

Ogham Sones, Souterrains, Ringforts and an Anglo-Saxon 'invasion'.

Cranat (Cranait) and Flanaid (Flanait), both princesses of the greater Fermoy district in early Medieval times. Both founders of hermitages / nunneries. Both acquired the status of 'sainthood' as defined by their times. Why the 'ait' endings to these personal names? How typical of common practice at the time and how Gaelic in origin? If not Gaelic in origin then where were such name endings common? In what culture and language?

Who did warrior and monastery founder *Finncú* (meaning White Hound, another Fermoy district 'saint') also known as Fanahan of Brigown/ (Mitchelstown) fight for? Was *Fir Maighe* and its monastic estates and their communities already Anglo-Saxon influenced when he lived? Were its communities in favour of Whitby's outcome or not? Did *Finncú* in the fashion of Roman gladiators of two to three centuries before thicken, fatten and grease his flesh to withstand sword blade and penitential sickle blade?

Was Canait someone who influenced the founding of monastic hermitages (nunneries?) in the landscape area to the south of *Fir Maighe* lands, a short distance to the south of Flanait's hermitage monastery at Clondalane (*Cluain Dá Lann* including the *Cúile* lands of Coole Abbey)? Was Cranat based at Kilcranathan Mountain to the south? Was it common at this time to resist arranged marriages among noble families, marriages made for political purposes, by entering a convent hermitage? Had Cranat already founded a nunnery/hermitage and had she already adopted a religious life when the threat of marriage was imposed upon her by her family? How did she blind herself temporarily only to have her sight 'miraculously' restored subsequently? How common were such situations in Irish tribal kingdoms and in Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in England?

How short a distance to the south is it from Kilcranathan (meaning the Cell of Cranat) Mountain to Clonmult / Donickmore? It is a short distance. Was Clonmult the central precincts of a large Hiberno monastic demesne? What does Clonmult derive from? Does it refer to a *cluain* i.e. meadow hermitage which was *maoilte* or *maoile* i.e. a place once praised or a place abandoned? Which? If abandoned then why? Was Donickmore (*Domhnach Mór*) destroyed for some reason? If in the context of Anglo-Saxon Christianity being imposed subsequent to the Whitby Synod (664 AD) was Donickmore destroyed? Was it an example of what the Venerable Bede, a scholar monk, in Anglo-Saxon England spoke about i.e. the destruction of monasteries and churches and the taking of slaves by an Anglo-Saxon invasion force in Ireland in 684 AD; an invasion lead by an Anglo-Saxon ealdorman, someone called Berht and sanctioned by the Northumbrian Anglo-Saxon king named Ecgfrith? Had an Anglo-Saxon bishop already working in Ireland warned against this action? Why was he in Ireland in the 20 year period after

Whitby? Why was it necessary for Saint *Adomnán* of Iona to wait until after Ecgfrith's death to have the salve captives released? Were any such slaves from South Munster monasteries? Were any from Kilmichael or Kinsale?

As distinct from a **cenobitic** monastic community the Hiberno Christian tradition appears to have been **semi-cenobitic**; to some extent, if not to a large extent. The semi-cenobitic tradition involved was very much in the Byzantine style. Rather than the monastic community, from small scale to large, being located in one great monastic 'house', instead the monastery consisted of a central precinct area where central pastoral services took place on a weekly basis and governance / administration of the often very large land-holdings (acquired by purchase, gifted, inherited etc and their respective native communities) took place. Zoned into these landscapes was a network of hermitages and their lands, some described as Cells (*Cillíní*), some as *Cluains* (meadow hermitages...*farrans/farms*???) or *Lyra*. Semi-cenobitic style monasticism still has a strong presence in the Christianity of the Eastern Mediterranean and perhaps there is something reflected there which might once have resonated across South Munster's monastic demesne landscapes.

So, how would semi-cenobitic demesne-land religious communities have reacted to an Anglo-Saxon invasion intent on destroying their religious tradition, introducing cenobitic traditions, taking their lands and enslaving their people subsequent to Whitby? Would they have adopted a state of alert and defence? If they saw themselves as the true people of God (*Céile Dé*) would they have revolted to a very significant degree? Was this the genesis of what was remembered as the **Revolt of the Culdees** (*Céile Dé*...does St. Augustine of Hippo echo in this name?). Were some ringfort souterrains which received ogham stones under these circumstances roughly finished i.e. becoming those with rough clay walls which are roofed with ogham inscribed slabs, as at Knockshanawee and Ballyknock for example?

Was the use of ogham stones in the construction of entrances to souterrains such as at Curraghcrowley by Ballymoney (*Baile na Manaigh*?) and Underhill at Fanlobbus near Kinneigh monastery (and ancient bishoprick above the great monastic 'desert' named for Sergius, a Pope?), the outcome of a response to Whitby or was it something which was already a long standing practice in certain places for other reasons? Had the incorporation of ogham stones into souterrains, or the major use of them to construct souterrain spaces, been practiced before the issues of Whitby appeared e.g. the use of 10 ogham stones at Drumlohan, Waterford, beside a *Cillín* to create a space which might have been used as a space beneath a shrine or feretory platform for a shrine on certain festival occasions? What of souterrain architectural forms in South Munster which do not appear, from the record,

to have had any associations with ogham stones? Do they date before or after Whitby?

If this Anglo-Saxon invasion affected not only County Meath but also South Munster then as a consequence of monasteries being destroyed and slaves taken were 15 ogham stones collected from burial *leachts* at cell hermitages (personal / private sites) and satellite *cluain* hermitages (small group / community sites) in the demesne landscape surrounding Clonmult / Donickmore?

A significant number of 'Kil' placename townlands surrounds Clonmult / Donickmore. Did each have a number of ogham inscribed stones associated with it in memory of their founders e.g. some sites only one because a private or personal hermitage, others being up to 6 stones in memory of a founding hermitage group of this size? Did some become part of the 15 stones used to 're-roof' a clay-cut souterrain at Ballyknock North in the Donickmore / Clonmult district, close to Youghal? If so, then why? Why was this souterrain in a multi-banked ringfort? Was it for defence? Was the ringfort and its souterrain revamped for defensive purposes because it was necessary to protect a group of Hiberno monks/ their hermitage and their followers in the face of an attack upon them and their religious heritage by an Anglo-Saxon force intent on imposing the outcome of the Whitby Synod? If so how common were such responses to the imposition of Anglo-Saxon/ Roman Christianity in South Munster? Did something similar happen at the great Hiberno of Donoughmore in Muskerry (i.e. at Knockshanawee or Roovesmore, or Ballyhank for example in the great 'green' desert area/ boglands/wilderness of this monastery at Desertmore)?

Why does the archaeological record and current dating suggest that there was a large increase in ringfort building around this time? Was it actual building of ringforts or just occupancy of them which underlies the dating evidence? Was the increase the outcome of Hiberno monastic groups, and their associated communities, 'making a stand' by creating, or by occupying already existing ringfort enclosures - places on lands absorbed as monastic estates grew - making some ringforts into refuges and places of local defence within their respective demesnes in the face of imminent danger from Anglo-Saxon attacks; and perhaps, attacks, also by those who had been of the Hiberno tradition but had favoured or agreed to adopt Saxon Christianity in order to preserve their demesne lands and communities?

If he is talking about doing his daily penance, singing his psalms, in a 'stone cell' what type of cell was *Adomnán* describing when he wrote his Rule? A subterranean one? (*St. Adomnán* went to Northumbria to have the captives released after Ecgrith's death). So, therefore was his stone 'cell', a souterrain, drystone built, situated within a ringfort enclosure and of *tig faoi*

talamh (house) form or *poll faoi talamh* (penitential pit form) or oratory (the domed cell at the end of its passage constructed within the slope (*littir?*) of the inner bank of a ringfort) form?

How serious a conflict was the Culdee Revolt? How many skirmishes, how many raiding parties, how many battles, how many deaths? How was it all resolved? Did an uneasy compromise result, some monastic hermitages - both group and private/personal - in certain tribe lands, perhaps in the rougher less productive and more remote lands of the west of the Ireland or on islands off its west coastline remaining in the older **Laura / Lavra** tradition? Others blending in the east blending uneasily in to the new normal and order of things? Being allowed to retain their identity, heritage and practices as distinct units within larger cenobitic communities of the Irish church? Some holding in later generations the status of 'Canons' of the church?

Given the fact that most ogham stone discoveries known for Ireland are from South Munster what does this say about the location, scale, scope, density, literacy, civility and learning of early Christianity on the island of Ireland? Did the religious begin its presence on the island among tribal peoples in South Munster interacting with the Roman Empire including Britannia? Was it not only South Munster's coastline but in those times when our county division did not exist and were instead the lands of tribes and clans and their geographies is it not more logical to think of the whole southern coastline of Ireland including South Wexford? Did it begin to have a presence in some clan land, tribe-land or coastal trading station / port as a cargo cult, or as the religion of a small migrant group, ex-military of Rome settlers, a de-mobbed local Roman garrison at a bridgehead trading station, as something becoming the fashion among those in favour of social change and desiring civility as defined by the Roman Empire with a Christian church coming to dominate it, or were they refugees from a time when the Empire persecuted their faith?

Was a 'new knowledge / new teaching' sought after by some druidic scholars and nobles, perhaps something not too distant from the religions of Zoroaster or Mithras or Mani, perhaps something which was economically useful to the mariner merchant? Was it something young nobles of coastal tribes saw as adventurous i.e. to become proficient in the practices, in the ways and teachings of the new religion, to acquire religious status and title by study and training abroad, to become on arriving home the founder of new communities across the tribe-land with new rules, laws, ways of community living and concepts of social justice within a monotheistic framework? To be the bringer of progress? Was this the mindset of *Ciarán* of Saighir and Cape Clear (West Cork), of *Ibar* of Wexford (originally schooled as a druid), of *Declán* of the Déise, among many others?

If there are elements of truth in all of this, then what state was the religion in across the Irish landscape by the mid 7th century? How had it grown? How widespread was it? How dominant was it in everyday life among the populations of South Munster? Was it an eastern Mediterranean / North African version(s) of the religion with the most frequent contact to these centres and not to Rome in Italy? Were its chief places of interest the patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria rather than the Western Empire at Rome?

If the Rock of Cashel was the administrative seat, both secular and ecclesiastical, of South Munster then was it the earliest and first arch-bishoprick in Ireland? ...once claimed by some? If so, was it an arch-bishoprick over large monastic estates in designated tribal bishopricks e.g. Kinneigh, West Cork? If so were these bishopricks of early medieval South Munster directly aligned with those of the Christianity of the Eastern Empire under Constantinople or Antioch? ...and with Rome during the period of the Syrian popes? If so then is it to such connections that we owe our place name elements such as Cill, Dar, Laura, Desert to name a few? Was Ailbe the most famous arch-bishop of Cashel and South Munster? Did these connections give a distinctly eastern character to early Irish monasticism as it blended with the Gaelic world during the Age of Rome's Empire in the West? Did it give a Byzantine flare to it? Was its semi-cenobitic form, the norm? consisting of large estates of individual *cluains* and *cill* lands apart from large gathering places such as *Larách* and *Domhnach* places? Were mountain places, places of meeting, of worship, places where those who gathered for the festivals of the old religions could be syncretised to Christianity, to hear the Word, to be baptised, to be syncretised to Christianity without disorientation? Were its early penitential practices of the Syrian type severity as in the lands of Antioch?

Was it all of this which Anglo-Saxon / Roman Christianity sought to abolish after the Synod of Whitby? Did such have an impact on the spread of Irish monasticism as missionary activities perhaps increased, missions of white martyrdom upon the Atlantic ocean bringing the cross in *currachs* to the open sea, westward to unknown places or eastwards in to the Kingdom of the Franks? Was it South Munster which received most attention from the Anglo-Saxon world after Whitby? Was there settlement as a result and if so, what happened to the displaced and dispossessed? Did some become perpetual 'Travellers upon the Road'?

Is all of this what RAS Macalister meant when he stated that the Synod of Whitby dealt a 'crushing blow' to the Celtic church?

Possible Invasion route ...if there was one?

How might a 7th century AD Anglo-Saxon monastic/military force make its way via diverse tribe and clan lands to arrive at Tullylease / Tuatha Saxon in North Cork? Might it have travelled via the River Suir from what if today Waterford Harbour, branching westwards along the Aherlow River a tributary of the Suir near where the town of Cahir would come to exist in later times, and where the eastern side of the Galtee Mountain range ends? This would bring them along the northern slope of the Galtees i.e. the Harps of *Cliu*, through Gallbally (*Gall Baile* i.e. homeplace, settlement, of the Foreigners be they Saxon, Viking, or Norman, or 17th century Planters). Did Berrihert leave cells or hermitage foundations along this route to maintain open connections to the Suir, or a connection to Cashel closeby the Suir, while proceeding westward to Tullylease?

Along this route Kyleberrihert (Berrihert's Cell) by Ardane exists, an enclosure within which lies the 'cell' with a multitude of carved stone cross fragments (including portion of a Celtic wheel cross) collocated there and embedded antiquarian style in its walls. What is its archaeology, its history? Why the anglicised spelling of Cill as Kyle rather than Kill? In the same field lies Berrihert's holy well, such a common associated element of early saints, one even echoed in *Seanacloon* (Old Hermitage/ Meadow) at Ballyvourney in West Cork or at Chapel Euny, by its beehive souterrain, in Cornwall.

From there westwards to Tullylease, across an extensive lowlying land area (forested or already a cultivated *maighe* plain?) to reach the foothills of the Mullaghareirke mountains by Tullylease?