sup>79</sup> Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin*, 3–4; Padel, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth’, 54–7.

<sup>80</sup> Jocelin of Furness, *Vita S. Kentegerni*, 23–25, ed. and transl. Forbes, 73–81 and 199–208. For discussion see J. R. Davies, ‘Bishop Kentigern’, 83–7 (who traces the shared material to the activity of Geoffrey of Monmouth as bishop of St Asaph 1151–5); Birkett, *The Saints’ Lives*, 98–100. The miracles are the indication of the monastery site by a white boar, the blinding and recovery of King Maelgwn, and a saint (Asaph) carrying burning coals unharmed. There is also sixteenth-century evidence for a cult of St Cadog at Cambuslang, Lanarkshire: Innes and Brichan, *Origines*, I.61; ‘Saints in Scottish Place-Names’, <https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/saint.php?id=34> (accessed 6 September 2019).

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, ‘St Mechyll of Anglesey’; see [Chapters 3](#) and [5](#).

<sup>82</sup> *HRB*, VIII.139, IX.152, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 188–9, 204–5; Chrétien de Troyes, *Le chevalier au lion ou le roman d’Yvain*, l. 2155, ed. Hult, 182–3. (The reading *Laudunet* is specific to the manuscript BAV Vat. Reg. Lat. 1725; other manuscripts give *Landudet*, *Landudez*, *Landonez*, *Landunet*.) See also Macqueen, ‘Yvain’.

<sup>83</sup> Plourin, ‘Questions d’onomastique’, 195–6.

published just a few years later, of the origin of Brittany in an expedition by 'Conanus Meriadocus, son of Octavius'. In medieval Wales, Cynan was a frequently used royal name in all parts of the country, but from at least the tenth century onwards it had an added symbolic weight. In several early prophetic poems, notably in *Armes Prydein*, probably composed in the 930s or 940s, a pair of characters, Cynan and Cadwaladr, occur as messianic figures whose return from the past heralds the reunification of Britain under British rule.<sup>84</sup> Cadwaladr probably stands for the seventh-century king of Gwynedd of that name.<sup>85</sup> Cynan is harder to place but may represent the Britons of Armorica, although it is not until the twelfth century, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*, that he is explicitly given that role.<sup>86</sup> The name Conan was in regular use among the Breton elite from the ninth century at least, was given to the son of Erispoe who was sponsored in baptism by Charles the Bald in 851, and was adopted by the comital house of Rennes in the later tenth century.<sup>87</sup> To what extent earlier Welsh and Breton tradition, respectively, contributed to the eventual choice of Conan Meriadoc as Geoffrey's Breton founder is unclear: but the Llancarfan–Cornouaille link that is evident in the composition of the Cartulary of Quimperlé certainly provided the seedbed for Geoffrey's work.

The other saint's Life in the Cartulary of Quimperlé is Ninnoc's. It interrupts the sequence of charters, and there seems no obvious reason for its inclusion, given that none of the charters refers to Ninnoc, to her relics or to lands granted to her.<sup>88</sup> Conceivably one motive was to popularise women's monasticism – freshly introduced to Brittany in the eleventh century in the context of Gregorian reform – by associating it with the time-honoured British past of the Breton Church.<sup>89</sup> The Life is understudied compared to other Breton *Vitae*. It has been suggested that it was composed earlier than the compilation of the cartulary, but it seems likely

<sup>84</sup> *Armes Prydein*, ll. 89–91, 163–70, 182–4, ed. and transl. Williams and Bromwich, 8–9, 12–13, 14–15, 44, 69; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 441–3, 468–71; Haycock (ed.), *Prophecies*, I.15, II.19–20, VII.29, VIII.9, X.5 (29, 46, 127, 154, 187); see discussion on pp. 10–11. For the dating, see [Chapter 5](#). For the political context, see also *WAB*, 519–35; German, 'L'Armes Prydein Vawr'.

<sup>85</sup> Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 441.

<sup>86</sup> *VM*, ll. 959–75, ed. and transl. Clarke, 102–5; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 441–3, 468–70. For the medieval Welsh prophetic tradition relating to the two heroes, see also Dumville, 'Brittany', 153–6; Henken, *National Redeemer*, 28–41.

<sup>87</sup> W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 177–8; *CR*, 2, 32, 78, 85, 103, 138, 165, pp. 2, 26, 61, 65, 78, 105, 128; Letaldus, *Miracula*, 27, ed. Mabillon, 605; Smith, *Province and Empire*, 110–11; Pettiau, 'A Prosopography', 175.

<sup>88</sup> Jankulak, 'Breton *Vitae*', 230, notes 62–3: Jankulak calls attention to a nineteenth-century history of Quimperlé which claims that a church named after Ninnoc, *Lann Ninnoc*, was a possession of the abbey.

<sup>89</sup> Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 213–20, 327–9, discusses the first convents in Cornouaille.



that in its present form (it claims, like most extant Breton *Vitae*, to be a recasting of an older *libellus*) it was part of the same initiative, and a product of the same process of collaboration between the ‘Llancarfan school’ and Cornouaille.<sup>90</sup> Like the Life of Gurthiern, it contains fresh Insular material. Ninnoc is said to have been the daughter of King ‘Brochanus’ in *Combronensi regione*, and of Meneduc, ‘of the people of the Scots, the daughter of King Constantine, of the line of Julius Caesar’, and to have had fourteen older brothers who also entered monastic life.<sup>91</sup> All these statements can be connected with post-Norman South Wales. Early medieval Welsh-Latin and Breton-Latin texts normally refer to Wales as *Britannia: Cambria*, a Latinisation of the Welsh *Cymru*, seems to have been coined by Geoffrey of Monmouth and taken up mainly by Gerald of Wales. *Combronensis* for ‘Welsh’ looks like an early effort to Latinise the vernacular term, and may betray another link with Geoffrey’s milieu (unless Strathclyde, called *Cumbria* or *Cambria* in Latin, Old English and Norse texts from the tenth century onwards, was meant).<sup>92</sup> The notion that the Roman emperors from Constantine back to Julius Caesar formed a single patriline is found in the ‘Run map Neithon’ pedigree of the Harleian genealogies, used in the construction of the Cadog genealogies.<sup>93</sup> Ninnoc’s father, Brychan, the eponymous foundering of the central Welsh kingdom Brycheiniog, is otherwise known (as *Brachanus*) from Lifris’s Life of Cadog, and from the genealogical tract *De Situ Brecheniauc*.<sup>94</sup> The Life of Ninnoc, however, is the earliest datable text to present him in what became his traditional role as father of saints. Probably the Brychan material in the Life of Ninnoc, like its other Welsh material, was obtained via Llancarfan.<sup>95</sup>

It was, however, freely treated by the author or editor of the Life. *Brachanus* was given an undefined family link with Gurthiern – *ex genere Gurthierni* – which suggests that Ninnoc’s Life was at least minimally edited, if not composed, to form a diptych with that of Gurthiern. There are also signs of Gaelic or Scottish elements in the text. The idea that King Constantine was Ninnoc’s ancestor, a Roman emperor and also a king of the Scots, is reminiscent not only of Welsh genealogy but also of

<sup>90</sup> *Vita S. Ninnocae*, CQ, fol.106v, p. 55.

<sup>91</sup> ... *ex genere Scotorum, filiam Constantini regis, ex stirpe Juliani Caesaris, Meneduc nomine: Vita S. Ninnocae*, CQ, fol.106v, p. 55.

<sup>92</sup> Pryce, ‘British or Welsh?’, 797–9; Edmonds, ‘The Emergence’.

<sup>93</sup> Harleian Genealogies, 16; EWGT, 11; Guy, ‘Constantine’, 390–1.

<sup>94</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, prologue and chapter 1, VSB, 24–9. The Brychan material may have reached the compilers of Vespasian A.XIV directly from Brecon or via Gloucester, as Joshua Byron Smith has suggested: Smith, *Walter Map*, 128. See MWG, 131–6; Sims-Williams, ‘The Provenance’, 58.

<sup>95</sup> MWG, 98–9.



the cult of a royal Constantine at Govan and at Rahan, Ireland, (mis) identified as one of the various kings of Pictland and Alba (Scotland) named Constantine.<sup>96</sup> As in the case of *Vita Gurthierni*, there is a possible connection with the cult of St Kentigern, given that Jocelin's Life of that saint introduces the royal saint Constantine.<sup>97</sup> The Gaelic theme is sustained by the reference to Ninnoc's baptism by Columcille and by St Patrick's support of her vocation. Thus, Ninnoc's background, eclectic as it is, attaches her Life to similar sources of information as were used in the Rhuys Life of Gildas. However, these elements were almost wilfully scrambled. Germanus and Columcille are made contemporaries, and a synod held at Plomeur to endow Ninnoc's monastery is dated to the year 458, although it is attended by Counts Waroch of Vannes, Juthael of Rennes and Budic of Cornouaille (figures of the sixth century) and by 'Archbishop' Turiau (probably an eighth-century bishop of Dol). Peter Bartrum dismissed the Life of Ninnoc as 'very fictitious', 'fabulous' and 'anachronistic'; but its comparatively early date makes it an important witness to the development of the Welsh historical tradition.<sup>98</sup>

Incidentally, the Life of Ninnoc also presents a neat but (again) anachronistic tripartite political division of Brittany in the Age of the Saints, representing Vannes, Rennes (in place of Domnonia) and Cornouaille by their recognised early dynasts. So little attention has been paid to this Life as a source that Bernard Merdrignac could speculate that the episode in the (twelfth or thirteenth-century) *Vita S. Ronani*, in which the same three counts dispute possession of Ronan's relics, was based on a historic moment at the end of the ninth century, without taking into account the probability that it was derived from *Vita S. Ninnocae*, a text produced at the monastery that possessed Ronan's principal church.<sup>99</sup>

Thus, the hagiography produced in Wales and Brittany in the century after the Norman Conquest shows a perhaps unprecedented level of interpenetration. One further example must be discussed, again involving the Dol-Combour family from north-eastern Brittany. Their dominance of Dol and links with Monmouth have already been mentioned. They were also promoters of the cult of Judicael, whose genealogy culminates in a patriarch who was father of a large number of saints. In this general format it resembles the 'Brychan tracts' from twelfth-century Wales. There is also a list of Brychan's children in a Life of Nectan, the patron of Hartland Abbey, preserved in the fourteenth-century manuscript

<sup>96</sup> Woolf, *Where was Govan?*; Dumville, 'A Mis-Identified Monastic Ditch-Digger'; and see Chapter 5.

<sup>97</sup> Jocelin of Furness, *Vita S. Kentegerni*, 33, ed. and transl. Forbes, 95 and 219.

<sup>98</sup> WCD, 75, 575–6.

<sup>99</sup> Merdrignac, 'La perception de l'Irlande', 145; Guillotel, 'Sainte-Croix'.

Gotha Forschungsbibliothek Mm.I.81: in this version, Brychan's children are local saints of north Cornwall and Devon.<sup>100</sup> The tenurial interests of the Dol-Combour family provide a link between the centres that produced or preserved the Judicael genealogy and the two lists of Brychan's offspring. Judicael's relics rested at Saint-Florent de Saumur before some of them were presented by Abbot William of Saint-Florent to the priory of Dinan, founded by his nephew Geoffrey in about 1070.<sup>101</sup> At about the same time, Abbot William and his family and associates founded Monmouth Priory, where the *De Situ Brecheniauc* tract was eventually preserved in its earliest surviving manuscript.<sup>102</sup> Geoffrey of Dinan obtained land in England in the early twelfth century, including the manor of Hartland, where Nectan was revered and his Life written in the later twelfth century, with its alternative list of Brychan's children.<sup>103</sup> The transmission of the legend of Brychan from Wales to Devon was probably due to the family connection between the patrons of Monmouth and Hartland. The position of the Judicael genealogy is less easy to assess. Although apparently earlier in date than the Brychan texts, it seems more like an outlier than the original inspiration for a type of hagiographical legend. (It does have one name in common with the Brychan lists: Praust, the name of Brychan's first wife according to *De Situ Brecheniauc*, is also, as *Prust*, the name of one of Judicael's sisters. Conversely, a gloss in *De Situ Brecheniauc* identifies Brychan's son Rhydoch as the Breton saint 'Judoc' and the text-hand places him *in Francia*.<sup>104</sup>) It is possible that the Judicael genealogy in its surviving form, after all, postdates the Norman Conquest and reflects Dinan contact with Wales via Monmouth. On the other hand, if it really is as early as *ca* 1000, as proposed in Chapter 5, perhaps such contact, and thus the origins of Welsh saintly genealogy, must be pushed chronologically further back.

The Monmouth-Hartland-Dinan nexus, presided over by Saumur, is typical of the twelfth-century growth of vertical connections between ecclesiastical centres. All over Britain and northern France, local churches were given by lay patrons as dependent parishes or priories to larger abbeys, which in turn might belong to supranational confederations such as the Savigniacs and Cistercians. To take a single example, the abbey of Sts Serge and Bacchus, Angers, a favourite shrine of the

<sup>100</sup> *Vita et Passio S. Nectani*, ed. Grosjean, 'Vie de S. Rumon', 397–402.

<sup>101</sup> *Historia Sancti Florentii*, ed. Marchegay and Mabille, *Chroniques*, 261; Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 157–60.

<sup>102</sup> *MWG*, 81, 129–30; Guy, 'Explaining the Origins'.

<sup>103</sup> Jankulak, *The Medieval Cult*, 157–71. The Life of Nectan has not been closely dated. Its accompanying miracle-collection seems to date from 1167–8, and its editor, Grosjean, assumed that the Life is somewhat earlier: Grosjean, 'Vie de S. Rumon', 389.

<sup>104</sup> *De Situ Brecheniauc*, 11, in *VSB*. 314; *WCD*, 650.

counts of Anjou (and resting-place of St Brioc), owned Tywardreath Priory in south Cornwall, founded soon after the Norman Conquest; Tywardreath, in turn, owned the parish of St Sampson of Golant.<sup>105</sup> Routine ecclesiastical administration thus connected a remote Cornish parish dedicated to an ancient Celtic saint with one of the cultural centres of the Loire Valley, and it becomes less surprising that Golant and its environs were a setting for one of the early French-language versions of the Tristan legend, that by Bérout.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, Savigny, on the Breton-Norman border, had daughter houses as far afield as Furness in the north-west of England, Basingwerk, Tintern and Neath in Wales, and Buckfast on the borders of Cornwall, all founded in the 1130s.<sup>107</sup> Any such connection could have resulted in the transmission of literary and hagiographical material from one Brittonic-speaking region to another, or to metropolitan England or France; but only rarely can such transmission be traced in the surviving literary record. In any case, any fame achieved by British or Breton saints and secular heroes in the wider world in these first decades after the Norman Conquest paled in the glare of the hugely successful presentation of British history by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

#### *Geoffrey of Monmouth and Brittany*

As has often been noted, little is known about Geoffrey of Monmouth outside his works, in which he was self-described as *Galfridus Monemutensis*. His *Historia Regum Britanniae* (perhaps more accurately titled *De Gestis Brittonum*) was in circulation in 1139 at the latest, and his *Vita Merlini* (VM) followed between 1148 and 1151. As *Galfridus Artur*, he (it is presumed) witnessed five charters at Oxford between 1129 and 1150; he became bishop-elect of St Asaph in 1151, and is said to have died in 1155.<sup>108</sup> His connection with Monmouth, a centre of redaction and reinvention of Welsh historical traditions, helps to explain his career. However, all guesses at his parentage and ethnic background, based as they must be on the attitudes expressed in his work, have proved inconclusive. As P. C. Ingham observed, 'both desire for and resistance to conquest can be read in [this] single text'.<sup>109</sup> Geoffrey's achievement, for which he was rewarded by the phenomenal success of his history, was

<sup>105</sup> Bromwich, 'Some Remarks', 60, note 121.

<sup>106</sup> Ed. and transl. Lacy, *Early French Tristan Poems*. <sup>107</sup> Burton, 'Furness'.

<sup>108</sup> For brief biographies, see Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*; Padel, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth and Cornwall'; Smith, 'Introduction and Biography'. For the title of Geoffrey's History, see Reeve and Wright (ed. and transl.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, lix.

<sup>109</sup> Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*, 49. See also MacColl, 'The Meaning of Britain', 251: 'the work appears to be the product of two conflicting allegiances'.

to discover in King Arthur a ‘social signifier’ who could express the aspirations of all parties in the divided world of post-Conquest Britain and Normandy.<sup>110</sup>

It has been suggested that Geoffrey was Breton, on the grounds of his Monmouth location, the favourable view taken of the Bretons in his work, and his claims about his source-material. In the dedication and the conclusion of his book he stated that he was translating an ‘ancient book in the British tongue’, ‘which Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, brought from Brittany’. At one point in his narrative, when describing how the Britons fled into exile in Brittany before the Saxon invasions, he even alluded to other, as yet untapped sources about the Bretons, promising to ‘relate their story elsewhere, when I translate the book about their exile’.<sup>111</sup> It seems vanishingly unlikely that these references imply the real existence of extended histories from Brittany, still less histories written in the vernacular. By contrast with Wales, Brittany had no local historiographical or annalistic tradition, outside hagiography. The chronicle in the Cartulary of Quimperlé left early Breton history a blank, skipping straight from a Bedan universal chronicle to Charlemagne’s conquest of Brittany. No extended prose in Breton survives from earlier than the fourteenth century; nothing remotely resembling Geoffrey’s book, with its deeply ingrained chivalric and dynastic assumptions, could have been written before the twelfth century; and Brittany was not the centre of Geoffrey’s interest, nor that of his sources as far as he reproduced them.<sup>112</sup>

Geoffrey creatively adapted existing British (rather than Breton) lore to arrive at his story of Breton origins.<sup>113</sup> He engineered a compromise between *Historia Brittonum*, which attributed the settlement of Brittany to ‘Maximianus’, and the recent doctrine from Llancarfan found in *Vita Gurthierni*, in which ‘Kenan son of Outham’ was responsible, by making Maximianus and Conan rivals to marry the daughter of King Octavius (Outham, Eudaf) of Britain and to succeed him on the throne. They were persuaded to sink their differences in a joint invasion of the Continent, with Maximianus gaining Rome and Conan Armorica.<sup>114</sup> Thereafter, as

<sup>110</sup> For a summing-up of recent scholarship on Geoffrey’s sympathies, see Flood, *Prophecy, Politics*, 21–2; for a discussion of his aims, see Farrell, ‘History’.

<sup>111</sup> HRB, prologue, 1: *michi . . . optulit Walterus Oxenefordensis archidiaconus . . . quondam Britannici sermonis librum vetustissimum qui a Bruto primo rege Britonum usque ad Cadualadrum filium Caduallonis actus omnium continue et ex ordine perpulcris orationibus proponebat*. XI. 208: *librum illum Britannici sermonis quem Walterus Oxenforensis archidiaconus ex Britannia aduexit*. IX.186: *Sed haec alias referam, cum librum de exultatione eorum transtulero*. Ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 4–5, 280–1, 258–9.

<sup>112</sup> Fries, ‘The Arthurian Moment’, 94; Smith, ‘Introduction and Biography’, 11–19.

<sup>113</sup> Guy, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Welsh Sources’.

<sup>114</sup> Guy, ‘Constantine’, 395–7.

in *Historia Brittonum* and Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*, the military strength of Britain was depleted.

Geoffrey developed the reciprocal idea that British prowess henceforward resided in Brittany. After the death of Maximianus, he claimed, Britain had to be rescued from anarchy by a Breton ruler, Constantine, the brother of Aldroen, who was fourth in succession from Conan. Constantine was the father of Ambrosius Aurelius and Uther Pendragon, and grandfather of King Arthur himself. Arthur embarked on a career of conquest that took in the whole of Europe, but after his tragic death, British fortunes declined and the Saxons invaded. More appeals for Breton aid only delayed the inevitable. When finally the last king of Britain but one, Cadwallo, was again reduced to asking for help from King Salomon of Brittany, he was forced to admit his nation's weakness: 'It was the most worthy men of the whole kingdom that followed Maximianus and Conan, leaving the unworthy to take their place.'<sup>115</sup>

However, despite the emphasis on Breton prowess (including the cavalry tactics praised in *Vita Teliavi*), Geoffrey's focus remains consistently on Britain.<sup>116</sup> Concentrating on his British narrative, he neglects the royal succession of Brittany. The rulers between Conan and Aldroen, and between Hoel II (Arthur's ally) and Salomon, are unnamed, leaving gaps into which later Breton writers could slot other figures from their legendary past, notably Gradlon.<sup>117</sup> Geoffrey gave Conan the additional name 'Meriadoc', the name of a Breton saint, for obscure reasons.<sup>118</sup> Other than that, he ignored existing Breton origin-stories. The only one of his early 'kings' of Brittany who is independently attested in Breton tradition is Budic, whom Geoffrey presumably knew from his adoption into Llandaf hagiography. As for the others, Alan, Hoel and Salomon are all names of well-known Breton rulers from the Carolingian period onwards. In choosing Hoel as the name of two Breton kings, Geoffrey may have intended a respectful reference to the first count of Cornouaille to become duke of Brittany (1066–84), as well as to his great-grandson Hoel, the son and heir apparent of Conan III, duke of Brittany at the time when he was writing. (He wrote too soon to know that Hoel would be disinherited in or before 1148.<sup>119</sup>) The hardest to explain of Geoffrey's

<sup>115</sup> *Nobiliiores namque tocius regni praedictos duces secuti fuerunt et ignobiles remanserunt, qui ipsorum potiti sunt honoribus*; HRB, XI.195, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 268–9.

<sup>116</sup> HRB, VIII.123, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 167.

<sup>117</sup> See the king-list in the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc edited (with French translation) by Le Huërou, 'La légenda sancti Samsonis', 147–9, 167–9.

<sup>118</sup> Pierre-Yves Lambert, interestingly but inconclusively, suggests 'Meriadoc' may have been derived from a British title or name corresponding to Irish *Múiredach*, denoting a notable or leader: 'À propos de "Meriadec"'.  
<sup>119</sup> Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, 29–32.

names for Breton kings is Aldroen. It is a genuine Breton name attested in charters, but not borne by any particularly high-profile individuals.<sup>120</sup> It may, however, have come to Geoffrey, like much else, through the interest of Llancarfan scholars in St Cadog. The sequence of charters in the Cartulary of Quimperlé relating to the Île Cado, which has already been cited as supplying Lifris with material for his *Life of Cadog*, ends with a grant of 1089 in which the church was made over to Quimperlé by Duke Alan IV ('Alan Fergant') of Brittany and the church's previous 'lord and heir', one Aldroen son of Juthael. Aldroen was a member of the dynasty of Bishop Orscand of Vannes (d. 1009), which had granted land to the church on Île Cado in the preceding charters. The previous generation of the family included another Aldroen and a Kyllae, perhaps the Kyllae who was abbot of Landévennec between 1056 and 1085.<sup>121</sup> More than one monk of Quimperlé bore the name Aldroen, including one titled *grammaticus* in a charter of *ca* 1084.<sup>122</sup> If members of this family were among the scholars involved in creating the pseudo-history of Cornouaille glimpsed in the cartularies of Landévennec and Quimperlé, perhaps Geoffrey decided to recognise their activities by giving one of their names to an early king of Brittany; possibly this pseudo-history was the 'book about [the Bretons'] exile' that Geoffrey promised to 'translate' in a future work.

However, Geoffrey says almost nothing about the geography and toponymy of Brittany, its saints and ecclesiastical office-holders, or any of the other incidental detail he lavishes on Britain. Efforts to demonstrate the existence of a 'British History' from Brittany before the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth have to struggle against the fact that, if there was any such text, its contents are largely if not entirely lost.<sup>123</sup> Some scholars have hoped to find traces of Geoffrey's Breton source in a western Breton saint's *Life*, *Vita Goeznouei*, preserved only in excerpts in a manuscript of notes made by or for Pierre Le Baud in the late fifteenth century, but equipped with a colophon that seems to date the text to the year 1019. *Vita Goeznouei* raises hopes by opening with the words 'We read in the

<sup>120</sup> The name, appropriately meaning 'high lineage', occurs several times in the Redon cartulary between 801 and 1101: German, 'Breton Patronyms', 10 (accessed 26 February 2020); Tanguy, 'Index generalis', 63.

<sup>121</sup> *CQ*, pp. 103, 105; Quaghebeur, *La Cornouaille*, 148, note 210. Kyllae is the only abbot of Landévennec to be commemorated in the Quimperlé annals, which increases the likelihood that he belonged to the Quimperlé patronal family; this is not certain, however, as the name is common in Cornouaille. For the possibility that a dynastic alliance had taken place between the family of Orscand of Vannes and the comital family of Cornouaille *ca* 1000, see Quaghebeur, 'Stratégie lignagère', 10–12.

<sup>122</sup> *CQ*, 41, 107, 102, pp. 177–8, 262–3, 256–7.

<sup>123</sup> Le Duc, 'L'*Historia Britannica*', 820–3.



British History . . . ’; however, the only information it gives about Breton origins, other than what is found in *HRB*, is the elaboration that Conan landed at Plougoulm (*Plebis Columbae*) in Léon, and the etymological legend that the British conquerors cut out the Gaulish women’s tongues, otherwise attested in Wales *ca* 1200.<sup>124</sup> The inclusion of the figure of Corineus (one of Geoffrey’s many eponymous founders, whose leading role reflects the importance of Cornwall in his work) is strong evidence for dependence on Geoffrey.<sup>125</sup> Despite the (confused) dating-information, *Vita Goeznouei* can be argued to represent a pre-Galfridian text only by the most special of special pleading.<sup>126</sup> The same applies to another text preserved in the Le Baud notebook and titled *Livre des faits d’Arthur*, a passage of 183 Latin hexameter verses taken from a longer poem on the origin of Brittany, corresponding closely in its narrative to *HRB*. Gwenaël Le Duc believed that the poem was a reworking of a tenth-century prose text which he identified with the *Historia Britannica* referred to in *Vita Goeznouei*. The poem certainly shares material with *Vita Goeznouei*, but nothing in its content suggests a date earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century: it carries a dedication to Duke Arthur II of Brittany (1305–12), and alludes to events of the time.<sup>127</sup>

However, if the evidence for the use of Breton source-material in Geoffrey’s *HRB* is weak, it is possibly slightly stronger in his other work, *VM*. The prophecies of Merlin included in *HRB* aroused so much interest that Geoffrey decided to follow them up by writing a separate verse Life of Merlin between 1148 and 1151, altering his earlier portrait of the seer to incorporate northern British traditions about a wild man, Lailoken, who lost his reason after the Battle of Arfderydd (573).<sup>128</sup> Might he also have

<sup>124</sup> Rennes, Archives départementales Ille-et-Vilaine, 1 F 1003, fols. 48r–v, partially edited by La Borderie, ‘L’*Historia Britannica*’, the remaining sections edited by Sterckx and Le Duc, ‘Les fragments inédits’. For the arguments for dating the text to 1019, or at least in the eleventh century, see also Fleuriot, ‘Sur quatre textes’; Fleuriot, ‘The Stubborn Date’; Le Duc, ‘La date’; Wilmart, ‘Origines et réforme’, 54–6; a later date is supported by Guillotel, [review of] Fleuriot, *Les Origines de Bretagne*; Guillotel, ‘Le poids historiographique’, 359; and Bourguès, ‘Guillaume le Breton’, who suggests that the author was William Le Breton (*ca* 1165–1225), author of an epic poem in honour of King Philip Augustus of France (1180–1223). For a summary of the debate, see Bourguès, ‘La cour ducale’, 83–8. A partial Life of Goeznou is also preserved in the 1516 printed Breviary of Léon, and another in Albert Le Grand’s collection of Breton saints’ Lives. All three surviving versions probably go back to the same source: Bourguès, ‘En tournant les pages’, 154–5. For the ‘tongues’ legend, see Dumville, ‘Celtic-Latin Texts’, 24–6.

<sup>125</sup> Tatlock, *The Legendary History*, 116; Echard, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth’, 47–8.

<sup>126</sup> For example, Ashe, ‘“A Certain Very Ancient Book”’.

<sup>127</sup> Bourguès, ‘La cour ducale’.

<sup>128</sup> This material and its relationship with Geoffrey’s *VM* is discussed by Padel, ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Merlin Legend’ (and references); the ‘Lailoken’ texts and the crucial Welsh poem, *Afallenau* (‘Apple-Trees’), are printed as an appendix in Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin*, 227–35.



used some material from Brittany? Elements of *VM* are found also in *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo*, a text preserved, as previously noted, in extracts made in the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries and attributed to Ingomar, apparently an early-eleventh-century monk of Saint-Méen.<sup>129</sup> In one episode of the *Historia*, Judicael's father-to-be, King Juthael, sends to 'Bro Gueroc, to the monastery of Gildas', to seek guidance from 'Taliosinus the bard, son of Don, a prophet who had great foresight through the interpretation of portents; one who with wondrous eloquence proclaimed in prophetic utterances the lucky and unlucky lives of lucky and unlucky men.'<sup>130</sup> This is the only reference to Taliesin in a non-Welsh medieval source except for Geoffrey's *VM*, in which a very similar passage introduces a colloquy between Merlin and Taliesin: 'Bid Taliesin come, as I wish to talk over many things with him; for he has recently come from the land of Brittany where he learned sweet philosophy of Gildas the Wise.'<sup>131</sup> One subject of the two sages' discussion in *VM* is the departure of King Arthur to have his wounds tended by the nymph Morgen and her eight sisters – the first of whom is named Moronoe.<sup>132</sup> In *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo*, Moronoe is the name of Judicael's wife.<sup>133</sup> There must be a textual connection between the *Historia* and *VM*: a realisation which brings us back to the family connection between Judicael's cult-centres at Saint-Méen, Saumur and Dinan, overseen by the Dol-Combours dynasty, and Monmouth, likewise a Dol-Combours foundation and Geoffrey's early home.

The economical hypothesis is that Geoffrey invented Taliesin's Breton sojourn and the name of Moronoe and the author of *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo* borrowed them, and hence that his work (at least this part of it) must post-date *VM*.<sup>134</sup> John Koch, however, raises several doubts about this hypothesis. The name-form *Taliosinus* may be as old as the ninth century, and could not have arisen from a mechanical copying of *VM*,

<sup>129</sup> Fawtier, 'Ingomar, historien breton'.

<sup>130</sup> *Ad provinciam Gueroci, ad locum Gilde, ubi erat, religionem suam peregrinus et exul transmarinus tollens, Taliosinus bardus, filius Donis, fatidicus presagissimus per divinationem presagorum, qui, preconio mirabili, fortunatas vitas et infortunatas disserebat fortunatorum virorum et infortunatorum per fatidica verba*: text and translation from Koch, 'De sancto Iudicaelo', 249, 251.

<sup>131</sup> *VM*, ll. 685–8, ed. and transl. Clarke, 88–9.

<sup>132</sup> Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin*, 206–8.

<sup>133</sup> BnF Lat. 9888, fol. 58r; Le Baud, *Histoire de Bretagne*, 82. This is in one of the unpublished sections of 'Ingomar's' material on Judicael; in the absence of a full edition of all the Judicael material in the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc, the relationship of this part of the narrative to the section printed by Fawtier and Koch cannot be determined exactly. For the contents and authorship of the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc, see De Berthou, 'Introduction'; De Berthou, 'Analyse sommaire'; M. Jones (ed.), *Le premier inventaire*.

<sup>134</sup> As argued by Fawtier, 'Ingomar, historien breton', 199–201.

which gives the name as *Thelgesinus*; the inclusion of Dôn (a divine ancestor-figure) bespeaks some independent knowledge of Welsh mythology; Taliesin is designated a 'bard', unlike in *VM*; and the idea of his having visited Gildas in Brittany may be a result of information-sharing between Brittany and northern Britain such as is apparent in the *Rhuys Life of Gildas*.<sup>135</sup>

Even if *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo* is derivative of *VM*, this is interesting in itself. In contrast to *HRB*, *VM* was written 'for a limited audience of friends' and is extant in only one complete manuscript (and six partial ones).<sup>136</sup> Its use in a Breton *Vita* would suggest that a Saint-Méen author was connected with this close-knit group. However, there are further suggestions that the dependency was in the other direction. In *Historia de Sancto Iudicaelo*, 'Galfridian' references are found alongside much less diluted Celtic mythological and panegyric elements. The *Judicael* text (or a source of it) could be a candidate for identification as the 'book about [the Bretons'] exile' whose material Geoffrey hoped to use in a later work.<sup>137</sup> A final suggestive point is the connection between the scene in *VM* in which the deranged Merlin rides on a stag, and the popular traditions that credit several Breton saints with riding a stag around their monasteries' boundaries in a single night.<sup>138</sup> Was this motif in Breton hagiography prompted by *VM*, or itself a prompt for it?

Geoffrey of Monmouth did more than any other individual in the twelfth century to promote the idea of a single British people, and, ostensibly, to raise the profile of the Bretons as its representatives *par excellence*. However, this, like almost everything he wrote, was two-edged. Michael Faletra considers Geoffrey's interest in Brittany to be a measure of how diluted the Bretons' British identity had become by the early twelfth century, compared with that of the Welsh. The Bretons and Cornish, for Geoffrey, were 'the good Britons' precisely because their Britishness constituted no threat to Norman-French dominance.<sup>139</sup> What he presents as the ancestral 'British' prowess of the Bretons is, in fact, evidence of their absorption into the Franco-Norman feudal world, while the 'degeneracy' of the Welsh stands for their retention of the language and culture of their British ancestors.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Koch, 'De sancto Iudicaelo', 253–4; Koch, 'Waiting for Gododdin', 179–83.

<sup>136</sup> Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin*, vii, 43–5.

<sup>137</sup> Merlin became an important figure in Breton folklore in the modern period: Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales', 145–50; Constantine, 'Neither Flesh nor Fowl'.

<sup>138</sup> *VM*, ll. 451–72, ed. and transl. Clarke, 74–7; Plaine, 'Notice', 209–10; *DCA*, 156; *DF*, 63, 102–3; *LBS*, II.245.

<sup>139</sup> Faletra, *Wales*, 44–5.

<sup>140</sup> *Degenerati autem a Britannica nobilitate Gualenses: HRB*, XI.207, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 280–1.

*Arthur and the Matter of Britain*

Geoffrey of Monmouth's creation of the definitive historicised version of the Arthurian legend was, of course, only one episode in the twelfth-century flowering of secular literature in the Francophone world (including England). An entire genre of romance grew up around the 'Matter of Britain', as it was called from the early thirteenth century. A second important, though less productive, genre associated with Britain was the *lai*, typically a brief verse love story with a supernatural element, of which Marie de France (*fl.* 1160 × 1210) was the original and finest exponent. British locations and names in a phantasmagorical, otherworldly setting were in vogue. 'Arthurian' romance has given rise to a vast scholarly literature, much of it devoted to seeking sources or analogues in Welsh and Irish vernacular literature, on the assumption that Arthurian themes and stories were appropriated from the oral traditions of France's Celtic neighbours.<sup>141</sup> However, in relatively few cases is it possible to demonstrate exact parallels – and in the case of Brittany and Cornwall, which have almost no extant secular medieval literature, it is not possible at all.

The existence or otherwise of a 'historic Arthur' continues to be an unsolved question (fortunately not germane to the present discussion).<sup>142</sup> Oliver Padel has argued convincingly that the 'original Arthur' of the British-speaking world was a figure of folklore, a 'wild man' of gigantic strength associated with hunting and magic, analogous to the Irish legendary character Fionn.<sup>143</sup> However, the 'historical' persona of Arthur as a war-leader against the Saxons was effectively constructed by the ninth-century author of *Historia Brittonum*: it was this idea of Arthur that was popularised throughout Europe by Geoffrey, without necessarily becoming prevalent in the British-speaking world.

There is some evidence that interest in Arthur and his warrior companions was growing in Europe before the launch of *HRB*. But how far Brittany shared in this interest at such an early date has not been established. Leading scholars of the twentieth century believed that Bretons played a crucial role in the transmission of Arthurian literature to the Continent since they understood both French and the British vernaculars and held a privileged position in Anglo-Norman society.<sup>144</sup> This theory necessarily rested on indirect arguments: the belief that when Latin and

<sup>141</sup> A recent example is Sergeant, *L'origine celtique*.

<sup>142</sup> Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur*; Higham, *King Arthur*; but see also Breeze, 'The Historical Arthur'; Johnson, *Evidence of Arthur*.

<sup>143</sup> Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', 13, 19–23.

<sup>144</sup> Loomis, *Arthurian Literature*, 52–63; Williams, 'Brittany'; Fleuriot and Ségalen, *Héritage celtique*.

French sources attributed Arthurian tales to *Brittones* or *li Bretoun*, the attributions were to Bretons (rather than Insular Britons) and were accurate; and the presence of specifically Breton names, name-forms and settings in French Arthurian romance.<sup>145</sup> These arguments have been steadily undermined, and recent scholarship on the 'Matter of Britain' has moved away from the attempt to discover direct models and analogues.<sup>146</sup> One strand has abandoned the presumption (always unprovable) of a long oral past for this literature, de-emphasising the role of oral entertainers in transferring stories directly from British to Francophone milieux, and focusing instead on the role of Latinate clerics such as Walter Map and Geoffrey of Monmouth himself in forming – and transforming – the material.<sup>147</sup> A related tendency is to regard the 'Matter of Britain' as a product of the encounter between the French, English and Brittonic worlds: not simply 'borrowed' from Celtic literatures but actively created amid the tensions of the colonial relationship.<sup>148</sup> On this reading, the colonial context was the seedbed for 'the theme of *aventure*, the encounter with the marvellous and conquest of the fear of the unknown' which are the staples of Arthurian romance.<sup>149</sup>

One result of these approaches has been to sideline Brittany. With the reduction of their supposed role as intermediaries, the overall contribution of Bretons to the Arthurian phenomenon becomes exiguous. Attempts to fit Brittany into the twelfth-century colonial paradigm are awkward given that Brittany's elite had largely accepted the neighbouring metropolitan culture as early as the tenth century.<sup>150</sup> Twelfth-century men of letters of Breton descent, Theodoric of Chartres, Peter of Blois, Stephen of Fougères and William Le Breton, took no interest in Breton lore and legend comparable to that shown in Wales by the Cambro-Norman literati Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walter Map and Gerald of Wales.<sup>151</sup> Even the *lais* of Marie de France, some of which (*Le Fresne*, *Chaitivel*, *Eliduc*, *Laüstic*, *Guigemar*) have explicitly Breton settings, and which have often been accepted as offering a genuine glimpse of an oral literature of entertainment specific to Brittany, have

<sup>145</sup> Loomis, *Arthurian Literature*, 56. For examples and discussion, see Bromwich, 'Some Remarks'; Sims-Williams, 'Did Itinerant Breton Conteurs ...?'.  
<sup>146</sup> Lloyd-Morgan and Poppe, 'Introduction', 2.

<sup>147</sup> Sims-Williams, 'Did Itinerant Breton Conteurs ...?', 111; Smith, *Walter Map*.

<sup>148</sup> Faletra, *Wales*; Finke and Shichtman, *King Arthur*; Warren, *History on the Edge*; Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies*; Over, *Kingship, Conquest and Patria*; Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*, 105–32; Khanmohamadi, 'Salvage Anthropology'.

<sup>149</sup> Sims-Williams, 'The Visionary Celt', 93.

<sup>150</sup> See, for instance, Warren, *History on the Edge*, 222.

<sup>151</sup> For Stephen of Fougères, chaplain to Henry II, bishop of Rennes 1168–78, and author of *Livre des Manières* and the Lives of two early twelfth-century hermit-saints, see Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt*, 110–21.

had their ‘Breton-ness’ questioned.<sup>152</sup> Marie, whose sobriquet ‘de France’ suggests that she worked in England, can be placed in the same Anglo-Welsh frontier milieu that inspired Geoffrey and his Cambro-Norman colleagues.<sup>153</sup>

Nevertheless, there are some indications that Bretons, even in an attenuated way, shared cultural tropes with the Insular Britons, participated in the ‘Arthur-mania’ of the twelfth century and were similarly regarded by their neighbours as suited to the role of the ‘Other’ in romance. The political events of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin periods helped to create the conditions for this.

To begin with the figure of Arthur himself: during the twelfth century, a belief in the return of Arthur to rule a renewed British kingdom is often ascribed to Britons – and specifically to Bretons – by French and English authors. From accepting these testimonies as objective evidence, historians have come to understand that they are politically and morally loaded, and were circulated by Anglo-Norman scholars while finding little support in sources emanating from Britons themselves.<sup>154</sup> Yet the evidence seems to be slightly stronger for Brittany than elsewhere. The earliest (and often-cited) testimony comes from Hermann of Laon, whose *De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudunensis*, narrating a journey to Devon and Cornwall in 1113, was completed in about 1145.<sup>155</sup> According to Hermann, the canons of Laon argued with a Cornishman who asserted that Arthur was not dead, ‘in the same way as the *Britones* are in the habit of arguing against the French on King Arthur’s behalf’.<sup>156</sup> *Britones* in this context, juxtaposed with *Francis* and written by an author from northern France, almost certainly means ‘Bretons’; it is hard to argue away the implication of this casual aside, that Arthurian belief was well established in Brittany. Henry of Huntingdon’s *Epistola ad Warinum*, written in 1139, likewise attributes Arthurian belief to his (possibly fictitious) correspondent, Warin Brito: ‘the Bretons, your ancestors [or “relatives”], refuse to

<sup>152</sup> Le Duc, ‘Les *lais*’, 300; Khanmohamadi, ‘Salvage Anthropology’, 56. Piriou, ‘Arthur sur le Continent’, 77–9, summarises the Breton content of the *lais*. For the possible relationship of *lai* and *gwerz*, see Laurent, ‘Tradition and Innovation’; Postic, ‘Between Lost Literature’. For Breton poetic metres see Fleuriot, ‘Langue et société’, 19–21.

<sup>153</sup> Hoepffner, ‘La géographie et l’histoire’; Carruthers, ‘What Makes Breton Lays Breton?’ (accessed 12 March 2019). Kinoshita’s study in *Medieval Boundaries* 105–32 focuses on the *lais* with Welsh settings.

<sup>154</sup> For a convenient collection of references to the so-called ‘Breton hope’ of Arthur’s return, see Helbert, ‘An Arður sculde ʒete cum’; for a fuller discussion, see Berard, *Arthurianism*, 13–42. The historiography is critically reviewed by Greene, ‘Qui croit ...?’.

<sup>155</sup> Berard, ‘King Arthur’; Berard, *Arthurianism*, 26–8. See also Tatlock, ‘The English Journey’; Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, 4–10.

<sup>156</sup> ... sicut Britones solent iurgari cum Francis pro rege Arturo, idem vir coepit rixari cum uno ex famulis nostris ... dicens adhuc Arturum vivere; *De Miraculis*, II.15–16, ed. Migne, col. 983.

believe that [Arthur] died. And they traditionally await his return'.<sup>157</sup> The commentary on the Prophecies of Merlin by 'Alanus', written around 1170, emphatically claims that the inhabitants of 'Armorica or lesser Britain' will stone anyone who contradicts their belief in Arthur.<sup>158</sup> Stephen of Rouen, author of *Draco Normannicus*, written during the Breton rebellion against King Henry II in 1167–9, depicts Arthur, alive and reigning in the Antipodes, threatening by letter to return and assist the rebels.<sup>159</sup> While this may be satire for a court audience, the testimony of an actual Breton may be more telling. Peter of Blois (*ca* 1130–1211) was of Breton parentage, although his parents had moved to France and he eventually became secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In two separate letters, written in about 1160 and 1172, he compared his own too hopeful expectations of reward to 'the Jews awaiting the Messiah, or the Britons Arthur'. This combined taunt against Jews and Britons was widespread, but Peter's use of it may be less dismissive than it looks at first glance. In yet another letter, Peter lashed out at contemporaries who had disparaged him because his parents were impoverished exiles. 'Was not Brutus an exile? Was not Aeneas?' Here Peter seems to seek support in the British Trojan origin-legend popularised by Geoffrey, and gives signs of feeling a conflicted sense of Breton identity.<sup>160</sup>

Was the Breton belief in Arthur's return largely the projection of uneasy colonialist clerics? Or was it real – or perhaps given real shape by these external perceptions? Lack of evidence makes any final judgement impossible. For instance, it is unclear whether Arthur appeared in local toponymic folklore as he did in Britain. There are a number of Breton sites with Arthurian associations but these are not documented before the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>161</sup> The evidence of anthroponymy is ambiguous. In the early Middle Ages the personal name Arthur is barely used

<sup>157</sup> *Mortuum tamen fuisse Britones parentes tui negant. Et eum venturum sollempniter expectant.* Henry of Huntingdon, *Epistola ad Warinum*, 9, in Greenway (ed.), *Henry*, 580–1.

<sup>158</sup> This text, known only through an edition of 1603, is printed in Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 265. For the identity of 'Alanus' and his commentary, see Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth', 368–70.

<sup>159</sup> Stephen of Rouen, *Draco Normannicus*, ed. Howlett; Day, 'The Letter'; Berard, *Arthurianism*, 54–64.

<sup>160</sup> Peter of Blois, *Epistolae*, LI: *fortasse sicut Arthurum Britannia, sicut Judea Messyam*; XXXIV: *fortasse venturum cum Britonibus praestolor Arturum, et Messiam cum Judaeis exspecto*; XLIX: *Nonne exsulavit Brutus? Nonne exsulavit Aeneas?* Ed. Migne, *Petri Blesensis Opera*, cols.154, 112, 147. See Tatlock, 'The Dates', 356; Dronke, 'Peter of Blois'; Cartlidge, 'An Intruder . . .?'. Berard, *Arthurianism*, 69–72, also cites a poem by Peter of Blois, *Quod amicus suggerit*, in which Arthurian belief is ridiculed; but it is relevant that Peter places this mockery in the mouth of his irreligious 'courtier' character, with whom the reader is meant to disagree.

<sup>161</sup> Trébeurden, CA, and the 'Camp d'Artus' at Huelgoat, F. The latter was first recorded by Jacques Cambry in his *Voyage dans le Finistère* in 1799: Postic and Bouget, 'Popular Traditions', 304–6; Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales', 133, note 30.

either in Brittany or in Wales, but in Brittany it does occur in seven ninth-century charters, all plausibly referring to the same individual: a man of some importance who witnessed charters of the Breton rulers Erispoe, Salomon and Alan I between 851 × 857 and 878, who by 878 had reached the position of first lay witness but is given no rank or affiliation.<sup>162</sup> Other names associated with Arthurian lore appear in charters of the same period.<sup>163</sup> Might this be linked with the dissemination of *Historia Brittonum*? From the second half of the eleventh century, the name Arthur begins to appear in charters at Fougères in eastern Brittany, in Maine, Anjou, Poitou and further south, as Pierre Gallais showed in 1967 in exploratory research that has not yet been thoroughly followed up.<sup>164</sup> The implication may be that knowledge of Arthur was spreading from Brittany, but it may also have been coming directly from Wales as a result of French aristocratic involvement in the Norman Conquest. Finally, there is the evidence of the *Vita* of St Euflam of Plestin-les-Grèves (CA), which has been argued to pre-date *HRB*.<sup>165</sup> It tells how ‘the mighty Arthur, who at that time was pursuing monsters in that part of Brittany’ did battle with a deadly serpent near the saint’s hermitage. This closely parallels an Arthurian episode in the Welsh-Latin *Vita I S. Carantoci*, in which Arthur is found ‘wandering in search of a most formidable, huge and terrible serpent’, which the saint tames at his request.<sup>166</sup> Arthur’s role in these *Vitae* resembles his pre-Geoffrey Welsh persona as a roving hunter-hero, and their similarity suggests a specific contact, perhaps again via Llancarfan, where *Vita Carantoci* seems to have been available and was interpolated with genealogical material in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>167</sup> Possibly stories about Arthur and monsters were circulating both in Wales and in Brittany prior to Geoffrey’s intervention – in this case shared by clerical authors who saw an opportunity to ‘name-check’ the legendary king as part of the serpent-taming scene that was an integral

<sup>162</sup> *CR*, 21, 52, 77, 100, 235, 240, Appendix 31, pp. 19, 42, 60, 76, 183, 188, 366.

<sup>163</sup> *CR*, 104, 132, pp. 78, 100; Le Bihan, ‘Arthur’, 281. For Uualcmeol as a form of Gawain, see Zimmer, ‘Bretonische Elemente’, 235.

<sup>164</sup> Gallais, ‘Bleheri’.

<sup>165</sup> Bourguès, ‘La production hagiographique du *scriptorium* de Tréguier’, 71; *DCA*, 191; Le Bihan, ‘Arthur’, 282.

<sup>166</sup> *Arturi quoque fortissimi, qui eo tempore monstra in illis Britanniae partibus persequatur* . . . : *Vita S. Efflami*, 6–9, ed. La Borderie, 285–8. *Arthur circuiens ut inveniret serpentem validissimum, ingentem, terribilem: Vita I S. Carantoci*, 4, *VSB*, 144–5. See Tatlock, ‘The Dates’, 360, and compare *HRB*, X.165, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 224–5. There is no direct evidence that the author of *Vita Efflami* knew *Vita Carantoci*. A version of *Vita Carantoci* was used in Brittany in the later Middle Ages to create a Life of St Caradec of Léon (surviving in the sixteenth-century Breviary of Léon), but it does not seem to have included the Arthurian episode: Jankulak, ‘Carantoc’, 128–31.

<sup>167</sup> *MWG*, 81–5.



part of many Brittonic saints' Lives. It is also the case that Arthur's role in more modern folklore recorded in Brittany tends to be that of a leader of the ghostly 'wild hunt', in keeping with his 'pre-historical' persona in Wales and Cornwall.<sup>168</sup>

To the question 'did Brittany contribute actively to the legend of Arthur?', the answer can only be 'perhaps'. The same is true of Brittany's role in the 'Tristan' cycle, some of whose elements – especially the character of King Mark – are rooted in Brittany, but seem mostly to have been developed elsewhere.<sup>169</sup> However, it can be argued that certain romance story-elements passed from Celtic Britain to France through ecclesiastical links in Brittany. A notable case is the story of Caradog Freichfras, mentioned earlier in connection with the Life of Padarn. Caradog, a legendary ruler in southern Wales and father of several saints according to the *ByS* genealogies, was claimed by the end of the twelfth century as a patron of the cathedral of Vannes, through the conflation of St Padarn of Llanbadarn Fawr with his namesake Paternus of Vannes. Vernacular Welsh tales and triads mention Caradog, a leading companion of King Arthur, and his loyal wife, Tegau Eurfron, 'golden-breast'. However, the story of how Caradog's wife acquired her golden breast is told only in an anonymous French romance, the *Livre de Carados*, part of the First Continuation of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*.<sup>170</sup> The story reappears in late fourteenth-century Brittany, attached to Azenor, the mother of St Budoc, in a Life of Budoc incorporated into the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc.<sup>171</sup> Given the early knowledge of Caradog at Vannes, it is legitimate to speculate that Brittany was the immediate source of the story in the *Livre de Carados*, and even that the story was developed in Brittany. (Compare the silver hand and bronze foot of St Melor in his *Vita* from Cornouaille or Léon.<sup>172</sup>) Arguably, then, anonymous Breton clerics as well as their Welsh and North British counterparts played a part in creating and transmitting the raw materials of romance.

### Brittany in the Norman and Angevin Imagination

Through the developments in British and Breton literature in the twelfth century, read alongside the depiction of Britons and Bretons in mainstream Anglo-Norman and Angevin literature, we can attempt to

<sup>168</sup> Postic and Bouget, 'Popular Traditions', 304.

<sup>169</sup> Bromwich, 'Some Remarks'; Tanguy, 'Du Loonois'; Padel, 'The Cornish Background'.

<sup>170</sup> Loomis, 'L'étrange histoire'; Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, 450–1; *WCD*, 115–7.

<sup>171</sup> Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*, III.3–6.

<sup>172</sup> *Vita S. Melori*, text P, 1c, text M, 1d, ed. Bourguès, *Le dossier hagiographique*, 56, 64. For possible comparanda, see Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature', 63–8.

distinguish between the way in which the British-speaking peoples wished to present themselves and their interrelationships, and the way in which they were seen from outside, under the influence of political events. While it is certainly true that Welsh and Bretons, in particular, perceived their history as interconnected and explored these connections with renewed vigour after the Norman Conquest, it is also true that a shared ethnic identity was projected onto them from outside and that this external view was mostly hostile.

John Gillingham has traced how the attitude of the English to the Welsh, Scots and Irish underwent a transformation in the first half of the twelfth century. Chroniclers and other writers of the late Anglo-Saxon period – from the Viking Age onwards – portrayed their ‘Celtic’ neighbours neutrally, even when at war with them. This continued after the Norman Conquest, and Welsh chroniclers reciprocated by a readiness to accept William I and Henry I as kings of the ‘Saxons, Britons and Scots’, overlords of multi-ethnic hegemonies, like the eleventh- and twelfth-century Scottish kings. However, beginning with William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum* in 1125 and growing more marked after the Welsh and Scottish recovery of territory during the English civil war of 1135–54, a different attitude developed: the peoples of the west and north were increasingly seen as barbarians, at a primitive stage of economic and social development, deficient in manners and morals.<sup>173</sup>

Partly this is a literary effect created by a more rhetorical style of writing history: but the change in attitude, at least among the literary elite, seems real. One influence on it may have been Carolingian ideas about the Bretons. As argued in [Chapter 5](#), Brittany in the tenth and eleventh centuries adapted to the social practices of feudal northern France and gained a new acceptance among its neighbours. However, the more the Normans saw themselves as inheritors of Carolingian Neustria and sought historical precedents for their expansion into France, Sicily and England, the more useful it was to them to revive negative ethnic stereotypes of their neighbours. As early as the 1070s, William of Poitiers was accusing the Bretons of a familiar bundle of offences: an undeveloped pastoral economy, excessive savagery in warfare, and sexual licence.<sup>174</sup> Angevin churchmen appointed to posts in Brittany, Bishops Marbod of Rennes (1096–1123) and Baudry of Dol (1107–30), took up the theme.<sup>175</sup> Once Normans were

<sup>173</sup> Gillingham, ‘Foundations’.

<sup>174</sup> William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, I.45, ed. and transl. Davis and Chibnall, *The Gesta Guillelmi*, 74–5; xx–xxi, on the dating; 74, notes 1–2, on the classical sources of William’s ethnography. Compare Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Kambriae*, I.8, ed. Dimock, 179–82, transl. Thorpe, 233–5. See Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another’s Word*, 37–56.

<sup>175</sup> For references see Livingstone, “‘You Will Dwell’”, 858.

in contact with Britons in the Insular world as well as on the Continent, it could only be a matter of time before these strictures were applied to their new neighbours, just as in the sixth century friction with Britons on the Continent may have prejudiced Gaulish churchmen against the Christianity of Insular Britain.<sup>176</sup>

The post-Conquest series of Welsh and Breton saints' Lives discussed earlier in this chapter was completed, and Geoffrey of Monmouth's History was in gestation, during the initial exploratory period of Anglo-Norman/British relations. During this period, too, the arrival of Arthurian personal names on the Continent suggests that Welsh-inspired secular tales came into vogue there almost immediately after the Norman Conquest. In glorifying the Bretons and emphasising their historical connection with the Britons of Wales, Welsh hagiographers of the early twelfth century may have hoped at first to benefit by association with a section of the new ruling class. Particularly during the reign of Henry I, who established a second wave of Breton landowners in England, a Breton moment seemed to come. The civil war of Stephen's reign seemed at first to improve Welsh prospects too. Stephen declined to pour his limited resources into subduing Wales, and several formerly defeated Welsh kingdoms re-emerged, annihilating a number of Anglo-Norman lordships. Robert of Gloucester, the chief supporter of Stephen's rival Matilda, accepted the situation and struck an alliance with Morgan ab Owain, king of the revived Morgannwg. In 1141, Welsh troops assisted at the victory of Matilda's forces at the battle of Lincoln. Other marcher lords followed Robert's example of compromise, and, as David Crouch has pointed out, while England suffered anarchy, Wales largely stabilised politically during Stephen's reign.<sup>177</sup> Bretons and British might hope to pool their interests: in the 1150s, a Welsh commentator on Geoffrey of Monmouth's Prophecies of Merlin celebrated Bretons as Britons who had returned to the British fold, explaining the prophecy 'They will restore the former inhabitants to their dwellings' by stating that these inhabitants were 'the Britons who went with Conan to Brittany, in the time of the Emperor Maximus, and who later returned with the Normans, that is, the Bretons'.<sup>178</sup> For the rest of the twelfth century, the English crown never regained the dominance in Wales that Henry I had held.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>176</sup> WAB, 234, 240. <sup>177</sup> Crouch, 'The March'.

<sup>178</sup> Hammer (ed.), 'A Commentary', 14: *Restaurabit pristinis: Britonibus videlicet, qui dudum tempore Maximi imperatoris duce Conano, postea duce Cadualladro, in Armoriam secesserunt qui cum Normannis tunc venerant*. For the dating and significance of the text, see Hammer, 'A Commentary', 21; Flood, *Prophecy*, 40.

<sup>179</sup> For Owain Gwynedd's successful attempts to enlist the support of King Louis VII of France see Pryce, 'Owain Gwynedd'; Duffy, 'Henry II', 135–6.

During the same period, the Scottish kingdom under David I made substantial territorial gains in northern England.

Thus the middle years of the twelfth century saw the long-term future of the island of Britain crystallise as one of an uneasy congeries of English and Celtic-speaking polities, and the metropolitan intellectual class hardened their attitude to the Welsh and Scots (and soon the Irish). The panic induced by the Welsh conflagration never fully subsided, as implied in lines from the Anglo-Norman *Description of England*:

Well have the Welsh taken vengeance ... Openly they go around saying and threatening us that at the end they will have it all – they will recover it through Arthur and will take the whole of this country from the Romance people, return to their own land and call it Britain again.<sup>180</sup>

This sequence of events is reflected in the ambiguities of Geoffrey's History. His 'Prophecies of Merlin' were released as a separate short work before the publication of the rest of the book and probably before the death of Henry I; they are the section of *HRB* most engaged with Welsh literary forms, in this case the tradition of political prophecy, and most affirmatory about the restoration of British sovereignty over the island of Britain and about the possible survival of Arthur ('his end shall be unknown').<sup>181</sup> In *HRB* itself, Geoffrey's characterisation of Arthur, with his court at Caerleon, may have been inspired partly by Morgan ab Owain's feat in capturing the castle of Caerleon from Richard fitz Gilbert in 1136.<sup>182</sup> Yet at the same time, his insistence on the present 'degeneracy' of the Britons, as opposed to their past glories, reflected the hostile new ethnography.

For good or ill, Geoffrey's History ensured that the Bretons were bracketed together with the Welsh and other peripheral 'barbarians' in the minds of Angevin court scholars. The Bretons, like the Welsh, were supposed to believe in the return of Arthur, a divisive and semi-pagan superstition: it was during the uneasy years of Breton revolts in the 1160s and 1170s that 'Alanus' and Stephen of Rouen produced their literary works on the subject. The Prophecies of Merlin – taken seriously and widely discussed across Europe – induced fears that an alliance of Welsh,

<sup>180</sup> *Ben s'en vengerent les Waleis. / ... Apertement le vont disant, / Forment nus vont mançant, / Qu'a la parfin tute l'avrunt, / Par Artur la recoverunt, / E cest pais tut ensement / Toldrunt a la romaine gent, / A la terre sun nun rendrunt, / Bretagne la repelerunt. The Description of England*, ll. 218–28, ed. Bell, 'The Anglo-Norman Description', 43.

<sup>181</sup> *HRB*, VII.109–117, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, 142–59. *Exitus eius dubius erit*: VII.112, 144–5. For the dating of *Prophetia Merlini* see Reeve and Wright (ed. and transl.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, viii–ix. For Geoffrey's use of Welsh prophecy and poetic techniques, see Flood, *Prophecy, Politics*, 23–38 and references.

<sup>182</sup> Gillingham, 'Foundations', 53; Howell, 'Roman Past and Medieval Present', 15–17.

Scots and Bretons would devastate England.<sup>183</sup> In reality the political relationship of Brittany to the Norman and Angevin empires was quite different from those of Wales and Ireland. Henry II as king treated Brittany as a French principality. Although he deposed its rightful duke Conan IV, the integrity of the duchy was maintained; it was never 'conquered' in the sense of the dispossession of its landowning class, the kind of conquest that had been achieved in England and attempted in Wales and parts of Ireland.<sup>184</sup> Ideologically, however, Bretons were subject to routine accusations of barbarity, contumacy and treachery from Norman and Angevin writers, as they had been in Carolingian times.<sup>185</sup> And in the 'Arthurian chic' literature of the same metropolitan circles, the complaisant side of the 'barbarian' face of Wales, Scotland and Brittany was depicted: here were testing grounds for knightly prowess, opportunities for *aventure*.

This ambivalence is seen in the writings of Wace, who came from Jersey, Breton in language and culture until the Viking Age. His background may have predisposed him to take an interest in Brittonic lore. In about 1155 he produced the *Roman de Brut*, an Anglo-Norman verse version of Geoffrey's *HRB*, and between 1160 and 1174 a versified history of the Normans, the *Roman de Rou*. In his *Brut*, Wace was responsible for adding to Geoffrey's history some motifs which may have originated in Brittany, such as King Arthur's Round Table.<sup>186</sup> In the *Roman de Rou*, he gives the Bretons the standard barbarian qualities of ferocity, arrogance and greed, but praises the nobility of individual Breton rulers.<sup>187</sup> His account of the fountain of Brocéliande, by contrast, illustrates the synergy that created the enchanted frontier landscapes of romance.<sup>188</sup> This 'natural' wonder recalls the *mirabilia* in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, but the promise of seeing 'fairies' (*fees*) implies that the Bretons were

<sup>183</sup> Letter of Bishop Arnulf of Lisieux to Thomas Becket in 1165, in which Henry II was claimed to be contemplating concessions to King Louis VII of France expressly to avoid fulfilling this prophecy: Duggan (ed.), *The Correspondence*, letter 45, l. 201; see Crick, 'Geoffrey and the Prophetic Tradition', 72–3.

<sup>184</sup> Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, 35–6.

<sup>185</sup> For examples, see *Historia Gaufridi Ducis*, II, ed. Halphen and Poupardin, *Chroniques*, 226–8; Andrew of Fleury, *Miracula S. Benedicti*, VII.7, ed. de Certain, *Les miracles*, 259.

<sup>186</sup> Sims-Williams, 'Did Itinerant Breton Conteurs ...?', 83–8, discusses the probability that Wace drew on a written source, perhaps a lost 'Breton lai', for this passage.

<sup>187</sup> Wace, *Roman de Rou*, part 3, ll. 2589–2730, ed. Holden, vol. 1, 257–62; Keller, 'Wace et les Bretons'.

<sup>188</sup> Wace, *Roman de Rou*, part 3, ll. 6387–6398, ed. Holden, vol. 2, 122, transl. Burgess, *The History*, 162. *La seut l'en les fees ueeir, Se li Breton nos dient ueir, E alters merueilles plusors ... La alai io merueilles querre, Vi la forest e ui la terre, Merueilles quis, mais nes trouai: Fol m'en reuine, fol i alai*. The location of Brocéliande is uncertain: for the development of its identification with the forest of Paimpont, see Postic and Bouget, 'Popular Traditions', 305–6.

already colluding with their neighbours' preconceptions, promoting their local attraction as a place haunted by powers outside the sway of Christendom. Wace reacts as is proper for a sceptical 'civilised' traveller; yet, very soon after the completion of Wace's poem, Chrétien de Troyes wholeheartedly adopted the magical fountain of Brocéliande into his tale *Yvain*, from whence it became a standard plot device in Arthurian literature. What began, for Bretons, as a fairly prosaic topographical curiosity was pressed into service as a fully fledged locus of *aventure* and magic, whether solely by the literary agency of Wace or (perhaps more likely) through a more sustained publicity drive.<sup>189</sup> However, in the *Speculum Naturale* by Vincent de Beauvais, written in about 1235 × 1264, the fountain of Brocéliande reverted to being a merely natural wonder.<sup>190</sup>

The late twelfth-century author Walter Map, in his *De Nugis Curialium*, took a similarly ambivalent view. Wales and the Welsh border was for him a place of honourable but savage behaviour where reality met a fantastical other world. Brittany functioned similarly in his extended story of 'Alan Rebrit'.<sup>191</sup> Here, Alan I 'the Great' (d. 907) is the protagonist of a scrambled version of late ninth- and early tenth-century events in Brittany, in which honour and greed drive a cycle of treachery and revenge, and courtly games of chess (as in the Welsh Arthurian tales) are juxtaposed with gory accounts of blinding and castration (perhaps reflecting the dynastic struggles in Powys in the earlier twelfth century).<sup>192</sup> Walter also offers Wales and Brittany as preferred locations for ghostly apparitions.<sup>193</sup>

A less moralised presentation of the Bretons and Welsh occurs in the ancestral romance *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, which falls outside the chronological bounds of this chapter but which must be mentioned as opening a window on the attitudes of the local nobility of the Welsh March, as opposed to court writers. It survives in a French prose version of the fourteenth century, probably derived from a verse text of the late thirteenth.<sup>194</sup> The Anglo-Norman marcher lords and Welsh rulers regard one another with respect despite intermittent warfare, and the real villain

<sup>189</sup> Chrétien's text is derivative of Wace: Duggan, *The Romances*, 234.

<sup>190</sup> Hüe, 'L'imaginaire arthurien', 311.

<sup>191</sup> The origin and significance of the informal title 'Rebrit', 'King of the Britons', deserves further investigation. In the *Roman de Rou* by Wace, part 3, l. 2621 (ed. Holden, I.258), *rei bret* applies to Duke Alan III (1008–1040); but in the (thirteenth-century?) *Roman des Bannerets* (ed. Morice, col. 1764), *Alain Rebré* is Alan II (936–52). For the latter text, see Cassard, 'Le Roman des Bannerets'.

<sup>192</sup> For these events see Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 33–8.

<sup>193</sup> Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, IV.15, IV.8, IV.13, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 376–93, 344–5, 370–1.

<sup>194</sup> Hanna, 'The Matter of Fulk'; Dolmans, 'Locating the Border'.

is King John, the outsider whose petty vindictiveness is contrasted to the locals' manly code of honour. (Again, a chess scene figures: John's inadequacy is first revealed when, as an adolescent, he gives way to temper over losing a game and throws the chessboard at Fouke.<sup>195</sup>) Most interesting from our point of view is the emphasis placed on Fouke's Breton ancestry: his mother was Hawise, the daughter of Josce of Dinan, lord of Ludlow in the 1140s (the twelfth-century possessions of the Dinan family in England are accurately listed); the FitzAlans of Oswestry, patrons of Léhon and Saumur descended from Alan fitz Flaad of Dol, were close connections.<sup>196</sup> In an early episode, Fouke's ancestor, Warin of Metz, is assisted at a tournament by the ten sons of his 'cousin' the duke of Brittany, 'knights, the fairest and most valiant of body that were in all Little Britain'.<sup>197</sup> Despite anachronisms, this text allows us to glimpse, as few others do, a borderland in which Welsh and Anglo-Norman culture might interpenetrate one another through the membrane of a tightly knit local aristocracy that took pride in its Breton roots. The Dinans have been implicated in the transfer of hagiographical lore between Wales, north Cornwall and Brittany: it may not be too far-fetched to regard them as candidates also for the transmission of Arthurian legend.<sup>198</sup>

However, when the courtly literature of the twelfth century suggests the existence of a shared Welsh-Breton culture, this can be a politically motivated construct imposed from an outsider's point of view. Chrétien de Troyes, in his romance *Erec et Enide* (completed ca 1170) chose a Breton name for his hero, and the tale concludes with the coronation of the hero and heroine on Christmas Day, in the presence of King Arthur, at Nantes. Present are 'Normans, Bretons, Scots, Irish, rich barons of England and Cornwall, and knights from Wales to Anjou, Maine and Poitou', a list that apart from the Scots coincides with the subject dominions of the Plantagenet empire.<sup>199</sup> The fact that two Brittonic allies of Henry II are name-checked as members of the Arthurian court – Brian 'des Îles', who may stand for Brian Fitz Count, and 'Yvain de Cavaliot', that is, Owain Cyfeiliog, prince of Powys (1130–97) – is part of an idealised picture of harmony in the Angevin empire in a text that was probably inspired by Henry II's celebration of Christmas at

<sup>195</sup> *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ed. Hathaway et al., 22–3.

<sup>196</sup> Round, *Studies in Peerage*, 122–9. <sup>197</sup> *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ed. Hathaway et al., 8.

<sup>198</sup> For Anglo-Breton families' patronage of vernacular literature in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see M. Jones, 'Brittany and Wales', 37–8.

<sup>199</sup> Aurell, 'Henry II', 378–9, citing Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ll. 6547–950 and 6640–44, in Poirion et al. (eds.), *Œuvres complètes*, 159–69. The name Erec is probably derived from Breton *Guerec*: Lot, 'Erec'. Bromwich, 'Celtic Dynastic Themes', 464–5, suggested that the name of Enide, too, was Breton, an eponym for the region of *Wened*, Vannes, but this suggestion has not generally been taken up in romance scholarship.



Nantes in 1169, in the company of his twelve-year-old son Geoffrey and Geoffrey's betrothed bride Constance of Brittany, after defeating a long-standing revolt.<sup>200</sup> The hope was that the Breton-Welsh alliance of which court writers of the 1160s and 1170s warned, the menace of the messianic Arthur, would be neutralised.

By the time that Duchess Constance of Brittany and her barons named her newborn son and heir 'Arthur' in 1187, the court had embraced Arthurian imagery to the extent that it is impossible to be sure whether the naming expressed Breton aspirations to independence or Angevin appropriation of Arthur.<sup>201</sup> Several chroniclers, notably William of Newburgh, took the former view, but in practice Breton rebellion was only dangerous inasmuch as it had been harnessed to the Angevin family drama.<sup>202</sup> The 'discovery' of Arthur's tomb at Glastonbury in 1191, and his increasing adoption as a figure of the *English* national past from the end of the twelfth century, beginning with the work of Layamon, completed the process of neutering Geoffrey's hero as a rallying-point for British separatism.<sup>203</sup> He had never been an important figure in the anti-English political prophecy of Wales, which continued vigorous for the rest of the Middle Ages.<sup>204</sup> But if – as twelfth-century sources imply – the Bretons, lacking a strongly developed prophetic tradition of their own, had focused all their political hopes on the return of Arthur, the death of their future duke in the custody of King John must have been a bitter blow. The transfer of the Breton barons' allegiance *en masse* from John to King Philip Augustus of France in 1203 was a measure of their outrage. Once again, as so many times in Breton history, the lack or untimely death of a male heir left the duchy a prize for neighbouring powers, and in 1212 the barons had to accept the imposition of Peter of Dreux, a minor relation of the French king, as duke by his marriage to Constance's daughter Alice.<sup>205</sup>

Between 1236 and 1254, in the sore atmosphere that followed Brittany's submission to the French crown, a Breton cleric (named in one manuscript as William of Rennes) composed a version of Geoffrey's *HRB* in epic Latin verse which tilted Geoffrey's ambivalence towards

<sup>200</sup> Schmolke-Hasselmann, 'Henry II Plantagenêt', 243–6. Chauou, *L'idéologie Plantagenêt*, 98, emphasises that this need not mean Chrétien's work was written under the direct patronage of Henry II. For Owain Cyfeiliog's relations with Henry II see Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 69; for his appearances in Welsh literature see Williams, 'Welsh Raiding'.

<sup>201</sup> On Angevin appropriation of Arthur see Berard, *Arthurianism*, 13–14, 108–39, and *passim*; Aurell, 'Henry II'.

<sup>202</sup> William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, III.7, ed. Howlett, *Chronicles*, I.235.

<sup>203</sup> For the 'discovery' of Arthur at Glastonbury, see Berard, *Arthurianism*, 77–98.

<sup>204</sup> Williams, 'Prophecy, Poetry and Politics'.

<sup>205</sup> On these events see Galliou and Jones, *The Bretons*, 196–206.

tragedy.<sup>206</sup> This author was the first Breton to claim the entire panorama of Geoffrey's history, from Troy onwards, and link it directly to the Breton present. Like his remote predecessor Gildas, he explained defeat as a punishment for sin. It was the greed and pride of the Britons and Arthur in invading land that was not theirs – first Brittany, and then the whole of Gaul – which led inevitably to their defeat and subjection by those same Gauls.<sup>207</sup> He remained hopeful of a pan-British recovery, and positive about the belief that Arthur still lived. However, his text shows no sign of being informed by a living, evolving tradition about Arthur or about British origins in general, either from the Insular world or from Brittany itself: all his material is drawn directly from Geoffrey, unlike the French, English and Welsh vernacular versions of the British History. William of Rennes claimed to write 'for the Britons alone', but his work aroused no discernible response in Brittany, where intellectual life in the thirteenth century seems to have become entirely dependent on that of metropolitan France.<sup>208</sup> What Bretons thought, and thought of themselves, from the mid-thirteenth century to the War of Succession in the mid-fourteenth, is largely unknown; and by the time they began once again to promote the idea of a Breton nation, the pan-Brittonic realm extending 'from Mynaw to Llydaw' that they might once have hoped to see restored had been crushed, never to rise again.

### Brittany in Medieval Welsh Tradition

On the Welsh side, attempts to integrate Brittany into the native historical tradition seem likewise to have declined after the burst of activity that culminated in the production of *HRB*. However, Geoffrey's version of history was greatly popularised in Wales by its appearance in Welsh translations from the early thirteenth century onwards, in the texts collectively known as *Brut y Brenhinedd*.<sup>209</sup> This helped to ensure that the foundation of Brittany kept a place in Welsh historical awareness, and characters associated with Brittany by Geoffrey infiltrated the learned tradition represented by the Welsh triads, genealogies and other genres.

<sup>206</sup> William of Rennes, *Gesta Regum Britanniae*, ed. and transl. Wright, *The Historia Regum*. The text, its dating, authorship and ideological stance are discussed by Wright, *The Historia Regum*, vi–xiv; Morris, 'The *Gesta Regum Britanniae*'; Putter, 'Latin Historiography', 95–7; Warren, *History on the Edge*, 222–44.

<sup>207</sup> William of Rennes, *Gesta Regum Britanniae*, IV, ll. 508–9, ed. and transl. Wright, *The Historia Regum*, 114–5.

<sup>208</sup> William of Rennes, *Gesta Regum Britanniae*, X, l. 492, ed. and transl. Wright, *The Historia Regum*, 286–7. Rio, *Mythes fondateurs*, 91–3; Kouskoff, 'La littérature de langue latine'.

<sup>209</sup> Himsworth, 'Brut y Brenhinedd'.

An occasional interest in the Breton language and its relationship with Welsh is seen. Gerald of Wales (*ca* 1145–1223), who may have undertaken some research among the Bretons when asserting the archiepiscopal rights of St Davids, wrote in his *Descriptio Kambriae* (1193–4): ‘In both Cornwall and Brittany they speak almost the same language as in Wales . . . it is rougher and less clearly pronounced, but probably closer to the original British speech, or so I think myself.’<sup>210</sup> The sense of Welsh linguistic superiority emerges in an addition to *Historia Brittonum* – approximately contemporary with Gerald’s description – explaining the Welsh word for Brittany, *Llydaw*, by stating that the Bretons are called *Letewicion*, meaning ‘half-dumb’ (Welsh *lled-taw*), because their male British ancestors cut out the tongues of the Gaulish women they married, to ensure that their offspring would speak only British.<sup>211</sup> The same story is told briefly at the end of *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, a vernacular romance probably composed in the early thirteenth century, containing material derived from *HRB*. Maxen is a Roman emperor who comes to Britain to woo the beautiful Elen, daughter of Eudaf, and then reconquers Rome with the help of her brothers Kynan and Adeon. Kynan’s group stay in Brittany, and cut out the women’s tongues: ‘and there have often come and still do come men of that language from Brittany’, the text concludes.<sup>212</sup> That this story, clearly Cambrocentric, became known in Brittany (see Chapter 5) is further evidence for Welsh-Breton contact.<sup>213</sup>

As detailed earlier in this chapter, Brittany played a role in several twelfth-century Welsh saints’ Lives. Two praise-poems to saints in Welsh dating from the same period, *Canu Cadfan* and *Canu Tysilio*, made mention of their saints’ cults in Brittany.<sup>214</sup> An effort was made in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century to incorporate Breton saints more systematically into a genealogical schema of British saints in the *ByS* collection.<sup>215</sup> One of the aims of the compiler was to show how the holy men of Wales came of noble stock from everywhere in the British-speaking world: from northern Britain, Cornwall and Brittany as well as Wales: ‘*Bonedd y Saint* is a statement of a pan-Brittonic ideology’.<sup>216</sup> To

<sup>210</sup> *Cornubia vero, et Armorica Britannia, lingua utuntur fere persimili . . . Quae, quanto delicata minus et incompressa magis, tanto antiquo linguae Britannicae idiomati magis, ut arbitror, appropriata.* Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Kambriae*, I.6, ed. Dimock, 177, transl. Thorpe, 231.

<sup>211</sup> Corpus Christi College Cambridge 139, fol. 171v, lower margin; *HB*, ed. Mommsen, 167, note 1; transl. Morris, *Nennius*, ch. 27, p. 24. See Dumville, ‘Celtic-Latin Texts’, 24–6; Roberts, ‘*Breuddwyd*’, 310–12; Roberts (ed.), *Breudwyt*, lxxxv.

<sup>212</sup> Transl. Gantz, ‘The Dream of Maxen’, 126–7. <sup>213</sup> Bourges, ‘Guillaume le Breton’.

<sup>214</sup> Jones and Owen, ‘Twelfth-Century Welsh Hagiography’.

<sup>215</sup> *EWGT*, 51–87; *MWG*, 42, 47, 200–1. See the remarks of Charles-Edwards in *WAB*, 617; Lewis, *Medieval Welsh Poems*, 15.

<sup>216</sup> Lewis, ‘The Saints’, 439.

include saints of Breton ancestry was important. The choice of particular saints to represent Brittany may have been less so. Apart from Paternus, only a few of the saints of *Llydaw* in *ByS* have any known cult in Brittany, and for those that have (Gwen, Mael, Sulien and Tegai, if the last is identifiable with the pan-Brittonic Ke), there is no suggestion in their Breton cult-evidence of any association either with each other or with their Welsh avatars.<sup>217</sup> (The historical implausibility of the claim that a large number of foundational Welsh saints came from Brittany has even prompted some scholars to argue that *Llydaw* meant a region in South Wales.<sup>218</sup>) Perhaps a pre-existing confraternity of Welsh saints led by Cadfan and Padarn was redefined as Breton after the hagiography of Paternus of Vannes became available in Wales; or an association of churches that had really had Breton connections in the past, perhaps before the Viking Age, was being imperfectly reconstructed.<sup>219</sup> On the whole, it seems most plausible that the original nucleus of the ‘Letavian’ group was the group brought together in the Life of Padarn: Padarn, Cadfan, Tydecho and Cynllo, if the latter is correctly identified as the ‘Ketinlau’ of the Life.<sup>220</sup> Churches dedicated to these four form an arc around the northern and eastern borders of Ceredigion, from the coastal sites of Tywyn in the north (Cadfan) to Llanbadarn Fawr in the south (Padarn), with churches dedicated to Padarn scattered among more local blocs devoted to the others.<sup>221</sup> Perhaps the ‘Letavian’ group originally defined a territory where the community of Padarn claimed precedence, but was obliged to share it with Cadfan when the latter’s church overtook Padarn’s in importance.<sup>222</sup> Part of the point may have been to differentiate this bloc from churches with founders who were claimed as Gwynedd dynastic saints, descended from Ceredig, the eponym of Ceredigion (as listed in the *Progenies Keredic* tract).<sup>223</sup> Other saints were later added to the nexus, thanks to its leading churches’ influence.

The ‘Letavian’ saints in *ByS* are grouped geographically, by their association with the island of Enlli; spiritually, under Cadfan’s leadership;

<sup>217</sup> St Tysilio of Meifod was identified with the Breton Sulien during the Middle Ages (see Chapter 6), but the supposedly Letavian Sulien was not.

<sup>218</sup> Howlett and Thomas, ‘*Vita Sancti Paterni*’, 68–75, 95–7; *WCD*, 420. See Jankulak, ‘Cross-Channel Intercourse’.

<sup>219</sup> Building on a suggestion by Miller, *The Saints*, 93–4. <sup>220</sup> *WCD*, 205.

<sup>221</sup> For the Tydecho churches, see Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 1 note 3; for the others, *WCD*, 84, 205.

<sup>222</sup> Tywyn was rebuilt in Romanesque style in the 1140s by Cadwaladr ap Gruffudd, sub-king of Ceredigion, and celebrated in verse by Llywellyn Fardd, the Gwynedd court-poet (Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, 55); Llanbadarn was restored as a collegiate church some time after 1136, but did not recover its pre-Norman importance: J. Wyn Evans, ‘The Survival’; Bowen, *A History*, 63.

<sup>223</sup> *EWGT*, 20; *MWG*, 137–42.

and genealogically, by their ‘Llydaw’ ancestry. Their ancestors included ‘Emyr Llydaw’ (‘the ruler of Brittany’), father of Gwen Teir Bronn and of a series of brothers who were each the parent or grandparent of a saint; ‘Eneas Ledewic [the Breton] of Llydaw’, husband of Gwen and father of Cadfan; ‘Ithel Hael of Llydaw’, father of Tegai and Trillo and their sister Llechid; and ‘Gwyndaf Hen of Llydaw’, father of Henwyn, Cadfan’s confessor.<sup>224</sup> Conceivably, the name ‘Ithel Hael’ refers to Juthael, the father of saints in the Breton ‘Riwal genealogy’. Otherwise, the lack of any connection between these putative ancestors and the founding-figures mentioned in Breton hagiography leaves scholarship somewhat adrift.<sup>225</sup> ‘Emyr Llydaw’ appears also in *Brut y Brenhinedd*, the thirteenth-century Welsh-language translation of *HRB*, and in late medieval Welsh Arthurian texts influenced by Continental romance. It seems to be a title rather than a name, and Rachel Bromwich concluded that it was simply a generic term for a Breton ruler. Its appearance seems to admit the uncertainty of genealogical knowledge relating to Brittany.<sup>226</sup>

Another vernacular text in which the role of Brittany is frustratingly vague is *Englynion y Beddau* (‘Stanzas of the Graves’). This text, a series of brief three-line stanzas on the burial places of Welsh heroes of the remote past, is found in manuscripts of the thirteenth century and later, but a version of it may have existed as early as the ninth or tenth century.<sup>227</sup> One sequence of verses seems to allude to at least one Breton character:

The grave of Beidawg the Red in the region of Rhiw Lyfnaw,  
The grave of Lluosgar in Ceri,  
And at the Ford of Bridw the grave of Omni.

Long past and hidden the turmoil he caused,  
The soil of Machawy covers him:  
Long [and] white the fingers of Beidawg the Red.

Long past the turmoil he caused and his wealth,  
The soil of Machawy upon him,  
Beidawg the Red, son of Emyr Llydaw.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>224</sup> ByS, 25, 26, 27, *EWGT*, 58. For saints descended from Ithel Hael, see *WCD*, under the names of the individual saints.

<sup>225</sup> *DF*, 229–30.

<sup>226</sup> Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 503–4 and 567; Lloyd-Jones, ‘emyr’; but see also *WCD*, 423; Koch, ‘New Thoughts’, 19.

<sup>227</sup> T. Jones, ‘The Black Book’, 100; Petts, ‘*De Sinu*’, 163–7.

<sup>228</sup> *Bet Beidauc Rut yn amgant Riv Lyvnav / bet Lluoscar y Keri / ac yn Rid Britu bet Omni. / Pell y vysi ac argut / gueryd Machave ae cut / hirguyn bysset Beidauc Rut. / Pell y vysi ac anau / gueryd Machave arnau / Beidauc Rut ab Emer Llydaw. Englynion y Beddau*, stanzas 36–8, ed. and transl. T. Jones, ‘The Black Book’, 124–5.

There are a number of interesting features in these verses. First, it seems that the group of three stanzas is not unitary. In the first stanza, Beidawg and his grave occupy only one line and the poet immediately lists the graves of two other heroes. The second and third stanzas, as Thomas Jones pointed out, share an opening formula ('long past') which differs from the standard 'grave-stanza', 'and their source may be a series of elegiac *englynion* in some lost story told of Beiddawg [*sic*] Rud'.<sup>229</sup> The place-names are unidentified, except for Ceri (Tfn.) and Machawy = Bachawy (Maesd.), which suggest an association with the central Welsh borderlands. The personal names Beidawg and Lluosgar too are unattested, but the third member of the group, Omni, has a (Latin-derived) name that is common in Brittany, but not otherwise found in Wales, reinforcing the possibility that some genuinely Breton tradition underlay these stanzas.<sup>230</sup>

*Englynion y Beddau* and *ByS*, as sources, are a scholar's nightmare. Anonymous, formulaic, consisting of short, easily reassembled sections, and dealing with a remote past that was already the stuff of legend in the authors' time, the texts as they stand are practically undatable and no individual section can be assigned beyond doubt to an 'original' version. *Englynion y Beddau* does suggest the bare possibility that traditions about heroes descended from 'a ruler of Brittany' – or perhaps, even more vaguely, 'a king beyond the sea' – circulated in Wales as early as the ninth or tenth century. But after the Norman Conquest, the few more recent Breton figures who were adopted (anachronistically) into literature in Welsh were those who had a high profile throughout the Anglo-Norman world – Alan Fergant (duke 1084–1112) and his son Brian Fitz Count – which does not suggest any privileged link with Brittany.<sup>231</sup> All told, traditions relating to Breton secular figures in medieval Welsh lore are scattered and extremely vague.

The evidence for communication between Wales and Brittany in the post-Conquest period is heavily skewed towards South Wales thanks to the preferential survival of hagiography. While the clergy of Morgannwg and St Davids were learning to live with Norman conquerors, northern Wales was a battleground and lacked bishops

<sup>229</sup> T. Jones, 'The Black Book', 104.

<sup>230</sup> Tanguy, 'Les noms d'hommes', 57; Tanguy, 'Index generalis', 104. Oddly, the name *Beidauc rut* is that of the plant *beidiog rudd*, the wild pansy (*viola tricolor*). It is tempting to identify *Beidauc* with the Breton exile *Budic* who features in the Llandaf Life of St Teilo (and was presumably developed thence into the character *Budicius* presented by Geoffrey of Monmouth), but this seems phonologically impossible (Patrick Sims-Williams, pers. comm.).

<sup>231</sup> *ByS*, 58, *EWGT*, 63; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 414–5; *LBS*, IV.429–31; *WCD*, 472; *Culhwch ac Olwen*, I. 216, ed. Bromwich and Evans, 8, 79–80.

for extended periods.<sup>232</sup> A vital window for the recording of hagiographical traditions may have been missed. *ByS* belatedly attempted to do for northern Welsh saints what the scholars of Llancarfan, St Davids and Llanbadarn had done for the south, but the attempt did not go much beyond the listing of saints in somewhat fluid groups. Place-name evidence (see [Chapter 6](#)), like *ByS*, suggests that there was sharing of saints' cults between northern and central Wales and Brittany in the early Middle Ages, but the two classes of evidence barely connect. In Brittany an early generation of Welsh and pan-Brittonic saints were forgotten in all but name. In Wales the presence of Breton saints was asserted, but few details were remembered and little new information was sought out.

By the late Middle Ages it seems that each region's historic contact with the other was valued for symbolic reasons, but was rarely the object of active interest. Breton contact with Wales – in the form of trade and occasional military support of rebels and exiles – continued and becomes more visible as the source-material improves, but, as Michael Jones underlines, Breton-Welsh relations barely differed from those that existed between Bretons and English, Irish or Scots.<sup>233</sup> Breton support for the Glyn Dŵr rebellion (1400–8), for instance, was given as part of a French army pursuing advantage in the Hundred Years' War, rather than as one British-speaking region supporting another.

In fact, after the break-up of the Angevin empire, Wales and Brittany were in very different political positions. Wales, and also Scotland and Ireland, were perceived by the English crown as hostile foreign entities, their languages and cultures as barbarisms. Brittany, from the point of view of the competing French and English crowns, was a province in a loose association of similar provinces, dynastically detachable but not in any sense alien. Its ruling class was French in culture; its linguistic oddity could be overlooked in a huge, inevitably multilingual kingdom.<sup>234</sup> Brittany, in short, was no longer a threat. Never after the accession of Pierre de Dreux would English or French scholars fret about a general British uprising, or detect dangerous pan-British sentiment in a belief in the return of King Arthur. Nor would any patriotic Breton, observing the ruthless measures of King Edward I of England against Welsh 'traitors', feel eager to claim a share in a contemporary British identity. Duke John II of Brittany (1286–1305), as brother-in-law and close associate of Edward

<sup>232</sup> Pearson, 'The Creation'; J. R. Davies, 'Bishop Kentigern', 83–4.

<sup>233</sup> M. Jones, 'La Bretagne', 89; M. Jones, 'Brittany and Wales', 40–9.

<sup>234</sup> For the multilingualism of France into modern times, see Robb, *The Discovery of France*, 50–70; for the growth of the administrative use of French in Breton-speaking medieval Brittany, see M. Jones, 'L'usage du français'.



I, apparently acquiesced in the conquest of Wales, and several Anglo-Breton families of the Welsh March played an active part in it.<sup>235</sup> Late medieval Bretons had the option to be *bons Bretons et bons Francoys*, an option that was not open (indeed would be meaningless) to Welsh and Scots in relation to the English.<sup>236</sup> Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, written towards the end of the fourteenth century, was a revived Breton *lai* in which the central character symbolised Brittany, caught between England and France in a tragic tug of love.<sup>237</sup> But culturally and socially, if not in terms of sheer power, this *ménage à trois* was at least a game played among equals.

<sup>235</sup> M. Jones, 'Notes', 95.      <sup>236</sup> Quoted in M. Jones, 'Bons Bretons', 346.

<sup>237</sup> Godlove, "Engelonde".

## Conclusion

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In the last century of the Roman Empire in the West, many decisions were taken which were doubtless intended as short-term measures, temporary concessions, to be reversed when affairs returned to normal. Affairs never did return to 'normal', and no one was ever able to fully clear up the resulting muddle, which over the centuries came to be dignified in history and myth as the 'birth of the nations of Europe'.<sup>1</sup> One of those short-term measures may have been to allow the creation of a substitute or 'overflow' Britain on the Continent: Brittany. Whether or not Brittany was inaugurated by an official act of the Roman Empire or its agents, it took on a life of its own, albeit formlessly at first.

At times in prehistory, inhabitants of the Armorican peninsula had embraced the role of thalassocrats: the megalith-builders, the suppliers of tin in the early Bronze Age, and the traders of the pre-Roman Iron Age had faced the open sea and reaped its riches.<sup>2</sup> The marginalised British and Armorican provincials of the Mediterranean empire of Rome presumably knew nothing of this, and were poorly placed to fill the role. The wealth that had once flowed through the peninsula was channelled elsewhere. The Frankish kingdoms that replaced Roman Gaul, like their predecessor, mainly faced east and south. (France's comparative lack of interest in the Atlantic proved to be millennial; even at the climax of Europe's expansion in the nineteenth century, the proportion of France's population emigrating to the Americas was smaller than that of any other major European country.<sup>3</sup>) Brittany seemed to be a corridor that led nowhere, a dead end for an isolated, *empaysanné* population.<sup>4</sup> Even those successful thalassocrats the Vikings did not trouble to ransack it for long, let alone settle there. During the economic upturn of the

<sup>1</sup> Innes, 'Historical Writing', 540.

<sup>2</sup> Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*, 145–51, 207–9, 233–40, 287–9, 322–9, 345–9.

<sup>3</sup> Haines, 'French Migration'.

<sup>4</sup> 'It is as if it was a short-circuited country, unknown to sailors and merchants or rather feared by them' (*C'est comme si c'était un pays court-circuité, ignoré des navigateurs et des marchands ou plutôt craint par eux*): Giot, 'Les premiers Bretons et les pots', 64.

eleventh and twelfth centuries Brittany played a part in the new political contacts across the Channel, but apparently little role in the region's burgeoning trade,<sup>5</sup> unless by piracy and right of wreck, exemplified in the often-quoted boast of Viscount Guihomar of Léon (1168–79) that he owned a precious stone that was worth a hundred thousand *solidi* every year, 'and he meant a reef on which ships were broken'.<sup>6</sup>

Even so, with minimal resources and little official attention, a connection was forged between Brittany and western Britain in the post-Roman centuries, the consequences of which endured in language and cultural memory. To sum up the subject of this book, what was the nature of the connection? How durable and real was that 'contact' – or was it largely 'myth' rather than 'history'?

It has become apparent throughout this investigation that the stories consciously preserved by Bretons (and their neighbours) about their British past are thin and disappointing compared to the weight of the evidence of language, place-names, script and cult. It is this unsatisfactory position that has tempted historians of Brittany from the late Middle Ages onwards to be persuaded by the pan-British fantasy of Geoffrey of Monmouth, or to attempt to create secular history from hagiography. It is obvious that many truer and more interesting tales of travel between Britain and Brittany could have been preserved, but never were: it is time to sum up the possible reasons why this was so.

To the extent that the political history of early medieval Brittany can be written, it is the history of a relationship with its Continental neighbours, and at times with England – with the powers that at different times dominated and sponsored it. The political paradox for Brittany was that the geography and social structure of the peninsula were so unsuited to the development of political power in the early medieval style that effective rulership on any but the smallest scale could be created only under external auspices.<sup>7</sup> In so far as Brittany existed as a political entity or entities, it did so when the power of its rulers was underwritten by more powerful patrons. However, such rulership, once created, was resistant to further absorption. Brittany could be ruled effectively *neither* as an independent polity *nor* as a province of a larger kingdom until after the resources of government had been increased by economic growth and the bureaucratisation of the state in the central Middle Ages.

Early medieval sources are concentrated where political power is at stake. Thus, time and again, we find that when Brittany and its contacts

<sup>5</sup> Cassard, *Les Bretons et la mer*, 131–3.

<sup>6</sup> *Et intelligebat de saxo a quo frangebantur naves: Communes petitiones Brittonum*, ed. La Borderie, 'Nouveau recueil', 102.

<sup>7</sup> See [Chapters 1 and 2](#).

emerge into the 'light' of relatively plentiful source-material, it is a connection – usually troubled – with Francia/France or with England that shines the light. The 'British' identity of Brittany did not take the political shape that would have attracted the attention of scholars. Contact with Celtic Britain did not involve political control: cross-Channel overlordships may perhaps have been a reality in the late fifth and sixth centuries, while the memory of the reach of Roman government and some of its resources were still in place, but the distances were too great and the rewards too small for them to continue.

But the obscurity of Brittany was not due merely to its political marginality. There were other reasons why the Brittonic-speaking regions, and Brittany most of all, were under-represented in the founding narratives of medieval Europe. One may point to the attitude of Gildas, the originator of the Welsh and Breton sense of history. Gildas, looking back to the Roman Empire, saw nothing to admire in the British rulers of his own time. Unlike Isidore writing of the Goths in the seventh century, or Bede of the English in the eighth, he was unwilling to give the rulers of his people a positive place in Christian history.<sup>8</sup> Gildas was one of the more moderate founders of a monastic movement whose ultra-ascetic 'ethos and ... highly fissile nature ... was inimical to historiography', as David Dumville suggests.<sup>9</sup> Not merely that, but Gildas had internalised the negative image of the Britons consistently presented by classical ethnography, which cast its long shadow over the whole of the Middle Ages. The Britons, last of the peoples conquered by Rome, had become 'locked in a perennial literary cycle' which did not allow them to 'overcome their status within imperial society as defeated barbarians'.<sup>10</sup> The authority of this depiction was not lessened by the demise of the Roman Empire. The Carolingian authors Ermoldus Nigellus and Regino of Prüm, and William of Poitiers in the eleventh century, recycled the stereotypes of the Britons created by Caesar and Cassius Dio. From the late sixth century onwards, this ethnic disdain was reinforced by the perception that the Britons were opposed to legitimate authority in the Church. This presumably explains the century and more of near silence about either Britons or Bretons in Continental historical sources, from the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth century. While monasticism and missionary initiatives flourished in the Merovingian realms with English and Irish participation, the Britons were shunned by 'civilised' Christian society.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Historia*, Prologue, transl. Donini and Ford, *Isidore*, 1–2; Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I.22, I.34, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 68–9, 116–7. See Lifshitz, 'The Vicissitudes', 377–82.

<sup>9</sup> Dumville, 'Saint David', 39. <sup>10</sup> Hustwit, 'Britishness', 23.

<sup>11</sup> *WAB*, 239–41, 396–410.

It has been argued above that the distinctive shared Welsh, Cornish and Breton pattern of devotion to saints may have become established during this period, the three outposts maintaining solidarity in their isolation.

In the later eighth and ninth centuries, Welsh and Bretons were re-admitted to the wider Christian world; from the Viking Age to the eleventh century there was a lull in anti-British rhetoric, as Britons were re-evaluated as necessary allies in the fight against heathen invaders. Yet this new acceptance must have caused the relative weakening of their mutual ties, and possibly the selective 'forgetting' of traditions about the preceding generations. This can be seen in developments in the cult of saints. During the Carolingian era and the Viking Age, a number of Breton saints found international recognition, to which their British origins were no obstacle. However, many cults of pan-Brittonic saints seem to have become obsolete by this time, or to have required later revival. More than one factor may have been at work in this process of selective memory. On the one hand, most Breton ecclesiastical establishments before the Viking Age were probably relatively small and impermanent, resulting in a rapid turnover of active saints' cults even during the period of closest contact with Celtic Britain; although relations with Welsh and Cornish churches may have been a constant, those relations may not have had much staying power at the level of individual institutions in Brittany. (This may also help to explain why so few specifically Breton saints have cults in Wales, and none in Ireland.) On the other hand, although Breton and Welsh scholars still cultivated relationships during and after the Carolingian Renaissance, as the study of glosses makes clear, the relative importance of the Welsh Church as a fount of authority could not but decline once the Breton Church was under Carolingian tutelage and had multiple Continental contacts. Most of the evidence suggests that Breton, Welsh and Irish scholars met at Continental centres, their contact facilitated and to some extent diluted by membership of wider networks. Also to be considered is the likely effect of late tenth-century Viking attacks on the Welsh Church and its ability to maintain contact with Brittany: John Reuben Davies has argued for a decline at that time in the upkeep of the cults of Welsh saints (similar to what has here been suggested for Carolingian Brittany).<sup>12</sup>

A weakening of ecclesiastical contact went together with divergence in secular culture. An extremely rich Irish secular vernacular literature was already making the transition into writing in the seventh century; Welsh

<sup>12</sup> J. R. Davies, 'The Saints', 395; for the Vikings see W. Davies, *Patterns of Power*, 51, 57–60.

was following suit, at least on a small scale, by the ninth at the latest.<sup>13</sup> Despite language playing an early and strong part in Breton identity, this did not happen in Brittany.<sup>14</sup> Already in the sixth to eighth centuries, as suggested earlier, the Breton elite was under-resourced compared to some of its Insular Celtic counterparts, and placed at a remove from the development of Insular aristocratic culture. It may never have produced the full range of literary genres seen in medieval Wales: the elegy, praise-poetry, saga-poetry and the heroic tales implied therein. The installation of Breton rulers by the Carolingians, and these rulers' imitation of Carolingian styles of power, probably resulted in a further turn away from the vernacular culture of the Insular world. The first physical evidence for the writing of verse in Welsh – the *englynion* written into the Juvencus manuscript Cambridge University Library Ff.4.42 – dates from the ninth century or the first half of the tenth.<sup>15</sup> It was at this very time that Breton scholars were abandoning Insular script for Caroline minuscule, a symbolic departure from a shared Insular past. In Wales, a similar transformation did not take place until the thirteenth century, when the demise of Insular script led to the wholesale loss of earlier books, ensuring that all surviving complete manuscripts devoted to literature in Welsh date from after 1250.<sup>16</sup> But by then the place of Welsh in written literature was assured, and some older texts were recopied as well as new ones composed. In making their choice for the Continent so soon, Breton scholars perhaps missed a vital potential stage in the development of a written vernacular literature. It is likely that the cultivation of oral literature in Breton began a slide down the social scale at this point, if it had not already done so.

This process helps explain the nature of the Breton historical tradition. We have seen how Bretons from the ninth century onwards developed a series of what may loosely be called myths, but more accurately aetiologies, to explain how Brittany came to exist. It is clear that in so far as they have come down to us, these origin stories are not popular traditions, nor yet oral lore formally cultivated by expert practitioners and committed to writing at a late stage in its formation. Rather, they are literate essays in historical explanation. There is little indication that those elements that have reached us are the preserved fragments of a larger pool of material: they have none of the allusiveness of the Welsh triads and early poetry or

<sup>13</sup> Carey, 'Learning', 62–6; *WAB*, 651–5 and references.

<sup>14</sup> Charles-Edwards, 'The Making of Nations', 22.

<sup>15</sup> Cambridge University Library Ff.4.42; the *englynion* are edited by Williams, *The Beginnings*, 89–121, and Haycock, *Blodeugerdd*, no. 1, 1–23. For the dating of the earliest writing down of Welsh verse, see *WAB*, 651–9 and references.

<sup>16</sup> Huws, 'Five Ancient Books', 67–8.

the learned tales of Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the quantity of scholarly ‘knowledge’ available about the Breton past seems always to have been limited and jejune. Rather than being chosen from an abundant variety of local traditions, most of it can be traced to a few points of origin, and be shown to have spread via particular well-used connections. The history of Gildas, the *Ormesta Britanniae*, was the ultimate authority. The Histories of Gregory of Tours were fundamental in laying down a cast of secular characters who would recur in most reconstructions of the Breton past – Conomor, Bodic, Theuderic and Waroch. The First Life of St Samson was a blueprint for subsequent hagiography, while the hagiographers of Landévennec added two more founding figures, Gradlon and Riwal. Conan Meriadoc, a Welsh creation, vaulted over all of these in importance for learned Bretons, thanks to the genius of Geoffrey of Monmouth in creating a memorable nodal point where Brittany branched from the Trojan-British family tree. As for the routes by which information travelled between Celtic Britain and Brittany, the role of the monastery of Llancarfan as a clearing house of information stands out for its longevity: in the ninth century it relayed traditions of St Brendan from Ireland to Alet; in the tenth it may have provided information about Gildas to his Rhuys hagiographer; and after the Norman Conquest, its scholars exchanged information with the abbeys of Cornouaille and may have passed them material from northern Britain. After the Norman Conquest, the Dol-Monmouth connection also became important. Not only Insular but also Continental ecclesiastical centres served as meeting points for Insular and Breton views of the past: the role of Fleury in the tenth century stands out.

Much of the knowledge spread through these channels was probably oral in the sense that it was passed on during face-to-face meetings, but the context for its transmission and recording was entirely ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastical knowledge in the Middle Ages of course had a vast oral hinterland. Clergy committed sacred texts to memory; the liturgy was performed aloud and absorbed by listeners through repetition; saints, founders and benefactors were commemorated in public, and their deeds proclaimed in homilies and lections in front of locals and pilgrims; the fame of miracles was spread by word of mouth, and the sharing – sometimes competitive – of tales of one’s saint and community must have taken place whenever devotees met, hence the impossibility of tracing all the influences in hagiography to textual models.<sup>18</sup> Yet all this knowledge

<sup>17</sup> For the oral referential framework of medieval Welsh literature, see Guy, ‘Constantine’, 382–5 and references.

<sup>18</sup> A good example is the miracle competition in Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, II.18, ed. Lot, 428–9.



began with books, especially the pre-eminent holy Book, the Bible, and aspired to return to an authoritative written form: the deeds of saints found their natural and fitting home in sacred writing, *hagiographia*. If tradition about the Breton past was cultivated as a specifically oral and secular art form, the evidence for this survives only in isolated fragments: the best example is the Latin praise poem for Judicael, and the same saintly king's genealogy. It was presumably his status as a saint that allowed a limited amount of secular lore about him to cross the threshold of an exclusively clerical written record.

The mere fact that no vernacular literature in Breton survives in writing until the fifteenth century is not a conclusive argument against the aristocratic cultivation of oral literature. Even in Wales, no extended vernacular prose texts can be dated before *ca* 1100 in their surviving forms.<sup>19</sup> (Cornwall, of course, was in a different position because it was incorporated into the English kingdom as early as the tenth century, and no longer had Cornish-speaking political leadership.) It might not have been until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Breton lost so much ground to French in aristocratic culture that it failed to make the large-scale entry into writing that then took place in Wales. However, the almost complete absence of oral-literary modes of expression even in the Latin literature of medieval Brittany makes it seem more likely that oral literature lacked the aristocratic support in Brittany that it had in Wales, even before the Norman Conquest swept Breton elites into the French mainstream. Jacques Le Goff wrote of literate, clerical culture 'refusing' and 'blocking' 'popular' vernacular culture in the early Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> But in most of Europe, where the popular vernacular was also the language of the lay aristocracy, oral material had only to overcome one barrier – the barrier between oral and written – to enter the historical record. As the written word expanded its remit to include secular vernacular literature, oral and literary modes flowed into each other. Breton oral culture faced a double barrier. The Breton elite was comparatively weak to begin with, and, as suggested earlier, could gain meaningful political power only with external, usually Frankish, assistance; insofar as the elite gained the wealth and power to be effective patrons, they gained it by accepting a vernacular culture and a language other than their own, Romance, then French.

<sup>19</sup> Rodway, *Dating Medieval Welsh Literature*, 1–34. Russell, 'Privilegium Sancti Teliau', argues against dating the earliest surviving example of Welsh legal prose, *Breint Teilo* in *LL*, earlier than the second quarter of the twelfth century.

<sup>20</sup> Le Goff, 'Clerical Culture', 158 – although his contention is criticised by more recent writers: see Smith, 'Oral and Written', 310–11 and references.

Without a doubt, early medieval Bretons must have produced a variety of accounts of their past in Breton: family stories and genealogies, ballads and folk tales. West of Vannes and Saint-Brieuc, Breton continued to be spoken at fairly high social levels throughout the Middle Ages. After the eleventh century it was presumably lesser landowners and the nascent urban middle class who continued to patronise oral literature as an art sophisticated enough, for instance, to preserve internal rhyme in verse, a common feature in Welsh poetry but unknown in Cornish, which must imply a continuity of training and practice going back to before the divergence of the Welsh and Breton languages.<sup>21</sup> Poets' repertoire presumably included narratives of the sort that served as prototypes for Marie de France's Breton *lais*, ancestors of the modern Breton ballads. (This in itself is interesting and demands explanation, since strictly narrative poetry was otherwise rare in the medieval Celtic languages.<sup>22</sup>) Storytellers must have embroidered on motifs such as werewolves,<sup>23</sup> the mysterious 'bird-man', and the 'drowned city', which appear in medieval Latin and French texts connected with Brittany and in modern vernacular versions, and had analogues in literary and popular tales in Ireland, Wales and Cornwall.<sup>24</sup> They may also have told tales of family origins and feuds, freely adapted over the generations, like the 'Alan Rebrit' story by Walter Map, and tales of Arthur the deathless hunter-hero, as in *Vita S. Efflami*.<sup>25</sup> But for the duration of the Middle Ages almost all such storytelling in Breton was effectively 'blocked' from the written record, meaning that our impression of the depth and longevity of the cultural contacts between Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago will inevitably remain incomplete.

However, though this investigation has been largely limited to the most self-conscious and educated, and hence in a way the most superficial layer of early medieval culture, the exercise has been illuminating. The relationship of Bretons to their Insular and Continental neighbours went through several changes and each change can be seen reflected in a number of literary productions. Shared knowledge that was once characterised as floating 'tradition' can be traced to specific origins and channels of communication with some degree of probability. The movements of manuscripts, and the sharing of cultural goods exemplified by

<sup>21</sup> Le Bihan (ed.), *An Dialog*, 18.   <sup>22</sup> *WAB*, 655–6.

<sup>23</sup> John Carey noted that the earliest surviving example of the 'Werewolf's Tale' plot is in the *lai* of *Bisclavret* by Marie de France and suggested that the plot had Welsh or Breton origins: Carey, 'Werewolves', 41–3; Bernhardt-House, 'Horses, Hounds', 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> Padel, 'Oral and Literary Culture'; Padel, 'Evidence for Oral Tales'; Constantine, *Breton Ballads*, 66–70; Laurent, 'La *gwerz* de Skolan'.

<sup>25</sup> See [Chapter 7](#).

saints' cults, too complex to be explained by geographical determinism, must be taken as evidence of deliberately chosen, personal contacts. It was a world where discreet Bretons might be active in more places than they were heard of, and at times their contributions unexpectedly crossed cultural boundaries, as in the transmission of Irish computistic science through Brittany to Fleury and beyond, or the mysterious similarity between certain English and Breton saints' Lives. In short our view of the Bretons, placed between the Continent and the Insular world, can be sharpened and humanised: their world was dynamic, not static, and they were formed but not trapped by it. In books and essay collections devoted to considering the 'Celtic' world in all its aspects, Brittany is likely to remain, as it does now, hovering uneasily on the fringes like a guest who is unsure of an invitation.<sup>26</sup> But the foregoing may – hopefully – have helped to clarify the ways in which Brittany both is and is not comparable to the rest of the Celtic-speaking world.

Many questions offer themselves for further investigation. Archaeology, language and name studies, and genetic studies still have much to contribute. As studies of early Christianity and the cults of saints in the Atlantic Archipelago and in Francia make rapid progress, so our view of how Breton churches and saints fit into this evolving picture will need constant adjustment. The late-medieval re-workings of earlier sources found in the Chronicle of Saint-Brieuc, the history of Pierre Le Baud, and hagiographical manuscript-compilations deserve fuller investigation. Also, a wider set of comparanda is desirable: in clarifying the extent to which Brittany shared the historic experience of the Celtic-speaking regions in the early Middle Ages, a missing element for comparison in this book has been the rest of the Atlantic coast of Europe: western France in general, Gascony, coastal Spain and Portugal.<sup>27</sup> The medieval history of much of this zone has until recently been more neglected than that of Brittany and the Celtic world, which is a measure of the success of the latter in mythologising their history from the Middle Ages onwards. Studying Brittany in this context might blur the dichotomy between Celtic and Latin, Insular and Continental; on the other hand it might clarify it further.

What can we encounter in studying early medieval Brittany that we would not find in a more developed form in the richer, more socially stratified society of one of its near neighbours, in the Atlantic Archipelago

<sup>26</sup> One example of many essay-collections with 'Celtic' in the title but nothing on Brittany inside is Ó hAnnracháin and Armstrong (ed.), *Christianities*. See also, for instance, Stoye, *West Britons*, a fine study of identity in early modern Cornwall which draws parallels with the rest of Celtic Britain but never mentions Brittany.

<sup>27</sup> For illuminating comparisons, see W. Davies, *Water Mills*, and W. Davies, 'Holding Court'.

or on the Continent? Was early medieval Brittany, in the end, anything more than an under-resourced culture, a hanger-on of developments that were centred elsewhere? The true originality of Brittany is expressed less in its surviving literary culture than in the life of its village communities, the *plebes*, which have received only brief discussion in this book but are revealed much more fully in the charter-evidence from ninth-century Redon.<sup>28</sup> At this point it seems apposite to quote one of the charters that is listed by Wendy Davies as an example of ‘local [diplomatic] practice’ in her study of the composition of the Redon cartulary:

A notice of who was present when Argantlon and her sons redeemed Randeummou from Drihiunet the priest, after Riwallon had pledged it for [ten?] *solidi* and five *denarii*, and if they had not redeemed it then, Argantlon the sister of Riwallon and her sons would have forfeited those ten *solidi* and five *denarii* into the hand of Drihiunet the priest, and she received that land in freehold and ownership and in *dicombit*, without any services or render to anyone except Argantlon and her sons, in the presence of these witnesses: [twenty-one names, including Portitoe the *machtiern* and two priests]. This was done on the first of April, the second day of the week, in the reign of the glorious lord and emperor Louis, Wido count in Vannes, Raginarius bishop, Portitoe and Uurbili both *machtierms* in the *plebs* of Carentoir, and I, Haeldetuuid, wrote and signed this.<sup>29</sup>

The material culture of the people who produced that record has disappeared without trace. Noël-Yves Tonnerre has written of the ‘tragic insufficiency’ of the yields of grain on which their survival depended.<sup>30</sup> Yet they had the resources to dignify a purely village-level transaction such as this with a written record, in which late Roman property law, Christian institutions, Frankish rulership and monetary values, and British-Celtic names and legal concepts sit side by side.<sup>31</sup> Brittany may have been ‘ungovernable’ at the provincial level, but this was balanced by an exceptionally high level of participatory self-regulation at the level of the local community. Haeldetuuid, the abbot and notary who wrote this charter and several others, had a strong idea of proper legal form. The twenty-one men who attended to witness Argantlon’s redemption of her mortgage took their responsibilities seriously. Doubtless, while Argantlon, Portitoe and the rest deliberated at their meeting, their slaves toiled on. All the same, the proportion of individuals taking an active part in legal business, in a village community of which the total population can have been at most

<sup>28</sup> CR; for analysis, see particularly W. Davies, *Small Worlds*; ‘Priests’; ‘People and Places’; ‘Suretyship’.

<sup>29</sup> CR, 131, pp. 99–100, translation mine; W. Davies, ‘The Composition’, 78–80, 85.

<sup>30</sup> *la tragique insuffisance de la production céréalière*: Tonnerre, *Naissance de la Bretagne*, 139.

<sup>31</sup> For the meaning of *dicombit*, see W. Davies, *Small Worlds*, 50–1.

a few hundred, is unparalleled in early medieval records and not common at any time.<sup>32</sup> Reading the roll-call of those citizens of Carentoir (all dead and forgotten long before the record was copied into the surviving cartulary, although Carentoir, about 10 km north of Redon, is still a *commune*), one cannot fail to be struck by their commitment to civil society. Its Insular heritage and Continental setting made of this society something both hybrid and unique. If we could know what stories of their shared past and their ancestors' travels framed the lives of the *plebenses* as they went about their business – before those stories were normalised to the European standard by cosmopolitan scholars – then indeed we would be able to approach a truer realisation of Brittany's place between Continent and Atlantic Archipelago.

<sup>32</sup> Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds*, 86–104, estimates that for the best-evidenced *plebs* in the Redon area, Ruffiac, adjacent to Carentoir, the free population (including proprietors at every level) was about 75 per cent of the total and the unfree, 25 per cent; separately (92) she notes that during the ninth century, we learn of nearly 300 individuals in Ruffiac of sufficient status to take part in legal transactions. The population of the *commune* of Carentoir in 2016 was 3,229, of Ruffiac, 1,435.

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