THE VIKINGS IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND IN THE NINTH CENTURY

DONNCHADH Ó CORRÁIN

ABSTRACT: This study attempts to provide a new framework for ninth-century Irish and Scottish history. Viking Scotland, known as Lothlend, Laithlind, Lochlainn and comprising the Northern and Western Isles and parts of the mainland, especially Caithness, Sutherland and Inverness, was settled by Norwegian Vikings in the early ninth century. By the mid-century it was ruled by an effective royal dynasty that was not connected to Norwegian Vestfold. In the second half of the century it made Dublin its headquarters, engaged in warfare with Irish kings, controlled most Viking activity in Ireland, and imposed its overlordship and its tribute on Pictland and Strathclyde. When expelled from Dublin in 902 it returned to Scotland and from there it conquered York and re-founded the kingdom of Dublin in 917.


Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Department of History, University College, Cork
ocorrain@ucc.ie

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1. In this lecture, I propose to reconsider the Viking attack on Scotland and Ireland and I argue that the most plausible and economical interpretation of the historical record is as follows. A substantial part of Scotland—the Northern and Western Isles and large areas of the coastal mainland from Caithness and Sutherland to Argyle—was conquered by the Vikings in the first quarter of the ninth century and a Viking kingdom was set up there earlier than the middle of the century. The occupation of this part of Scotland corresponds chronologically to what I call the prelude to the Viking wars in Ireland (from c.795 to c.825). This involved raids on Ireland directly from south-western Norway and, very likely, some from settlements in Scotland in the later part of that period. The main thrust of the ninth-century Viking attack on Ireland (c.825 to c.850) was mounted from Scotland, Laithlinn was the name of Viking Scotland, and the dynasty that imposed itself on Dublin, and that later dominated York and threatened to dominate England, originated in Viking Scotland. This, it itself, is not a novel idea. It has been suggested in a somewhat vague way, amongst others, by R. H. M. Dolley, but he was thinking mainly of the tenth century. Professor Peter Sawyer largely concurs and he has explicitly rejected the notion (put forward, for example, by N. K. Chadwick) that the ninth-century attack on Ireland was planned and implemented from south-western Norway by the king of Lochlainn. Professor A. A. M. Duncan pushes the Scottish argument much further and surmises that the Olaf who came to Dublin in 853 was 'the son of Hebridean chief', but he cites no evidence. That evidence is complex and will bear re-examination.

2. The first thing that must be done is to detach the Viking dynasty of Scotland and Ireland from Norway itself. Historians, for over a century and a half—perhaps longer—have been keen to attach the Viking kings whose names are mentioned in the ninth-century Irish annals to the genealogy of the kings of Vestfold in Norway. The Vestfold genealogies that historians in the past have compiled are based on the Ynglingasaga, but they tend to flesh them out by adding materials from Íslendingabók, Landnámabók and Heimskringla, Old-Norse historical and literary works of the twelfth century and later. Effectively, since the days of Todd, the hypothesis had been advanced that Amlaíb, called Amlaíb Conung, from Old Norse konungr 'king' in F, is identical with Óláfr in hvíti of Íslendingabók and Óláfr Guðrøðarson of Ynglingasaga. This view is expressed eloquently (and with complicated genealogical tables) by Professor A. P. Smyth and he cites Landnámabók as the source that gives the fullest account of him. I quote Smyth's translation of Landnámabók:

Óláfr inn hvíti harried in the Western Seas and he won Dublin in Ireland and the district of Dublin, and there he established himself as king. He married Auðr inn djúpauðga, the daughter of Ketill flatnefr. Their son was called Þóststeinr raúðr. Óláfr fell in battle in Ireland, but Auðr and Þóststeinr went to the Hebrides. … Þóststeinr became a warrior-king. He entered into an alliance with jarl Sigurðr inn riki [of Orkney] the son of Eysteinn gluarma. They won Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Moray, and more than half of Scotland. Þorstseinr became king over that region, but the Scots soon slew him and he fell there in battle.
This narrative may appear legendary—even fantastic—but if Óláfr's descent is historical the Dublin dynasty was directly descended from the Norwegian Vestfold kings, and the direct connection with Norwegian royalty is genuine. However, as Smyth and others admit, there are formidable chronological problems about this. Nonetheless, he affirms that 'there can be no doubt that the so-called Óláfr inn hvíti of Icelandic sources was the same king as Amlaíbh, the ninth-century ruler of Dublin' (104).

3. Jón Steffensen examined these genealogies in careful detail and he concluded that they are a chronological morass. Nonetheless, he still tried—in vain, I think—to save them for history. The link between the Old-Norse genealogies and the Irish annals is provided by an annal in Fragmentary Irish Annals, but it is not reliable. This sole connection, the genealogy found in F §401—Ioamar. Mc. Gothfridh mc. Ragnaill mc. Gothfridh Conung mc. Gofraidh—has no independent value: it is merely another variant of the Icelandic material, and this is not the only fragment of its kind in F. It is likely that the father of Amlaíb (Óláfr) and Ímar (Ivarr) is Gothfridh (Guðrøðr) and that he is a historical person and dynastic ancestor (see table 1), but his genealogical ascent is a construct without historical value.

4. In the matter of possible dynastic connections between the dynasty of Dublin and Norwegian dynasties important historiographical progress was made in the early nineties, and this provides a new critical context for the analysis of the problem. Dr Claus Krag has shown that the Ynglingatal (once believed to have been composed a little before AD 900, and thus early and intrinsically valuable) is not much older or more authoritative than Ynglingasaga, that it reflects concepts current in the twelfth century, that the genealogies are qualitative rather than chronological, and that they come in 14-generation sequences like the Anglo-Saxon ones (both based formally on the structure of Matthew's genealogy of Christ). In his view, these are 'products of the imagination, the extant texts are remnants of the historical literature of the 12th and 13th centuries, concerning what were held to be the ancestors of what was then the Norwegian royal house ... the idea that the Norwegian kings descend from Harald hårfragi and the monarchy was held to the property of his dynasty, is no more than a construction ... the conclusion is that the Yngling tradition is entirely a part of the historicising method, partly cast in artistic form, which Icelandic learned men developed'. Peter Sawyer has argued convincingly that Ynglingasaga is fiction, not history, but a fiction whose learned creators drew on what they knew (or thought they knew) of Scandinavian history in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Kings who may originally have ruled Norwegian Oppland are transformed into kings of Vestfold and dubious king-lists are turned into genealogies. We find the historian Ari Þorgilsson doing just this in his early twelfth century: he derives his own descent from a variant of this very genealogy. So much for the Dublin dynasty's genealogical background in Vestfold.

5. What of contemporary Norway? Knut Helle (who accepts most of Krag's views) points out that the sources for early Norwegian kingship are limited and, while the saga genealogies may reflect the ambitions of the great when the sagas were being written in the twelfth century and later, they can tell us little or nothing of the Viking Age. Effective Norwegian royal power emerged in the eleventh century. In the early Viking Age there were no kings of Norway. The kings and sons of kings mentioned in the Irish annals cannot, therefore, be linked to any Norwegian dynasty.

6. The early raids on Ireland seem to have been aristocratic free enterprise, and named leaders appear in the Irish annals—Saxolb (So[hook]xulfr) in 837, Turges (Purgestr, not Porgisl or Porge) in 845, Agonn (Hákon) in 847. Only towards the middle of the ninth century was there any attempt by any Viking kings to coordinate attacks and settlement in Ireland, and these kings appear to belong in the Viking settlements in Scotland.

7. Three important annalistic entries record the activity of Viking royals in Ireland in 848, 849 and 853. All three have connections with a kingdom called Lothlend, Laithlind, Laithlín, later Lochlainn. The first occurs in the Annals of Ulster:

U 848.5. Bellum re nOlcobur, ri Muman, & re Lorggan m. Cellaiq co Laighniu for gennti ecc Sciaith Nechtain in quo ceciderunt Tomrair erell, tanise righ Laithlinne, & da cet dec imbi 'A battle was won by Ólchobar king of Munster and Lorcán m. Cellaiq with the Leinstermen against the pagans at Sciaith Nechtain in which fell Tomrair (Þórir) the earl, heir-designate of the king of Laithlind and 1200 about him'.

This took place at a strategic place, Castledermot, Co Kildare, not far from Dublin where a Viking settlement had been established in 841-42. The Irish leaders were amongst the most powerful provincial kings in the country, the troops involved were numerous, and the slaughter was immense. Þórir the earl was evidently a very important person, even if the identity of the king whose heir-designate he was remains unclear (but see table 1). He was leading a large army. This was a battle of major significance, even if we take the annalist's estimate of the slain (as we ought) to be merely a conventional expression for a very large number.
8. The next entry that has reference to an overseas 'king of the Foreigners' occurs in 849:

   U 849.6. Muirff. Jeacht .u.i.xx. long di muinntir righ Gall du thiachtain du tabairt greamma forsna Gaillu ro badur ara ciunn co commascat h'Erinn n-uile iarum 'A sea-going expedition of 140 ships of the people of the king of the Foreigners came to exercise authority over the Foreigners who were in Ireland before them and they upset all Ireland afterwards'.

Evidently, this was a violent attempt by a king of the Vikings, using large forces, to compel the independent Vikings in Ireland to submit to royal authority, and it was fiercely resisted.

9. The next and final entry in this series occurs four years later:

   U 853.2. Amhlaim m. righ Laithlinde do tuidhecht a nErinn coro giallsat Gaill Erenn dó & cis o Goidhelaib
   ‘Amlaíb (Óláfr) son of the king of Laithlind came to Ireland and the Foreigners of Ireland gave him hostages and he got tribute from the Irish’.

The differing treatment of Irish and Viking as tribute payers and hostage givers respectively may be significant. Within the conventions of Irish politics, the Viking settlers are treated as free, the Irish as a subject population. It is likely that only a small number of Irish kingdoms submitted to Viking overlordship.

10. An entry in F evidently refers to these same events and contains some supplementary information. This appears well-founded and the source of F may be taken to be reliable on the whole in regard to these events.

   F §239. Isin mbliadain-si bhéos .i. in sexto anni regni Maoil Sechnaill, tainig Amhlaoibh Conung .i. mac rígh
   Lochlainne i nErinn & tug leis erfhuagra cíosa & canadh n-imdha ó a athair & a fagbhail-sidhe go h-obann.
   Tainig dno Iomhar an brathair ba sóó 'na deaghaidh-sidhe do thobhach na ccios ceadna Also in this year, i.e.
   the sixth year of the reign of Mael Sechnaill, Amlaíb Conung (Óláfr konungr), son of the king of Lochlainn, came to Ireland, and he brought with him a proclamation imposing many tributes and taxes from his father, and he left suddenly. Then his younger brother Ímar (Ívarr), came after him to levy the same tributes.

The expression 'also in this year' could be taken to refer back to F §238 which is firmly dated to 849. However, this does not fit well with 'the sixth year of the reign of Mael Sechnaill'. His predecessor Niall Caille died in 846 and certainly by 847 (if not by 846) Mael Sechnaill was recognised as king of Tara—and this would tend to place these events in 852/53. This dating fits well with U and is to be preferred.

11. All these entries refer to major expeditions to Ireland by leaders who were recognised as royal by the Irish annalists. Very large numbers of troops and ships were involved and their purpose was conquest, control of the Vikings already settled in Ireland, and the imposition of taxes on Irish kingdoms. All are associated with the kingdom of Lothlend, Laithlind or Lochlainn whose king appears to be directing the operations.

12. There are other references to Lothlend/Laithlind. One that belongs certainly to the ninth century occurs in a well-known poem—quoted so often that it has become trite—preserved uniquely as a marginal entry in Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 904, a copy of Priscian's Institutiones grammaticae, heavily glossed in Old Irish. According to Bruno Güterbock, this manuscript was written in Ireland in the mid-ninth century: he dates it by reference to marginal notes that he thinks were written in 845 or 856. Robin Flower dated it more closely to the years 845-46. Professor David Dumville has recently re-examined the dating criteria and, whilst he is agnostic about many things, the central ninth-century date stands: he thinks that it was written after the death of St Diarmait ua Aeda Róin of Castledermot in 825 and before its appearance in Cologne some time anterior to 859, and he holds with Traube and Gerard Murphy that the book is to be associated with the circle of Sedulius Scotosus who was active on the Continent between the 840s and the 860s. However, his suggestion, on slight palaeographical grounds, that the manuscript was written on the Continent 'where its associations might be with Liège or Cologne, with Sankt Gallen, or even with northern Italy' is speculative and the quatrain must be located in an Irish context unless more convincing evidence to the contrary can be produced.
The wind is fierce to-night
it tosses the sea's white mane
I do not fear the coursing of a quiet sea
by the fierce warriors of Lothlend.

A second example occurs in a verse appended to the entry in the Annals of the Four Masters on the battle of Cell Ua nDaigri (Killineer, at Drogheda on the Boyne) in 868. Here the king of Tara, Aed Finnliath mac Néill (r. 862-79), defeated the kings of Brega and Leinster and a large Viking force (of which one of the leaders was Carlus, son of Amlaíb of Dublin).

\begin{quote}
Dos-fail dar Findabhair find
fiallach grinn diong Laithlind luind—
as ar chédaidh rimhter Goill—
do cath fri righ nÉtair n-uill.\\
\end{quote}

There comes over fair Findabair
a keen host from fierce Laithlind—
the Foreigners are counted in hundreds—
to do battle against the king of great Étar.

Whether this quatrain had to with this battle originally may, one could argue, be a little uncertain. However, one can read rí Étair as a kenning for king of Tara (i.e. Aed Finnliath) and Findabair is probably Findabair na n-Ingen, now Fennor in the parish of Donore at Drogheda and quite near to Killineer. For what it is worth, F states that the Vikings had arrived at the mouth of the Boyne with a great fleet and they were induced by the king of Brega to join in the attack on the king of Tara.

13. Where, then, is Lothlend, Laithlind, later Lochlainn? Heinrich Zimmer thought it was Lolland (Låland), the Danish island, but Alexander Bugge decisively disproved that unlikely hypothesis in 1900. A decade or so later, Carl Marstrander suggested that it derived from Rogaland, the district about Stavanger in Norway—and we know from good archaeological evidence that the early Viking raids on Ireland originated here. For phonological reasons he had to posit that the forms Lothlend and Lochlann existed side by side, though only the first is attested for the ninth century. By 1915 he had come to have serious reservations about this but the distinguished Norwegian linguist Alf Sommerfelt continued to accept it as late as 1950. There are two main objections to this etymology: there is no other example of initial r becoming l in an Irish borrowing from Old Norse, and loth- not loch- is the earliest form. It was left to David Greene to reject Marstrander's etymology firmly, but his suggestion that loth/loath is from the Irish word meaning 'quagmire, marsh', is to say least weak, as Greene freely admits. One should, perhaps, posit an Old-Norse rather than an Old-Irish name. The second element is likely to be -land 'land' (which would develop regularly into -lann and -lainn). Is it possible that the first element is loð- (which would regularly give Irish *loth) 'shaggy, woolly, covered with or thick with long grass' and that the term is, in origin, simply a geographical descriptive, appropriate to the fertile Orkneys and north-eastern Scottish mainland? In time, folk etymology may have replaced loth-, laith- with loch-, and Lochlann may have been understood as 'land of sea-loughs', a fair description of the Western and Northern Isles and west coast of Scotland. There may have been no Irish name for Scandinavia or its parts. In Greene's view, 'We must conclude that the Irish had no specific word for Norway until the eleventh century when Lochlann comes to be specialised in that meaning. … For the first two centuries of contact with the Vikings, there is no strong evidence that the Irish learned much about Scandinavia proper; this need not surprise us, since the connections of the Vikings of Ireland were predominantly with the Atlantic area rather than with the homeland. There is, then, no good historical or linguistic evidence to link Lothlend/Laithlind with Norway, and none to link the dynasty of Dublin to the shadowy history of the Ynglings of Vestfold.

14. Lothlend/Laithlind is Viking Scotland (and probably includes Man) and I believe one can deduce this from a close reading of a reliable and dated Irish source: the account of the battle of Clontarf in the Annals of Ulster.

U 1014. Slogadh la Brian m. Cennetigh m. Lorcain, la righ n-Erenn, & la Mael Sechlainn m. Domnaill, la righ Temhrach, co h-Ath Cliath. Laighin uile do leir i tinol ar i cinn & Gaill Atha Cliath & a coimlin do Ghallaib Lochlainne leó. i. x.c. luirech. Gniathrath crodha etorra ... In quo bello cecidit ex adhuersa caterua Gallorum Mael Mordha m. Murchada ri Laigen, & Domnall m. Fergaise ri na Fortuath: cecidit uero a Gallus Dubghall m. Amlaim, Siuchraidh m. Loduir iarla Innsi Orcc, & Gilla Ciara m. Gluin Iairn rigdomna Gall, & Oittir Dub, & Sturtgain, & Donnachad h. Eruib, & Grisene, & Luimne, & Amlaim m. Laghmaind, & Brotor qui occidit Brian, i. toisimh na loingsi Lochlannaigh, & ui. mile iter marbad & bathad ’Brian son of Cennetig son of Lorcán, king of Ireland, and Mael Sechnaill son of Domnall, king of Tara, led an army to Dublin. All the
Leinstermen were assembled to meet them and the Foreigners of Dublin and an equal number of the Foreigners of Lochlann i.e. 1000 mail-clad men. A valiant battle was fought between them … In this battle there fell on the side of the opposing troop of the Foreigners Mael Mórda son of Murchad king of Leinster and Domnall son of Fergal king of the Fortuatha; of the foreigners there fell Dubgall son of Amlaib, Sigurd son of Hlo[hook]jöver jarl of the Orkneys, and Gilla Ciarain son of Glúin Iainm heir-designate of the Foreigners, and Ottir Dub and Suartgair and Donnchadh ua Erulib and Grisene and Luimne and Amlaib son of Lagmann and Broðar who killed Brian, commander of the fleet of the Lochannaig, and 6000 who were killed and drowned'.

The argument turns on the identification of leading persons killed on the Viking side (other than those who were self-evidently Irish kings). Dubgall m. Amlaib was the son of Amlaib Cuarán, king of Dublin. Amlaib Cuarán, otherwise Óláfr Sigtrigsson Kvárán, ruled as king of Dublin from 945 to his abdication after the battle of Tara in 980. He died in religious retirement in Iona in 981. Dubgall was brother of Sitric Silkenbeard, otherwise Sigtryggr Óláfsesson Silkskeggigi, king of Dublin from 989 until his deposition in 1036. Siuchradh m. Loduir iarla Innsi Orcc is Sigurðr digri son of Hlo[hook]jöver, earl of Orkney—the first earl for whom we have a precise date (that of his death)—and of whom there are detailed accounts in the sagas (though these are probably not reliable).40 Gilla Ciarain m. Glin Iairn rígdomna Gall is son of Glúin Iainm (otherwise Járkné Óláfssson, king of Dublin, who ruled from 980 to 989), grandson of Amlaib Cuarán, and nephew of Sitric Silkenbeard.41 In Brjáns saga (which survives in Njáls saga,42 dates to within a few years of 1100, and belongs to Viking Dublin) the associations of Brotor, otherwise Bróðir,43 the commander of the loinges Lochlannach 'the Viking fleet' (Lochlannach is simply an adjective from Lochlann) are with the Isle of Man.44 Cogad (which also dates to c.1100) links him with Amlaib mac ri Locland 'son of the king of Lochlann', and states that both were earls of York and of all the north of England45—and though this is wildly anachronistic it firmly connects both with the British Isles while retaining some vague memory of the Dublin-Viking kingship of York in the early tenth century.

15. Donnchadh ua Erulib is probably not Viking. Marstrander derived Erulib from Old Norse Herulfr rather than Hlo[hook]jöver or Hiorulfr.46 There is, however, a historical objection to this derivation: the eponymous Erulb belonged to Cenél Eogain and he was grandson of Mael Dúin (ar788), king of Ailech, and son of Murchad, king of Ailech, who was deposed in 823. He was born, then, in the early ninth century, far too to early to bear an Old-Norse name. Meyer suggests that the name is derived from Old English Herewulf, Herulf and the implication is that it had been borrowed before the Viking wars began.47 Suartgair derives from Old Norse *Suartgeir, *Suartgarr which corresponds to Old English Sweartgar.48 In Cogad Suartgair (miswritten Snadgair) is represented as one of the four king's deputies and admirals of the Vikings (cetri irrig Gall & cetri toisig longsi)—the others being Ottir Dub, Grisene and Luimne. If these are 'king's deputies', they are likely to be deputies of the king of Dublin—no other Viking king is known to have been involved. Ottir, a name well attested in the Irish annals in the tenth century, derives from Old Norse Óttarr.49 His Irish soubriquet Dub 'the Black' points to an Irish or Scottish background. Grisine, better Grisín(e) is the Old Norse personal name Griss with the Irish diminutive ending -ín, -ine -éne, and this indicates that he belonged to Gaelic-speaking Ireland or Scotland.50 In Marstrander's view, the use of such diminutives is 'a fact that throws an extraordinary light on the close linguistic and social connections between Norsemen and Irishmen at the outset of the eleventh century'.51 The provenance of Luimne (Lummin, Luiminin in Cogad) is uncertain: Marstrander and Stokes52 do not suggest an Old Norse etymology and it may be Irish Lommin.

16. Amlaib mac Lagmaind belongs to the Hiberno-Norse world of the Isles and Man. Lagmann is derived from Old-Norse lo[hook]gmaðr 'lawman'.53 This name of a profession became a personal name in the Orkneys (and, as we know from the Irish annals, in the Hebrides), but not in Scandinavia proper.54 It is attested (in the plural, Lagmainn) as the name of an aristocratic kindred or group in the Hebrides in 962 who engaged in late Viking attacks on Ireland.55 The same Lagmann, led by Magnus mac Arailt, lord of the Isles, again appeared as raiders in Ireland in 974.56 It must, therefore, have become a personal name some generations earlier. It also occurs as a personal name among the descendants of Godred Crovan, king of Man and the Isles.57 And it is attested in the twelfth century amongst the Ui Dubh Dirma, a minor branch of the Northern Ui Néill, who were lords of a petty kingdom called In Brétagh in Inis Eogain.58 The Scottish surnames Lamont and MacLamond derive from it.59

17. Not one of the leaders of 'the Foreigners of Lochlann' can be shown to have come from Scandinavia. They all belong in the Northern and Western Isles, Scotland, Man and Ireland. This is precisely what the Annals of Inisfallen say of Brian's opponents slain in the battle: ocus ar Gall Tarthair Domain isin chath chetna 'and the Foreigners of the Western World were slaughtered in the same battle' (1104.2). In the usage of the Irish annalists, the term 'Western World' refers to the Gaelic world and does not extend in any case beyond the British Isles. It has long been recognised that Cogad adds names from much later and indeed fictional literary sources60 but when we weed out a few of the more improbable ones we have the
following as the principal foreign confederate forces at Clontarf:

Ro tochured cucc dna Siucraid mac Lotair, iarla Insi Orc & na nInnsi archena, & comtionol sloig buirb barbarda dicheillid dohisc dochomaid do Gallaih Insi Orc & Insi Cat, a Manaind & a Sci & a Leodus, a Cind Tiri agus a háirer Goedel … ’They invited to them also Sigurðr son of Hlo[hook]ðver, earl of Orkney and the Hebrides as well, and an assembled host of uncouth, barbarous, berserk, stubborn, treacherous Foreigners from Orkney, Shetland, Man, Skye, Lewis, Kintyre and Argyle …’62

This fits well with what we know of the leadership from U and confirms one in the impression that, for the contemporary annalist, Laithlinn/Lochlainn meant no more than the Norwegian Viking settlements in the British Isles, and more particularly those in Scotland and Man.

18. This conclusion is supported by two literary texts. The first is Cath Maige Tuired,63 a text dated in essentials to the ninth century,64 and very probably to the second half. The surviving text is not unitary. There is general agreement that §§1-7, 9-13 are late and derive from the historistic text, Lebor Gabála.65 fragment §8 is not the beginning of an independent tale and is hardly integral to the text; and the tale breaks off imperfectly.66 No evidence cited here is taken from these interpellations. Some difficulties about dating and interpretation remain. T. F. O’Rahilly argued that ’the extant text of Cath Maige Tuired, though doubtless based on and incorporating the earlier account, is comparatively late, for it contains some loan-words from Norse and applies the name Insi Gall to the Hebrides’—late enough to indicate that its author may have belonged to the late tenth century.67 This date may have been suggested to O’Rahilly by the first contemporary annalistic attestation of Insi Gall as a term for the Hebrides in 989,68 and buttressed by the Norse/English borrowings in the text. Of these, there is one clear Old-Norse borrowing: fuindeóc (§133) ’window’, from Old-Norse vindauga.69 Two other borrowed words, scildei, scitle, scite (§§28-30) ’coins’ (<scill) and bossán (§28) ’purse’ (<súþ) derive from Old English, not Old Norse,70 and while one cannot say that they had not been borrowed into Irish before the Viking period they fit well with the expanding commercial activity of Viking Ireland and the increased circulation of coin. The linguistic evidence and the historical references to Insi Gall and Lochlainn indicate that the text was written at a point when the Vikings had made a serious impression on Ireland. A terminus ante quem is provided by Cormac’s Glossary, which excised the text and which dates to c.900.71 Incidentally, the paganism of the Vikings and its treatment in a fictional manner enabled the creator of the text to make full use of what he knew (or thought he knew) of mythology and pagan practices.72 However, while using the Tuatha Dé in a subtly allusive way to represent the Irish and while presenting their magic as benevolently defensive, he expressly distances himself from pagan mythology by depicting the Dagda as a gross figure of fun, a scandalous and unsavoury Father of the Gods, whose licentious behaviour is offensive to good christians73—and this contains a conscious christian programmatic aspect that may be read as ridicule of paganism in general, and of that of the Vikings in particular.

19. As Dr Gray has pointed out, ’the Fomorian threat is described as if it were a vast alliance among various Scandinavian forces, all bent upon the conquest of Ireland’.74 Dr Carey has argued cogently that the text was written in the second half of the ninth century—possibly in the reigns of Mael Sechnaill (r. 846-62) and Aed Finnliath (r. 862-79)—and that it represents (amongst other things) a reaction, expressed in symbolic literary terms, to the Viking attack and he sees no need to take the references to Insi Gall as the work of a later interpolator.75 I agree. One might add that the sea-inlets, lakes, and rivers of Ireland, whose waters the cupbearers of the Tuatha Dé promise to hide from the Fomoire, have (with few exceptions) a clear contemporary reference—the Shannon and its lakes and estuary, the Bann and Lough Neagh, the Boyne, the Liffey, the Munster Blackwater, and Strangford, Belfast Lough and Lough Foyle were amongst the principal areas of ninth-century Viking activity.76

20. However, the important passage for our purposes is:

Faithius iar sin cusán tréinrén, co Balor húa Néit, & co rígh na n-Innsi, & co hIndech mac Dè Domnand, co rígh Fomoire; & nos-taireclamsat-side do neoch biú ó Lochlainn siar do slúag doqum n-Erinn, do astad a císa & a ríghi ar eigin foruib, gur'ba háandochuilth long ó Insdib Gallad co hÉirinn leo. Ní táníq doqum n-Erinn drem buid mó gráin nó adhuiath indá in slóg-sin na Fomoiridhí. Ba comhág agond fir ó Sgiathia Lochlaind & a hInnsi Gall immonn slógad-sin ’Thereafter he sent him to the champion, to Balor grandson of Nét, the king of the Hebrides and to Indech son of Dé Domnand, the king of the Fomoire and these gathered all the forces from Lochlainn westwards into Ireland to impose their tribute and their rule over them [i.e. Tuatha Dé] by force, so that they made one bridge of ships from the Hebrides to Ireland. No host ever came to Ireland that was more hateful or more terrifying than that host of the Fomoire. The man from Skye of Lochlann and the man from Insi Gall were rivals over that expedition.’77
The text artfully merges the Fomuire and the Vikings, and places the Fomuire in the Scottish territories of the Vikings, as ninth-century Ireland knew them. *Scathia* of the text is a learned latinisation of *Scy* (nom. *Sci*, gen. *Sceth*, Old-Norse *Skío*), and it is clear that it is part of *Lochlainn*. The final sentence conveys that there was rivalry between the king of Skye (who would have controlled the Inner Hebrides) and the king of *Insi Gall*, which we can read as the Outer Hebrides in the present context. It is, of course, quite uncertain whether there is anything historical in this, perhaps a reference to rivalry amongst Viking sub-kings in Scandinavian Scotland that would have made good sense to contemporaries, but historicity cannot be ruled out.

21. The literary reflexes of the battle of Clontarf and of other aspects of Viking history in Ireland in the saga *Cath Ruis na Rig* bear out the equation of *Lochlainn* with Scandinavian Scotland. We owe the first thorough discussion of this text, and an edition and translation of the relevant passage, to the pioneering work of Heinrich Zimmer. Thurneysen dated it to the first third of the twelfth century and would attribute the Book of Leinster *Táin bó Cúailgne* and *Mesca Ulad* to the same author. Áine de Paor reached like conclusions about authorship. However, Dr Uaitéar Mac Gearailt argues convincingly against common authorship and dates the text ‘possibly mid way through the second half of the twelfth century’. The opening of the tale is as follows: after the overthrow of the Ulaid in *Táin bó Cúailgne*, king Conchobar fell into a decline and languished because of his defeat. His druid urged him to send for his absent friends to help him, and to resume the struggle. His overseas friends divide into two groups: the Ulster warrior Conal Cernach who is levying tribute abroad, and the Viking forces of Scotland.

Acut fáití fessa & tecta uaitiú chaena cot chairdib éicmaissi. i. co Conall crúaid coscorach commaidmecath buadaich claideabh ño airm i fail ac tobach a chísa & a chanad i crícaib Leódús i n-insib Cadd & i n-Insib Or[c]. & i crícaib Scithia & Dacia & Gothia & Northmannia ac tastel Mara Ict & Mara Torrián & ic slataigecht sliged Saxan. & fait fessa & tecta uait no cot chairdib éicmaissi co iathaib Galleada co Gallítathaib na nGall. i. co Amlaib uel Ólaib hua Inscoa rig Lochlainne, co Findmór mac Roðhir co rig sechtmad rainne de Lochlainn, co Báre na Sciggeire co dunud na Piscarcarla, co Brodor Roth & co Brodor Fiúit, & co Siugraid Soga [co] rig Súdiam, co Sortabud Sort co rig Insi Orc. Co secht maccabi Romrach (co hIll, co hIle, co Mael, co Muile, co Abram mac Romrach, co Cet mac Romrach, co Celg mac Romrach), co Mod mac Herling, co Conchobar coscarach mac Artuir meic Bruide meic Dungail, co mac rig Alban ’Let tidings and messages be sent from you forthwith to your absent friends, namely, to Conall, the stern, the triumphant, the exultant, the victorious, the red-sworded, to where he is raising his tax and tribute in the territories of Lewis, in the Shetlands, and in the Orkneys, and in the lands of Scythia, Dacia, Gothia, and Northmannia, voyaging the Ictian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea, and plundering the ways of the Saxons. Let tidings and messages be sent from you, too, to your absent friends to the lands of the Foreigners, to the foreign lands of the Foreigners, namely, to Amlaib (or Ólaib) ua Inscoa, king of Lochlainn, to Findmór son of Hróarr, king of the seventh part of Lochlainn, to Báre of the Faroe Islands, that is, to the fortress of the Piscarcarla, to Brotor Roth and Brotor Fiúit, and to Siugraid Soga, king of the Hebrides, to Sortabud Sort, king of the Orkneys, to the seven sons of Romra (to II, to Ile, to Mael, to Muile, to Abram mac Romrach, to Cet mac Romrach, to Celg mac Romrach), to Mod mac Herling, to Conchobar the Victorious son of Arthur, son of Brude, son of Dúngal, the son of the king of Scotland’. The heroic Conall Cernach is levying tribute, firstly in Viking Scotland (Lewis, Shetlands, and Orkneys), and secondly, in more distant parts of Europe (Scythia, Dacia, Gothia, and Northmannia). One may take Scythia to be Śvealand (Sweden), Dacia to be Denmark, Gothia to be Gotland and Northmannia to be Norway: they are listed with the English Channel and the Mediterranean and the author is concerned to represent Conall Cernach as putting the most remote lands under tribute. If these are to be understood as continental Scandinavia, it is interesting that Latin-derived learned names are used for these regions and, evidently, in the mind of the writer, they are quite different from the *Lochlainn* of which Amlaib ua Inscoa is king.

22. The Viking allies, with the exception of Báre of the Faroes, all belong in *Lochlainn* or in places identifiable as being in Scotland. Siugraid Soga, Old Norse *Sigrðr sugga* (‘big, strong man’), a clear reflex of Sigurð digri ‘the Stout’ son of Hló[hooookj]over, is called *ri Súdiam*, a place name that derives from Old-Norse *Suðreyjom*, the dative plural of *Suðreyjar*, the normal name for the Hebrides, usually called *Inse Gall* in Irish. The historical Sigurð was earl of Orkney and apparently was overlord of the Hebrides as well. Sortabud Sort, in Old Norse *Suðrhuofuo* in *suarr*, is represented as king of Orkney—and this personage seems unhistorical. Brotor Roth (Old Norse *Bróðir rauðr*) and Brotor Fiúit (Old Norse *Bróðir hvítr*) are a duplicated reflex of the historical Brotor who slew king Brian. The seven sons of Romra (II, Ile, Mael, Muile, Abram, Cet and Celg) are puzzling, and appear to have place-name etiologies: Trócht Romra is said to be the Solway Firth and some of
them seem to be eponyms of places (Islay, Mull of Kintire) in Scotland. Findmóir son of Rofher, king of the seventh part of Lochlainn, looks odd but this term may reflect the division of Scotland into sevenths in *De situ Albanie* and may refer to Viking Caithness: *Septima enim pars est Cathanesia citra montem et ultra montem; quia mons Mound diuidit Katanesiam per medium* 'The seventh part is Caithness, to this side of the mountain and beyond the mountain; because the mountain of Mound divides Caithness through the middle'.

Caithness was, of course, heavily settled by the Vikings. The most important figure in this text, however, is *Amlaíb uel Ólaib hua Inscoa rí Lochlainn* who is a literary reflex of Amlaíb Cuarán. *Inscoa* is a rendering of Old-Norse *Skórinn* 'the shoe' (with postposed article) and corresponds to Irish *cúarán* 'shoe, slipper', the by-name of Amlaíb Cuarán, father of Sitric Silkenbeard. Amlaíb Cuarán was well-known by his Irish name in Norse-speaking circles (see, for example, 'er var meó Óláfí kvarán i Dyflinn' in *Landnámabók* but the Old-Norse form *Skór, Skórinn* can be readily reconstructed from the Irish and therefore was used by speakers of Old Norse. It passed from them to the author of *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, who turned it to literary purposes, and the name recurs in the twelfth-century *Acallam na senórach*: *Aiffi ingen Ailb (vl. Alaib meic Scoa, ingen rig Lochlainn atuai)*. The historical Amlaíb Cuarán was king of York for a brief period c.943 before his reign as king of Dublin (945-80), and has no direct connection with Norway. All the associations of the derived literary persona constructed from the historical figure are with Viking Scotland, and *rí Lochlainne* in *Cath Ruis na Ríg* must mean, for its author, king of Viking Scotland. One notes, too, that when Conall Cernach musters the troops of this alliance, he does so at Lewis in the Hebrides. Furthermore, as Sophus Bugge suggests, on the basis of the Old-Norse forms of names of people and places in the mustering of the Viking fleet, it is very likely that the author of *Cath Ruis na Ríg* is drawing on a pre-existing historical tale in Old Norse, inspired by Irish-Viking history and the battle of Clontarf, and circulating in Dublin and in Viking Scotland in the twelfth century. And it is likely that this Old-Norse tale existed in written form.

23. The earliest precisely datable historical example of *Lochlainn* meaning 'Norway' occurs in a chronological poem of 58 quatrains by Gilla Cóemáin mac Gilla Samthainde, *Annálad anall uile*. This poem was written in 1072: the author gives the date of writing in quatrains 6-7, 56-57—and he gives the ferial for the year twice.

§55

*Dá bliadain—ní brèc i nglaid—
ót ec Donnchada meic Briain
cath Saxan—sèol co nglage—
i torchair ri Lochlainne.*

'Two years—it is no falsehood in battle—
from the death of Donnchad son of Brian
to the battle of the Saxons—pure course—
in which fell the king of Lochlann.

Donnchad mac Briain, king of Munster and claimant to the kingship of Ireland, went on pilgrimage to Rome in 1064 and died there in that year. The 'battle of the Saxons … in which fell the king of Lochlainn' refers, of course, to the victory of Harold II Godwinesson at Stamford Bridge, on 25 September 1066 and the death in that battle of Harald harðráði, king of Norway, whom Marianus Scottus called 'rex Normanndorum'.

24. The next example is provided by the Annals of Ulster:

1102.7: *Maghnus ri Lochlainni co longais moir do thuidhecht i Manainn & sith m-bliadhna do denum doibh & do feraib Erenn* 'Magnus king of Lochlainn came with a great fleet to Man and a year's peace was made by them and the men of Ireland'.

A third example occurs in Magnus's death notice in the same annals:

1103.6: *Maghnus ri Lochlainnii do marbad for creich i nUltaitb* 'Magnus, king of Lochlainn, was killed on a raid in Ulster'.

These entries refer to Magnus III berfœttr, king of Norway (r. 1093-1103) and his famous expeditions to the West. Magnus was son of Óláfr kyrri and grandson of Harald harðráði. In 1098, perhaps profiting from several years of disorder in Man and the Isles, which included intervention by Muirchertach Ua Briain, king of Ireland, Magnus came west and established his overlordship there—over the Orkneys, and perhaps over Kintyre, Galloway and, briefly, Gwynedd. He harried the Ulster coast and not altogether successfully, for he apparently lost three ships and about 120 men. Magnus left his son Sigurðr in
Orkney, and returned to Norway in the spring. He came back to the west, perhaps in 1101, certainly by 1102, and he caused a great deal of anxiety. The Irish annals report that he had come to capture Ireland, and here they agree with such later sources as Ordericus Vitalis and the Norse sagas. Magnus occupied Man and meddled in Irish and Norman politics. The Annals of the Four Masters state that 'the men of Ireland made a hosting to Dublin against Magnus'. 'Men of Ireland' refers to Ua Briain and his supporters, and the context suggests that Ua Briain felt under serious threat. Soon after that a truce was agreed. Magnus and Muirchertach exchanged hostages and a marriage alliance was arranged. The peace with Magnus looks very much like a holding operation on Ua Briain's part until he decided how to cope with this emergency. I believe that Cogad Gáedel re Gallabh, an eloquent historicist assertion of Ua Briain power, addressed to the Dubliners and to other political opponents, including Mac Lochlainn who was king of the North and Ua Briain's chief rival, belongs to this period of crisis.

25. It is evident that Laithlind/Lochlainn took on the new meaning 'Norway' only when there were kings of Norway and when these posed a serious military threat in the British Isles. Effective control of the Northern and Western Isles would inevitably be a pre-condition of that threat, and the change of meaning evidently took place in that context.

26. We now return to the ninth century. The evidence of the Irish annals is that there was a king of Viking Scotland whose heir-designate, Tomrair or Thórir, was in Ireland with a very large army in 848, and he fell battling against two of the most powerful Irish provincial kings. In 849 this king sent a fleet of 140 ships to establish his authority over the Vikings in Ireland, and upset the whole country. In 851 the Irish annals report another dramatic development: Danish Vikings came to Dublin, slaughtered the Vikings of Dublin and plundered their fortress. They tried to do the same to the Viking settlement at Annagassan, but they were heavily defeated and many of them were killed. According to the Welsh annals, Anglesey was plundered by Danes (perhaps the same force) in 853 or so. What may be a reply from Viking Scotland to the Danish attacks in Ireland came in 852: 160 ships and their crews came to Carlingford Lough to do battle with the Danes but the Danes won, and their opponents abandoned their ships to them. Two Norse Viking leaders are mentioned: Stain who fled and Ierene who was beheaded. And next year, Amlaib, 'son of the king of Laithlind', came to Ireland and got the submission of the Vikings of Ireland and he received taxes from the Irish. From now on, Amlaib and Ímar (with their brother, Auisl (Auisl), first mentioned in 863, and murdered by his brothers in 867) evidently ruled in Dublin and engaged in significant wars with the Irish kings.

27. We now need to consider the homeland and origins of these kings. The written sources reveal little. In 795 Skye and Iona were attacked, in 798 there were 'great incursions both in Ireland and in Alba'. However, as far as Scotland is concerned, there is no indigenous record for the early ninth century—silence only. Apart from the raids on Iona (802, 806 and the final reported raid in 825, when Blathmac was martyred) nothing much is known of any Viking raids on any Scottish churches in the early ninth century, apart from a raid by Danari (probably Danes, hardly Norwegian Vikings from the Western Isles) as far as Dunkeld in the reign of Cánael mac Ailpin or Kenneth I (r. 843-58), reported in the Scottish Chronicle. That is not to say that such raids did not take place. Evidently, Iona came to an early understanding with the new power in the Western and Northern Isles: the only untoward ecclesiastical incident reported for the rest of the ninth century is that the shrine and halidoms of Columba were brought to Ireland 'in flight before the Vikings' in 878. Only for Ireland are there details of the early years of Viking raiding. We can only guess that northern Britain had similar experiences. Hardly anything is known about raids on England from the plundering of a Northumbrian monastery in 794 and the churches of Hartness and Tynemouth in 800 until the raid on Sheppey in 835.

28. When and how the Vikings conquered and occupied the Isles is unknown, perhaps unknowable. To my mind, occupation and colonisation are different (if often sequential) processes. The first involves the establishment of lordly or royal control over a subject population and very often the imposition of a new aristocracy. The second involves settlement of the land and the dispossession or part dispossession of the previous occupiers. Some areas may have been occupied, others (for example the Shetlands and the Orkneys) were colonised. Dr Myhre has re-opened the question of possible settlement (and here colonisation seems to be in question) of Scandinavians in the Northern and Western Isles in the eighth century and, indeed, the much disputed matter of early settlement as a whole. Sommerfelt cites linguistic evidence for contact between the Picts and the Scandinavians before AD 700, but this is no evidence for settlement or indeed for the kind of raiding that is characteristic of the Viking Age. This problem is perhaps beyond satisfactory solution. Given the lack of written records, scholars must depend mainly on archaeology, but archaeology cannot give dates as refined as decades, unless one is lucky with dendrochronology or writing in the form of coin hoards. The other fall-back is toponomy, but toponomy is a surly, inarticulate and ambiguous witness, even in the hands of the best counsel. Add to this the rebarbative Scottish indigenous written sources for the ninth century and chronology becomes very difficult. Given the evidence of the few contemporary
Irish annals and inferences one can make from the pattern of raiding on Ireland, the likeliest course of events is that the Isles—Northern and Western—and their contiguous mainland territories were occupied between 790 and 825 (towards the earlier part of this time-span). This period corresponds to the prelude to the Viking wars in Ireland. One detailed annalistic entry in U points to a significant development in Scotland: in 839 the Vikings inflicted a crushing defeat on Forthriu and killed the most important Scottish leaders.115 What Forthriu was at this time is the subject of some recent discussion, but it is likely that it is identical with Southern Pictland, Pictland south of the Mounth.116 One possible interpretation of the defeat of 839 is that the Vikings were by now fully in possession of the Northern and Western Isles, and were attacking South Pictland because they had already established themselves over North Pictland or, at least, had placed it under tribute. I believe the attacking Vikings were the Norse Vikings of the Isles, and not Danes. And this lone annalistic entry is likely to be a mere pointer to long-term and intense Viking pressure on the central lowlands of Scotland.

29. Meanwhile, in Ireland, the prelude to the Viking attack proper is marked by desultory coastal raiding that slowly becomes more frequent.117 The annals do not, of course, report all raids and acts of violence, nor does anyone expect them to do so, but it is probably right to take the annals to be a reliable general indication of what happened. First came the attacks on Rathlin and Skye in 795. These were followed in 798 by the burning of the church on St Patrick's Island (off Skerries), and the bóirme na crích 'cattle-tribute of the territories' taken by the Vikings must refer to a forced levy for provisions on the mainland nearby. In the same entry the annalist refers in a general way to great incursions in Ireland and in Britain. In 807, raiders rounded the north coast of Ireland and attacked western coastal monasteries—Inishmurray off the Síog coast and Roscam in the inner waters of Galway Bay.118 For the first time, the annals begin to report fighting between the Irish and the Vikings—skirmishes rather than battles: 811 (a defeat of the Vikings by the Ulaid), 812 (their defeat by the Éoganacht Locha Léin in the south-west), later in 812 (their defeat by Fir Umaill, near Clew Bay), followed by a slaughter of Connmaicne of west Galway by the Vikings. Small groups of two or three ships apiece may have been active on the west coast. They were back in 813 when they slaughtered Fir Umaill on the west coast and killed their king.

30. By now, the Vikings had learned all they needed to know about most of Ireland's coastline and its possibilities for plunder, occupation or colonisation, but suddenly there is silence. There are no reports of activities on the west coast or anywhere else in Ireland for eight years. Attacks begin to be reported again in 821 in the Irish Sea (raids on Howth and on the churches in the islets of Wexford Harbour) and on the south coast, Cork and Inis Doimle in 822. In the distant south-west, Vikings raided the remote monastery of Skellig, 14 kilometres off the Kerry coast and so ill-treated its superior that he died as their prisoner. In the north-east, there were concerted attacks on coastal monasteries of the Ulaid: Bangor was struck in 823 and savagely plundered in 824. In 825 Down and Moville were hit, and the Ulaid defeated those who had attacked the most prestigious of their monasteries. From this point, there are terse annalistic reports of severe attacks along the east coast on churches and local coastal kingdoms and significant engagements with local kings. The prelude was over: the first Viking Age proper had begun. It is possible that the earliest raids, those that occur up to the second decade of the ninth century, were mounted from south-west Norway. The more vigorous and destructive attacks in 821 and later, evidently made by larger and better organised forces, are a different matter. Because of the logistical problem of bringing large fleets from Norway and because of the large numbers one can infer from their activities, these probably came from nearby, and the Viking settlements in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland are the most likely bases. It is possible that the time of calm in Ireland between 813 and 821 corresponds to a period of intense activity in Scotland.

31. In the 830s, the raids on Ireland became more ominous and from 836 large-scale attacks began with 'the first prey of the pagans from Southern Brega [south Co Meath] … and they carried off many prisoners and took very many captives'. In the autumn, the annalist reports 'a most cruel devastation of all the lands of Connacht by the pagans'. Clonmore, Co Carlow—a monastery patronised by the dynasty of south Leinster—was burned on Christmas Eve, and many captives were taken. Mid-winter raiding for slaves proves that the Vikings were already over-wintering, possibly on islands, and could hold numerous prisoners. The Life of St Fintan of Rheinau indicates that they were already slaving, and taking captives for sale in mid-century.119

32. In 837, a fleet of sixty ships appeared on the Boyne and another on the Liffey—very likely from the Scottish settlements—each bringing about 1500 men. They ravaged the east-coast kingdoms. Though the Uí Néill kings routed them at first, they were soon defeated 'in a countless slaughter'. The Vikings now began to appear regularly on the inland waterways—the Shannon, Lough Deragh, the Erne, the Boyne, Lough Neagh and the Bann. They overwintered on Lough Neagh for the first time in 840-41. They now began to build longphóirt, fortresses that protected them and their ships, and some of these became permanent. There was one at Linn Dúachaill (Annagassan, Co Louth) by 841 and another at Dubhlinn (on the Liffey at or near Dublin). From Annagassan they raided deep into the midlands, from Dublin they attacked Leinster and Uí Néill. They first overwintered in Dublin in 841-42.
33. These large-scale raids—the beginning of the occupation of the Irish east midlands—were mounted from Scandinavian Scotland, apparently by aristocratic freebooters and adventurers, some of whom (as we have seen) are named in the Irish annals. This may be a re-run of what one infers happened in Scotland a generation earlier. First, small exploratory raids, then heavy plundering and slavery to break the resistance of the population, and finally occupation and colonisation. However, sometime before the mid-ninth century, a kingship of Viking Scotland had come into being and, as we have seen, that kingdom began to exercise authority over the Vikings and their settlements in Ireland, though not of course over all, for the annals continue to report the activities of freewheeling adventurers. And this brings us back to Amlaib and Ímar, who took control of the kingdom of Dublin, certainly from 853.

34. Some time in the 850s or early 860s the dynasty moved its main operations to Dublin. We find Amlaib, Ímar and their brother Auisle (he is first mentioned in the Irish annals in 863), extremely active in Ireland, engaging in warfare and politics with the major Irish kings.120 Only two aspect of their activities will be considered here: their dealings with the Gall-Goidil 'Foreigner-Irish' and their impact on monastic raiding.

35. The Gall-Goidil 'Viking-Irish' make their appearance in the Irish annals in the period 856-58, and then disappear from the record just as suddenly. It is likely that they originated in Viking Scotland, and were war bands aristocratically led by men of mixed Scottish and Viking descent, operating independently of the dynasty and adventuring on their own account in Ireland. By the middle of the ninth century, a generation (and perhaps a second generation) of such aristocrats would have come to military age in Scotland. The interpolator of F is particularly interested in them, and his preoccupations—and his views—have been ill-advisedly shared by some modern historians.121 The interpolator is extremely hostile to them:...

... Scuit iad, & daltai do Normannioibh iad, & tan ann adhearnar cid Normannigh fríu. Maidhídforra ré nd-Aoith, & cuirtear a ndeargáir ar nGall-Ghoidheal, & cinn imhda do bhreith do Aoith leis; & ra dhlíghsíot na hÉiréannaigh an marbhadh soín, uair amhail do-nidís na Lochlannaigh, do-nidís-stiomh '... they are Gaels and foster-children of the Vikings, and sometimes they are even called Vikings. Aed defeated them and slaughtered the Gall-Goidil, and Aed brought many heads away with him; and the Irish were entitled to do that killing for as the Vikings did, so also did they [the Gall-Goidil].122

Elsewhere, in an addition to the account of the expedition of Mael Sechnaill, king of Tara, to Munster in 858, he accuses them of being apostates and of being much more hostile to the church than the Vikings themselves:

Gen go ttiosadh Maol Seachlainn an turus so do ghabháil righe Mumhan do fén, ro bo thuidheachta do mharbhadh an ro marbadh do Ghall-Ghoidhealaibh ann, uair daoine ar tréadhadh a mbaiste iad-saidhe, & ad-bertais Normanniaigh fríu, uair bís Normannach ca, & a n-altrum forra, & ger bó ocle na Normanniaigh bunaíth dona h-eaglaisibh, dá measa go móir iad-saidhe, .i. an lucht sa, gach conair fo Eirinn a mhidis 'Although Mael Sechnail made not this expedition to take the kingship of Munster for himself, it was worth coming to kill what he killed of Gall-Goidil there, for these were people who had forsaken their baptism, and they were called Vikings because they behaved like Vikings and they had been fostered by them; and though the real Vikings were evil towards the churches, these were much worse wherever they were in Ireland.'123

None of this moralising occurs in the uninterpolated annals. Here the Gall-Goidil first appear as the allies of Mael Sechnaill, king of Tara, against the Vikings, evidently those led by Ímar and Amlaib, kings of Dublin: Cocadh mor etir gennti & Mael Sechlainn co nGall-Goidhelaibh lais 'Great warfare between the Vikings and Mael Sechnaill, who was supported by the Gall-Goidil.'124 In the same year, they were in the north, where Aed Finnliath mac Néill, king of Ailech, heavily defeated them far inland at Glenn Foichle (Glenelly, in the barony of Upper Strabane).125 They may have come from Lough Neagh and the Bann. In 857, a leader of theirs, Caiitl Find (whose name is appropriately partly Old Norse, partly Old Irish), is mentioned: he was routed in battle by Ímar and Amlaib in Munster.126 This enmity continued into the next year. The Gall-Goidil allied with Cenél Fiachach (a sub-kingdom of Southern Uí Néill) and both were defeated by Ímar of Dublin and Cerball, king of Osraige in Araid Tire (to the east of Lough Derg and the Shannon in Co Tipperary).127 Evidently, the kings of Dublin did not like free-wheeling Vikings (or look-alikes) in their space.

36. In fact, they made serious attempts to exercise royal control. This appears in a new pattern in the Viking plundering of Irish monasteries. This change has often been noted128 and has been the subject of a recent study that seeks to show that the fall off in monastic plundering in the second half of the ninth century is due, in large part, to a marked decline in annalistic recording, though some real decrease in raiding may have occurred.129 However, a more plausible explanation suggests itself.
The large-scale plundering of monasteries stops quite suddenly about the time that the dynasty established itself in Dublin. In the fifteen years between 855 and the end of 870 the annals report ten incidents that can be regarded as attacks on monasteries (Lusk and Slane 856, Leighton c.864, Clonfert 866, Lismore 867, Armagh and Castledermot 869, the islands of Lough Ree and the surrounding lands, where there were many monasteries c.873, Kilmore near Armagh 874, and the capture of the superior and lector of Armagh in 879, which is not conclusive evidence for a raid). Of these, at least three were carried out by the royal dynasty itself: the assault on Lismore in 867, Amlaíb's major attack on Armagh in 869 (which can be understood as revenge on the Northern Uí Néill, the patrons of Armagh, for the death of his son at the battle of Cell Úa nDaigri the year before), and Barid's plundering of Lough Ree and its surroundings. Between 881 and 902, the annals report some fourteen attacks on monasteries. Of these, three were certainly done by the royal dynasty: Duleek 881, Lismore 883 and Armagh 895. Nine others are likely, given their nearness to Dublin: Kildare (886), Ardbracken, Donaghpatrick, Dulane and Glendalough (all in 890) and Kildare and Clonard in 891. Some monastic plundering by Vikings evidently not under the control of Dublin occurs mainly in the periphery, for example, the attack on Cloyne in 888. And there is another consideration: plundering monasteries is a crude and cost-inefficient method of generating income from rich and politically subservient institutions: regular payments of fixed tribute are much more effective and suit both sides better, but this will occur only if the dynasty exercises real control. This appears to be the case, and monastic plundering by the dynasty occurs as political punishment (for example Armagh in 869), or when arrangements for the payment of tribute broke down (perhaps Lismore in 867), or when there is strife amongst the branches of the dynasty as happened towards the end of the ninth century. The annalistic record is, of course, partial and incomplete; there are changes over time in its nature, and some diminution in its extent. However, it does indicate a general trend that fits well with the emergence of kingly power amongst the Vikings in Ireland. Kings and their henchmen do not like professional trouble-makers competing for the same scarce resources in their area of jurisdiction and causing general disorder and loss. Evidently the dynasty kept good control for the most part and was usually (though not always) able to exclude independent operators in the later ninth century, certainly from its own central areas of interest.

37. Important evidence for the move of the dynastic centre to Ireland is to be found in Dublin's dealings with Scotland, as reported in the Irish annals. And this evidence is corroborated by the Scottish Chronicle.

U 866.1: Amlaiph & Auisle do dul i Fortrenn co nGallaib Erenn & Alban cor innriset Cruithentuaith n-uiile & tucsat a ngiallo 'Amlaíb and Auisle went to Fortriu with the Foreigners of Ireland and Scotland and they ravaged the whole of Picotland and took their hostages'.

The meaning of this entry is clear enough. The Dublin dynasty, commanding the Vikings of Ireland and Scotland, invaded Southern Picotland, then plundered the whole of Picotland, and took hostages as overkings should when enforcing their political authority over other kings. This leaves no room for independent kings: Constantine I (r. 862-76), called 'rex Pictorum' in his obit, will have given hostages with the rest. One infers that, as part of this operation, they imposed a tribute on Picotland-and this inference is supported by F §328: 'they took many hostages with them as a pledge for tribute; for a long time afterwards they continued to pay them tribute'. This attack is recorded independently and accurately in the annals in the Scottish Chronicle:

ac post duos annos uastauít Amlaíb cum gentibus suis Pictaium et habitaít eam a kl'. Iauar' usque ad festum sancti Patricii 'And two years later Amlaíb and his gentiles plundered Picotland and occupied it from the first of January to the feast of St Patrick'.

It is clear from the annals that they returned to Dublin, and for the next four years there is a fairly detailed account of their activities-enough to show that Dublin was their base of operations. In 866 Aed Finnliath, king of Tara, destroyed the longphoirt of the Vikings all along the north coast of Ireland and defeated them in battle at Lough Foyle-and here he may have taken advantage of the absence of much of the Viking manpower in Scotland. The annals tell us nothing of the relationship of these settlements to the Dublin dynasty but, given their strategic position in the direct line of communication between the Western Isles and Ireland and their location on the littoral of the most powerful kingdoms in the north, it is likely that they were under the direct control of Dublin. In 867 there was a struggle within the dynasty: Auisle was murdered by his brothers and this conflict may have been the occasion for an Irish attack. A force led by Cennétig mac Gaithéne, king of Loigis, burned the fortress of Amlaíb at Clondalkin near Dublin (it was within the monastic enclosure) and killed 100 of his followers. They followed this up with a successful attack on Dublin itself. Some time in the same year, Amlaíb committed (in the words of the annalist) 'treachery on Lismore'—as if he had broken an agreement of immunity in return for tribute. As we have seen, the Dublin dynasty played a role in the battle of Cell Úa nDaigri in 868 in which Aed Finnliath king of Tara defeated the Uí Néill of Brega and killed their king who had the Leinstermen and the Vikings of Dublin as allies. Carlus, son of Amlaíb of Dublin, was amongst the slain. In reply, Amlaíb raided Armagh in 869 and burned its oratories; a great deal of plunder was taken and 1000 of its inhabitants were either killed or taken prisoner. In effect, this
was a proxy attack on Aed Finnlith whose dynasty saw itself as the protector of Armagh.

38. However, in 870-71 the Dublin leadership turned again to Scotland.

39. A plausible account of the events leading to the further involvement of Amlaíb with Scotland and his death can be pieced together if one reads _Lochlainn_ as Viking Scotland.

40. Amlaíb is next and finally mentioned in the _Scottish Chronicle_ in an entry that appears to be corrupt:

> _Tercio iterum anno Amlaíb trahens centum a Constantino occissus est._

There are several difficulties with this. For _tercio_ one may read _tercio decimo_ on the assumption that the scribe dropped _x._ from the _xii._ of his exemplar—the third year of Constantine is 865/66 and Amlaíb was certainly alive long after that. If one may accept this emendation and count inclusively (as the writer certainly does in the next entry in the _Scottish Chronicle_) one arrives at the very likely date 874. The expression _trahens centum_ seems corrupt and the emendation _trahens censum_, 'levying tribute', while apt is uncertain. One may possibly interpret the entry as follows: Amlaíb was killed by Constantine I in 874, very likely whilst levying or re-imposing tribute on Southern Pictland. The next entry in the _Scottish Chronicle_ is firmly dated to 875: the battle of Dollar between the Danish Vikings and the Scots, in which the Scots were driven in defeat to Atholl. The date is confirmed by an independent entry in _U_ for 875: _Congressio Pictorum fri Dubghallu & strages magna Pictorum facta est_ 'An encounter of the Picts and the Danish Vikings and there was a great slaughter of the Picts' (despite the
terminology of the Scots are here intended and both entries refer to the same event). Now the Norwegian Vikings of the West evidently took a hand in events and profited from the Danish victory: *Normanni annum integrum degerunt in Pictavia* 'the Norwegian Vikings spent a whole year in Pictland'. This fits well into the year 875/76 and one may infer that their activities in Scotland led to the death of Constantine I in 876 (the date is that of U), as reported in regnal list D: *Constantinus mac Kynat. xv a. reg. et interemptus est a Noruagensibus in bello de Merdo fatha et sepultus est in Iona insula* 'Constantine mac Cináeda ruled for fifteen years and he was killed by the Norwegian Vikings in the battle of de Merdo fatha and he was buried in the island of Iona'. One other unique entry in F appears to bear on the death of Gøðrøðr:

> F §409. Ég righ Lochlainne i.e. Gothfraid do tedmaimm grána opond. Sic quod placuit Deo 'The death of the king of Lochlann i.e. Gothfraid of a sudden and horrible fit. So it pleased God'.

This entry has caused a great deal of trouble for historians: for example, Radner suggests that the text is in error, and Ímar (a873) of Dublin is meant; and Hunter Blair thinks that the entry is seriously misplaced and refers to Gothfrid ua hilmair (a934). First, the marginal date of 873 is an editorial conjecture but probably a sound one. It follows two entries that are dated in more or less satisfactory ways. The first (§407) recounts a successful Viking expedition to Slieve Bloom, and a virtually identical text of this entry occurs in M which dates it to 872. The second (§408) is an account of the placing of a fleet on Loch Ree on the Shannon by the Viking leader Barith and his plundering of that area. It is dated to the eleventh year of Aed Finnliath, that is, 872 (counting inclusively) or 873, but since the entry is unique there is no independent confirmation of these precise events from other annals. However, there is some contextual support for a dating to 873: M records 'the plundering of Munster by the Vikings of Dublin' in 873 and I relates that 'Barid went with a great fleet from Dublin westwards by sea and plundered Ciaraige Luachra'. His activities on Lough Ree may have been an extension of his expedition to Ciaraige Luachra into the Shannon and its lakes. The year 873 looks plausible enough, though the case is not helped by the fact that the entry is followed in F by a short undated entry (§410) that could at a pinch be taken to refer to events in Wales in 876-77 and then a large chasm in the text. This much-emended entry appears to be the death notice of Gøðrøðr, king of the Vikings in Scotland and father of Ímar and Amlaíb. This is no chronological impossibility: his sons first appeared in Ireland 25 years before, very likely in their twenties or younger, and we may infer from this that he may have been in his sixties when he died.

41. Ímar had continued to rule in Dublin and when he died in 873, his annalistic death notice is as follows:

> U 873.3. Imhar rex Nordmannorum totius Hibernie[hook] & Britannie uitam finiuit Ímar king of the Norwegians of the whole of Ireland and Britain ended his life.

There is no good reason why this entry cannot be taken literally as meaning that Ímar was overking of all the Norwegian Vikings in Ireland and Britain. Though one cannot be absolutely certain what 'Britannia' meant for the annalist, the examples in U indicate that it meant the island of Britain as a whole. His brother, Amlaíb, had returned to the homeland in Scotland and was now involved in local events there. One may infer from the terms used in this obit that Dublin had come to be regarded as the dynastic caput. The evidence suggests that Dublin was the capital of a sea-kingdom: Man and Viking Scotland in the narrower sense-the Orkneys, Caithness, Sutherland, the Western Isles and Argyle and the coastline of Inverness and Ross and Cromarty. It may also included overlordship of Pictland and of the Strathclyde Britons. It is probable that Galloway and Cumbria from the Solway Firth to the Mersey formed part of the same overlordship. Generally, the extent of Norse settlement in Galloway is disputed; the evidence of place-names is, as usual, ambiguous, and it is best to think that the area was British in population with strong Irish, Hebridean and Anglian influences and probably Dublin-Norse overlordship. The connection between Galloway and the Gall-Goídil (Old-Norse Gaddgeðalar) is uncertain: the word is the same, the people need not be. The role of the Dublin Vikings as colonists in Cumbria is obscure, but it is likely that many settlers in the Wirral came from Dublin, its hinterland and dependencies. Wainwright thought there was a great colonising movement that led to intense and largely peaceful settlement from the Dee to the Solway and beyond, and eastwards towards Yorkshire north of the Humber. The problem is chronology, and only a vague answer can be given.

42. When Dublin was fell to Irish attack in 902 and when its dynasty was expelled, some of the Dubliners went to Anglesea and from there to Chester. They may have been going to their own kinsmen. If so, the settlement in Cumbria must be at least as early as the later ninth century.

43. The members of the dynasty went to Scotland, back to where they started from and to territories that had long been their dependencies. In 903 we next find them not in the Isles and in the west of Scotland (where, one assumes, their control remained effective), but engaged in warfare in Southern Pictland. As the *Scottish Chronicle* relates:

The attack on Dunkeld is nothing less than an attack on the king of South Pictland, Constantine II (r. 900-43), the most important ruler in Scotland. Very likely, he had been considered a dependent king by the dynasty of Dublin, and the fall of Dublin was the signal for his revolt. The presence of the Dublin dynasty in Scotland is confirmed by the Irish records. In 904 Ímar grandson of Ímar, the king of Dublin until his expulsion, was killed by the men of South Pictland with great slaughter, but this setback did not halt the Dublin dynasty. In the same year, Ead, whom the annalist calls ri Cruithentuaithe 'king of Pictland', was killed by two grandsons of Ímar and one Ketill with a loss of 500 men. Evidently, the Dublin dynasty was fighting for control of South Pictland. Some time between 904 and about 914 (when historical sources again become available), the exiled Dublin dynasty reached what one could call critical mass in North Britain and embarked on another career of conquest, in northern England and Ireland. Professor Alfred P. Smyth has thrown a flood of light on these and subsequent events that led to the re-establishment of the Viking kingdom of Dublin, the taking of York by the same dynasty, and the establishment of close relationships between Dublin, York and northern England generally.

44. In Ireland, the second Viking age began suddenly with 'the arrival of a great sea-fleet of pagans in Waterford Harbour' in 914. In 917 two leaders of the exiled Dublin dynasty joined in the renewed attack and, though their relationship to the Waterford fleets of 914-15 is not clear, they took control of Viking activities in Ireland. Ragnall grandson of Ímar who is called ri Dubgall 'king of the Danes' because he had made himself king of Danish Northumbria, came with a fleet to Waterford. His kinsman, Sitric Caech, defeated the Leinstermen in 917, re-captured Dublin, and re-established the Viking kingdom. In 918 Ragnall led his Waterford fleet to North Britain and made himself king of York and ruler of Northumbria and probably of Cumbria. He died in 921 and in his obit he is called ri Finngall & Dubgall 'king of the Norse and the Danes'—an accurate description of his mixed Scandinavian kingdom. The Dublin-York axis that was to have such influence in Ireland and England for over half a century, had been established, and the dynasty of Dublin was now more powerful than ever.

45. Viking Scotland, known variously as Lothlend, Laithlind, Laithlinn, Lochlainn in Irish literary and historical sources, played a major if unsung role in the history of Britain and Ireland in the ninth and tenth centuries. While Norwegian in origin, its dynasty cannot be convincing attached to any Norwegian royal line. The sagas and genealogies that do so belong to twelfth century or later, and have little value for the early Viking age. Much of the raiding on Ireland in the first half of the ninth century was mounted from Viking Scotland, and in the middle of that century the kings that controlled Viking Scotland made Dublin their headquarters. Though they had limited success in winning land in Ireland, they were overlords of far-flung dependencies in Scotland, Wales and England, some of which they ruled indirectly through dependent kings. From these they extracted tribute and military service. When the kings of Dublin were expelled in 902 they returned to Scotland where they engaged in the re-conquest of Southern Pictland and the taking of Northumbria. From here, they again attacked Ireland and re-established the kingdom of Dublin.

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