

## EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND

This is the first fully documented history of Ireland and the Irish between the fourth and ninth centuries AD, from Saint Patrick to the Vikings – the earliest period for which historical records are available.

It opens with the Irish raids and settlements in Britain, and the conversion of Ireland to Christianity. It ends as Viking attacks on Ireland accelerated in the second quarter of the ninth century. The book takes account of the Irish both at home and abroad, including the Irish in northern Britain, in England and on the continent. Two principal thematic strands are the connection between the early Irish Church and its neighbours, and the rise of the Uí Néill and the kingship of Tara.

The author, Thomas Charles-Edwards, is Professor of Celtic in the University of Oxford. His previous books include *Bechbretha* (1983, with Fergus Kelly), *The Welsh Laws* (1989) and *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (1993).

EARLY CHRISTIAN  
IRELAND

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## *Abbreviations*

AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> (Bollandists)
AB	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
AClon	Annals of Clonmacnois, ed. D. Murphy, <i>The Annals of Clonmacnois</i> (Dublin, 1896)
Adomnán, VSC	Adomnán, <i>Vita Sancti Columbae</i> , ed. A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, rev. edn by M. O. Anderson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1991)
AI	Annals of Inisfallen, ed. and tr. S. Mac Airt, <i>The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B. 503)</i> (Dublin, 1951)
AT	Annals of Tigernach, ed. and tr. W. Stokes, <i>Revue Celtique</i> , 16 (1895), 374–419; 17 (1896), 6–33, 119–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–97, 267–303; reprinted in two vols. (Felinfach, 1993)
AU	Annals of Ulster (with the ‘corrected’ AD dates as in the edn of S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, <i>The Annals of Ulster (to AD 1131), Part I. Text and Translation</i> , Dublin, 1983)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports (Oxford)
Bede, HE	Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
BN I, II etc.	<i>Bretha Nemed</i> texts numbered, ed. and tr. L. Breatnach, <i>Uraicecht na Ríar</i> (Dublin, 1987)
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis (Turnhout, 1971– )
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca (Turnhout)
C CSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout, 1954– )
CGH i	<i>Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae</i> , i, ed. M. A. O’Brien (Dublin, 1962)
CGSH	<i>Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae</i> , ed. P. Ó Riain (Dublin, 1985)

xiv	<i>List of abbreviations</i>
<i>CIH</i>	<i>Corpus Iuris Hibernici</i> , ed. D. A. Binchy (Dublin, 1979)
<i>CIIC</i>	R. A. S. Macalister, <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum</i> , 2 vols. (Dublin, 1945–9; vol. 1 repr. Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1996)
<i>CMCS</i>	<i>Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies</i> (nos. 1–25), continued as <i>Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies</i> (nos. 26– )
<i>CS</i>	<i>Chronicum Scotorum</i> , ed. and tr. W. M. Hennessy, <i>Chronicum Scotorum: A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from the Earliest Times to AD 1135</i> (London, 1866)
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna, 1892– )
<i>DIL</i>	<i>Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language</i> , ed. E. G. Quin <i>et al.</i> (Dublin, 1973–76)
<i>EIWK</i>	T. M. Charles-Edwards, <i>Early Irish and Welsh Kinship</i> (Oxford, 1993)
<i>ECMW</i>	V. Nash-Williams, <i>The Early Christian Monuments of Wales</i> (Cardiff, 1950)
<i>Fél</i>	<i>The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee: Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé</i> , ed. and tr. W. Stokes, Henry Bradshaw Society, 29 (London, 1905; repr. Dublin, 1979)
Heist, <i>Vitae</i>	<i>Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae e Codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi</i> , ed. W. W. Heist, Subsidia Hagiographica, 25 (Brussels, 1965)
<i>Hib.</i>	<i>Collectio Canonum Hibernensis</i> , ed. F. W. H. Wasserschleben, <i>Die irische Kanonensammlung</i> , 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1885)
Hogan, <i>Onom.</i>	E. Hogan, <i>Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae</i> (Dublin, 1910)
<i>JRSAI</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</i>
Kenney, <i>The Sources</i>	J. F. Kenney, <i>The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical</i> , Records of Civilization (New York, 1929)
<i>LL</i>	<i>The Book of Leinster, Formerly Lebar na Níachongbála</i> , ed. O. Bergin, R. I. Best, M. A. O'Brien and A. O'Sullivan, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1954–83)
Löwe (ed.), <i>Die Iren und Europa</i>	H. Löwe (ed.), <i>Die Iren und Europa</i> , 2 vols., Veröffentlichungen des Europa Zentrums Tübingen (Stuttgart, 1982)
<i>MGH</i>	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA	Auctores Antiquissimi

## List of abbreviations

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- SRG                Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum  
 scholarum
- SRM                Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum.
- Muirchú, *Vita S. Patricii*    Muirchú, *Vita S. Patricii*, ed. and tr. L. Bieler  
 with F. Kelly, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*,  
 Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 10 (Dublin, 1979)
- Ní Chatháin and Richter (eds.), *Irland und Europa*    P. Ní Chatháin  
 and M. Richter (eds.), *Irland und Europa: Die Kirche im  
 Frühmittelalter / Ireland and Europe: The Early Church*,  
 Veröffentlichungen des Europa Zentrums Tübingen,  
 Kulturwissenschaftliche Reihe (Stuttgart, 1984)
- Ní Chatháin and Richter (eds.), *Irland und die Christenheit*    P. Ní  
 Chatháin and M. Richter (eds.), *Irland und die  
 Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission* (Stuttgart, 1987)
- PG                J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Graeca*, 161 vols. (Paris,  
 1857–86)
- PL                J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris,  
 1844–64)
- PLRE              A. H. M. Jones, J. Morris and J. Martindale, *The  
 Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols.  
 (Cambridge, 1971–92)
- Plummer, *Vitae*    *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols.  
 (Oxford, 1910)
- PRIA              *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
- RC                *Revue Celtique*
- SC                Sources Chrétiennes (Paris)
- Tírechán, *Collectanea*    Tírechán, *Collectanea*, in *The Patrician Texts in the  
 Book of Armagh*, ed. and tr. L. Bieler with F. Kelly  
 Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 10 (Dublin, 1979)
- UJA                *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*
- VT<sup>2</sup>                *Vita Tripartita Sancti Patricii*, ed. K. Mulchrone, *Bethu  
 Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin, 1939)
- ZCP                *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*

## *A note on pronunciation*

There is no room here for a full discussion of the pronunciation of early Irish names, but some important points can be covered. (For further guidance, see P. Russell, *An Introduction to the Celtic Languages*, London, 1995, pp. 223–7.)

Normally, Irish words were stressed on the first syllable. Towards the end of the period covered by this book this initial stress caused vowels in other syllables to be reduced to the ‘murmur vowel’ (as in the second syllable of English *father*). This did not, however, affect long vowels, normally denoted in Old Irish by an acute accent (a long *a* is thus *á*). The main difficulty, however, is with the consonants. Most consonants have two values, mainly depending on whether they are initial or not. So, for example, *deorad* ‘foreigner, alien’ has two *ds*, one initial, the other final. The initial *d* is pronounced as *d*, but the final one as *ð* (*th* as in ‘the’). Similarly, an initial *m* is pronounced as an *m*, but a non-initial one (unless doubled) is a *v*. A different duality is found with *c* and *t*: when non-initial they were pronounced *g* and *d*. These principles of early Irish spelling can be illustrated by a name which recurs frequently in this book, Adomnán, and by two words, *tét*, ‘(harp-)string’, and *éc*, ‘death’. These were pronounced approximately:

aðovnān, with the stress marked on the initial *a*. (For the pronunciation of the *a* see the end of this note.)

Later the *o* in the second syllable was reduced to a murmur vowel, represented by an upside-down *e*. Hence:

aðəvnān

The other two were:

tēd, ēg (*ēd* was pronounced approximately as in northern English ‘made’)

It may be noted, first, that the short *a* in the first syllable of Adomnán or Cathal was normally pronounced further back in the mouth than a

standard English *a* (to get an approximately correct pronunciation shorten the long *a* in ‘father’) and, secondly, an *s* before an *e* or an *i* may well have been pronounced as a *sh*: hence Caisel = Cashel.

Another difficulty with consonants is that, as in Russian, they may be either ‘palatal’ or ‘neutral’ (‘slender’ or ‘broad’). This complication will largely be ignored here for simplicity’s sake; where it is shown, this will be by a superscript <sup>i</sup>, which indicates that the adjacent consonant is pronounced in the way it would naturally sound before an *i* or *y*. Thus English ‘key’ has a palatal *k*, while ‘cap’ does not. The use of the accent over a diphthong, such as *ai* (approximately English ‘aye’), is to distinguish it from *a* followed by the ‘glide vowel’ signifying that the adjacent consonant is palatal.

In the following suggested pronunciations of some common early Irish names *x* stands for the *ch* in *loch*; *γ* stands for its voiced counterpart, as in German *Tage*; *θ* stands for the *th* in ‘thin’, to be distinguished from *ð* standing for the *th* in ‘the’; all the names are pronounced with the stress on the first syllable:

Áed	aið (approximately to rhyme with ‘hythe’)
Áedán or Aídán	aiðān (but anglicised as Aidan), where <i>ān</i> rhymes with Khan
Báetán	baidān
Brega	breyɑ
Cathal	caθəl (later <i>th</i> came to be pronounced <i>h</i> , and this pronunciation is common)
Colmán	colmān
Congal	conγəl
Domnall	dovnəll
Donnchad	donnəxəð
Éogan	ēoγən (but later, in Middle Irish, Éogan changed to Eógán, and later still the <i>E</i> was dropped and the <i>γ</i> came to be pronounced <i>w</i> ; hence this name is commonly pronounced <i>owən</i> , to rhyme with ‘low ‘un’)
Flaithbertach	flaθvərtəx
Lóegaire	loiγəre
Mide	miðe (anglicised as Meath = mīð)
Muirchertach	murxərtəx
Muirchú	mu’rəchū
Murchad	murəxəð

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*A note on pronunciation*

Óengus

oinɣəs

Suibne

su'vne (the later pronunciation is anglicised as  
Sweeney)

Tadgg

taðg (often pronounced 'taig')

In the names of kindreds (including royal dynasties), it is customary to use a relatively modern pronunciation for *Uí* 'descendants':

Uí Néill

ī nē'ill (the *ll* is 'slender' or 'palatal')

*Uí* causes the following letter to have its 'internal' value:

Uí Dúnlainge

ī ðūnləŋe

*Uí* elides a following *F* and changes *S* to *h* (this is shown by a superscript dot):

Uí Fáeláin

ī āilā<sup>h</sup>n.

## *A note on the Chronicle of Ireland*

The ‘Chronicle of Ireland’ is a handy term for the parent-text lying behind the extant annals up to AD 911, in very much the same way as one Alfredian text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle lies behind extant copies. It is believed that up to *c.* 740 this single source was written on Iona; from then until 911 it was continued at a monastery in the Irish midlands, probably in Brega. From 911 the text represented by the main hand of the Annals of Ulster was continued at Armagh until the break in the text in the twelfth century, but other annals derive from a continuation written at Clonmacnois. Hence, for the period before 911, if the Annals of Ulster agree with any of the Clonmacnois group of annals, one can be reasonably certain that the entry in question derives from the Chronicle of Ireland. However, it is very likely for other reasons that many other entries, now preserved only in one branch of the tradition, also go back to the Chronicle of Ireland.