

KATHLEEN HUGHES MEMORIAL LECTURES 19

CAROLINE BRETT

‘YOU READ IT HERE FIRST’: EARLY  
TRADITIONS OF WELSH SAINTS IN  
BRITTANY



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC  
&  
HUGHES HALL

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Kathleen Winifred Hughes (1926-77) was the first Nora Chadwick Reader in Celtic Studies in the University of Cambridge. Previously (1958-76) she had held the Lectureship in the Early History and Culture of the British Isles which had been created for Nora Chadwick in 1950. She was a Fellow of Newnham College, and Director of Studies in both History and Anglo-Saxon, 1955-77. Her responsibilities in the Department of Anglo-Saxon & Kindred Studies, subsequently the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, were in the fields of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh history of the early and central Middle Ages. Her achievements in respect of Gaelic history have been widely celebrated, notably in the memorial volume *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, published in 1982.

The Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures both acknowledge her achievements and seek to provide an annual forum for advancing the subject. The lecture is hosted in Hughes Hall in conjunction with the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. The lecture is published as a pamphlet each year by the Department.

Hughes Hall was founded in 1885 to take women graduating from the universities and give them a one year training to become teachers. Originally called the Cambridge Training College (CTC) it was re-named in 1948 in honour of its first Principal, Elizabeth Phillips Hughes, who had been one of the early students of Newnham College and became a respected leader in the theory and practice of education. E. P. Hughes came from Wales and was a proponent of the language and culture of Wales. But, apart from this Welsh heritage, there is no known connection between the College and the scholar now commemorated in this series of lectures. Hughes Hall became a full college of the university in 2006. Enquiries about entry as a student are always welcome. Information can be found on the college website at <http://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate-admissions/>

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‘You Read it Here First’: Early Traditions of Welsh Saints in Brittany

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‘YOU READ IT HERE FIRST’:  
EARLY TRADITIONS OF WELSH SAINTS IN BRITTANY

Unlike a number of earlier lecturers in this series I did not have the good fortune to meet Kathleen Hughes in person; but as an undergraduate trying to get to grips with the history of early medieval Ireland, I relied heavily on her clear, gracefully written and above all helpful books, *Early Christian Ireland: an Introduction to the Sources* and *The Church in Early Irish Society*. Filled with apt examples to whet your appetite to find out more, they were the first model for the kind of history I hoped to write. In recognition of this, I chose for today’s lecture a topic from the field of ecclesiastical history that Kathleen Hughes made so much her own.

Kathleen Hughes produced foundational studies of a text and a manuscript on which I will be partly basing my lecture – the Welsh-Latin Life of St Cadog by Lifris of Llancarfan, dating from the years around 1100, and the hagiographical manuscript in which it forms the *pièce de résistance*, British Library Cotton Vespasian A.XIV, part i, known as *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*.<sup>1</sup> The focus of her study of the Life of St Cadog was its evidence for the sharing of information about saints and their cults between Wales and Ireland in the early Middle Ages – specifically, the appearance in each other’s Lives of St Cadog of Llancarfan and St Finnian of Clonard.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Hughes, ‘British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A.XIV (*Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*): its purpose and provenance’, in N. K. Chadwick (ed.), *Studies in the Early British Church* (Cambridge, 1958), 183–200, reprinted with some editorial changes in Kathleen Hughes, ed. David N. Dumville, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources* (Woodbridge, 1980), 53–66; Kathleen Hughes, ‘The historical value of the Lives of St Finnian of Clonard’, *English Historical Review*, 69 (1954), 353–72. Most of the contents of Cotton Vespasian A.XIV part i are published with an English translation in A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944). It has been established that the manuscript was written at Monmouth during the last third of the twelfth century: Ben Guy, ‘The Life of St Dyfrig and the lost charters of Moccas (Mochros), Herefordshire’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 75 (Summer 2018), 1–37: 6 and note 17.

In her posthumously published O'Donnell Lecture, 'The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?', Hughes developed the theme of ecclesiastical connections between Wales and Ireland.<sup>2</sup> She concluded that a pre-eminently monastic *organisation* shared among the Brittonic and Gaelic-speaking Churches was a mirage – but this was without prejudice to the reality of many elements of shared culture among these regions, in respects such as the development of script, of exegesis and canon law, and in the cult of saints – for example in the recurrence of the same names of reputed saints in the hagiography and liturgy and, most enigmatically, in the place-names of more than one Celtic-speaking region.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Hughes, 'The Celtic Church: is this a valid concept?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 1 (Summer 1981), 1–20.

<sup>3</sup> Script: David N. Dumville, 'Writers, scribes and readers in Brittany, AD 800–1100: the evidence of manuscripts', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin, 2005), 49–64: 51–2; David N. Dumville, *A Palaeographer's Review: The Insular System of Scripts in the Early Middle Ages, Volume One* (Osaka, 1999), 111–13. Exegesis and canon law: Richard Sharpe, 'Gildas as a Father of the Church', in Michael Lapidge and David N. Dumville (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), 193–205: 201–2. Large amounts of source-material for the cults of saints found in various Celtic-speaking regions were collected, rather uncritically, in Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints. The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and such Irish Saints as have Dedications in Britain*, 4 vols. (London, 1907–13), and in the many pamphlets by Gilbert Hunter Doble collected in his *The Saints of Cornwall* (Chatham, 1960). (For a bibliography of Doble's publications, see R. M. Catling and J. P. Rogers, *G. H. Doble. A Memoir and a Bibliography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Exeter, [1949]).) A geographical synthesis of Celtic saints' cults was attempted by E. G. Bowen in his *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (Cardiff, 1969) and *Britain and the Western Seaways* (London, 1972). For critiques and partial updating of this work, see Owen Chadwick, 'The evidence of dedications in the early history of the Welsh Church', in H. M. Chadwick and N. K. Chadwick (eds.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), 173–88; Jonathan Wooding, 'The figure of David', in J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan Wooding (eds.), *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* (Woodbridge, 2007), 1–19; Karen Jankulak, 'Adjacent saints' dedications and early Celtic history', in Steve Boardman, John Reuben Davies and Eila Williamson (eds.), *Saints' Cults in the Celtic World* (Woodbridge, 2017), 91–118. Most good recent studies of saints' names occurring in place-names concentrate on particular regions. For Wales, see the previous lecture in the present series, David N. Parsons, *Warning: May Contain Saints. Place-Names as Evidence for the Church in Early Wales*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lecture 17 (Cambridge, 2019), and *idem*, *Martyrs and Memorials: Merthyr Place-Names and the Church in Early Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2013). Cornwall: Oliver Padel, 'Local saints and place-names in Cornwall', in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 303–60. Brittany: Bernard Tanguy, 'L'hagio-onomastique bretonne: problématique et méthodologie', *107<sup>e</sup> Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Brest, 1982: Philologie et Histoire jusqu'à 1610. I: Questions d'Histoire de Bretagne* (Paris, 1984), 323–340. Scotland: the 'Saints in Scottish Place-Names' project at the University of Glasgow,

The investigation of the role of saints and of personal communication in creating a shared Christian tradition in Celtic Britain and Ireland is one I would like to see extended more systematically to Brittany, a region that occupies an uncertain, liminal space in medieval ‘Celtic’ studies, sometimes in, sometimes out. Brittany, of course, took its British language and identity from migrants coming from Britain in the immediate post-Roman period. The nature of this migration is frustratingly obscure; but the evidence of language, place-names, inscriptions and manuscripts underlines that Brittany was included in the shared culture I have just mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Of course this is not a new realisation. In the earlier twentieth century, Baring-Gould and Fisher and Gilbert Doble painstakingly recorded the evidence for the sharing of saints’ cults between Britain and Brittany.<sup>5</sup> The difficulty lies in constructing a plausible narrative or institutional model to account for such sharing. When it became clear to historians that saints’ Lives could not be taken as accurate records of the times of the saints themselves, and that their emphasis on monastic asceticism could not be understood as an institutional template for the ‘Celtic Church’, fresh approaches had to be developed; and this was especially difficult in the case of Brittany because of the shortage of almost every kind of early evidence *other than* hagiography.<sup>6</sup> Thanks to the research undertaken since the 1980s

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<https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/>; Ireland: Deirdre Flanagan, ‘The Christian impact on early Ireland: place-name evidence’, in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds.), *Ireland and Europe: The Early Church/Ireland und Europa: die Kirche im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1984), 25–51; Tomás Ó Carragáin, ‘Church sites and other settlements in early medieval Ireland: densities, distribution, interactions’, in Nancy Edwards, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Roy Flechner (eds.), *Transforming Landscapes of Belief in the Early Medieval Insular World and Beyond* (Turnhout, 2017), 457–89 .

<sup>4</sup> For language, see Caroline Brett with Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago, 450–1200: Contact, Myth and History* (Cambridge, 2021), 17–31 and references; for place-names, Oliver J. Padel, ‘Generic place-name elements in the three Brittonic regions’, in Caroline Brett, Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (eds.), *Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Medieval Brittany, 450–1200: Connections and Disconnections* (Turnhout, forthcoming); for inscriptions, Wendy Davies *et al.*, *The Inscriptions of Early Medieval Brittany/ Les inscriptions de la Bretagne du Haut Moyen Âge* (Oakville, CN and Aberystwyth, 2000); Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), 169–73. For manuscripts, see note 3 above.

<sup>5</sup> Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*; Doble, *The Saints of Cornwall*.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of ecclesiastical history based on hagiographical sources and emphasising monasticism are John Ryan, *Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Dublin, 1972); Siân Victory, *The Celtic Church in Wales* (London, 1977); Gildas Bernier, *Les chrétientés bretonnes continentales depuis les origines jusqu’au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rennes, 1982).

by Wendy Davies, Julia Smith, Thomas Charles-Edwards, and Bernard Tanguy, among others, we now have a much better understanding of the early medieval Church in Brittany and a firmer basis for comparison with other British-speaking regions – not least, as Charles-Edwards has noted, the fact that these Churches shared the experience of being thought backward and unorthodox by their English and Gallic neighbours.<sup>7</sup>

But what I especially want to emphasise is the way in which study of the Breton Church can reflect added light on the Churches of southern Celtic Britain as far back as the post-Roman period. We are not likely to get a full or fair picture of the British Church if we do not recognise the long-term role it is likely to have played in providing intellectual and human resources to Brittany (as well as to Ireland), ensuring that the Breton Church would forever after remember its founding saints as emigrants from Wales.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See in particular Julia M. H. Smith, ‘The “archbishopric” of Dol and the ecclesiastical politics of ninth-century Brittany’, *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982), 59–70; *eadem*, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge, 1992); Wendy Davies, ‘Priests and rural communities in east Brittany in the ninth century’, *Études Celtiques*, 20 (1983), 177–197; *eadem*, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (London, 1988); Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Beyond empire II: Christianities of Celtic peoples’, in T. F. X. Noble and J. M. H. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Volume 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600 – c. 1100* (Cambridge, 2008), 86–10; *idem*, *Wales and the Britons*, 228–41; Bernard Tanguy, ‘De l’origine des évêchés bretons’, in *Les débuts de l’organisation religieuse de la Bretagne armoricaine, Britannia Monastica*, 3 (1994), 5–33; *idem*, ‘Hagionomastique et histoire: Pabu Tugdual *alias* Tudi et les origines du diocèse de Cornouaille’, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique du Finistère*, 115 (1986), 117–42; and the important collections of essays in Marc Simon (ed.), *Landévennec et le monachisme breton dans le haut Moyen Âge: Actes du Colloque du 15<sup>e</sup> centenaire de l’abbaye de Landévennec 25–26–27 avril 1985* (Bannalec, 1986) and Bernard Tanguy and T. Daniel (eds.), *Sur les pas de Paul Aurélien. Colloque international Saint-Pol-de-Léon 7–8 juin 1991* (Brest/Quimper, 1997). Other important works will be cited in subsequent references.

<sup>8</sup> For the role of Britons in the Christianisation of Ireland, see David N. Dumville, ‘Some British aspects of the earliest Irish Christianity’, in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds.), *Irland und Europa: Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter/Ireland and Europe: The Early Church* (Stuttgart, 1984), 16–24; Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Britons in Ireland, c. 550–800’, in John Carey, John T. Koch and Pierre-Yves Lambert (eds.), *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana* (Andover, MA, 1999), 15–26; *idem*, *Wales and the Britons*, 181–7. That Insular Britain was a long-term provider of clergy to the Breton Church was suggested by René Largillière, *Les saints et l’organisation chrétienne primitive dans l’Armorique bretonne* (Rennes, 1925), 226. For the British origins of Breton saints see François Kerlouégan, ‘Les Vies de saints bretons les plus anciennes dans leurs rapports avec les Îles britanniques’, in Michael Herren (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies. Papers on Latin Texts and Manuscripts of the British*

I will focus today on this Breton hagiographical tradition and particularly on what it can tell us about the development of the cults of saints in Wales in the period before hagiography from Wales itself survives in any quantity, and about the institutional support that is likely to have existed there for saints’ cults and their propagation.

There is an obvious disparity between the quantity and date of saints’ Lives produced in Brittany and in Celtic Britain. All complete extant Lives of Welsh saints date from the eleventh century and later, after the beginning of the Norman Conquest. By contrast, from Brittany we have a fairly substantial body of datable hagiography from the ninth century and one text that may be as early as the late seventh. Because Bretons thought it important that their founding fathers came from Britain, some of these early Lives contain substantial amounts (even a preponderance) of information about Wales and Cornwall (and also, occasionally, Ireland), and about Insular saints and their churches. The paradox that Breton clerics regarded the British Church as their parent and yet were apparently in advance of it in the production of hagiography is one that I will return to in the last part of the lecture.

The earliest Breton saint’s Life, the First Life of St Samson of Dol, was a model for all subsequent Breton hagiography and it set the pattern for an emphasis on the saints’ Insular British origins.<sup>9</sup> Although composed in Brittany, the Life of Samson gives much more space to its hero’s early career in Wales, Ireland and Cornwall than to the final Breton phase of his life. Its Breton author represents himself as a devoted pilgrim in Britain, visiting and honouring the places associated with his hero’s early life: ‘I have been in his magnificent monastery’ [of St Illtud, in Wales]; ‘I have venerated and touched with my hand the sign of the cross that St Samson

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*Isles, 550–1066* (Toronto, 1981), 195–213; Bernard Merdrignac, ‘Le “glaive à deux tranchants” et l’ “âge des saints”’, in B. Merdrignac, *Les Saints bretons entre légendes et histoire. Le glaive à deux tranchants* (Rennes, 2008), 195–213; Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 113–42.

<sup>9</sup> *Vita I S. Samsonis* (BHL 7478), ed. Pierre Flobert, *La Vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol* (Paris, 1997). For recent discussion see the essays collected in Lynette Olson (ed.), *St Samson of Dol and the Earliest History of Brittany, Cornwall and Wales* (Woodbridge, 2017), together with Joseph-Claude Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne du haut Moyen Âge. Répertoire raisonné* (Ostfildern, 2009), 308–36; R. Sowerby, ‘The Lives of St Samson: rewriting the ambitions of an early medieval cult’, *Francia*, 38 (2011), 1–31.

carved ... on a standing stone' [in Cornwall].<sup>10</sup> Subsequent Breton hagiographers too went to some trouble to research (or at least assert) the British background of their founding saints.

The Welsh view of the Bretons was more distant. The north Welsh author of *Historia Brittonum*, writing around 830, believed that the Bretons had emigrated in the distant past and were no longer playing an active part in British destinies: 'they are the Armorican Britons and they never came back, even until the present day'.<sup>11</sup> If they did intervene again, it would be in the remote end times foretold in political prophecy, as in the tenth-century poem *Armes Prydein*.<sup>12</sup> On the rare occasions when a Welsh saint's Life mentions Brittany, it is in the context of Welsh patronage or colonisation: the legendary hero Caradog Freichfras conquers the province;<sup>13</sup> St Cadog of Llancarfan blesses it with a monastic foundation as he is returning from Rome.<sup>14</sup> This picture of Brittany's dependency and, on the whole, insignificance was only slightly mitigated in Welsh hagiography after the Norman Conquest, when the arrival of Breton landowners in Wales made Breton origins newly noticeable and fashionable. The Breton content in post-Conquest Welsh hagiography seems cosmetic, answering to contemporary concerns such as the status of the bishoprics of Llandaf and St Davids, rather than being deeply embedded.<sup>15</sup> Early twentieth-century historians of Wales who generally accepted the historicity of Welsh saints' Lives were sceptical as to whether such Breton material truly belonged in

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<sup>10</sup> *Vita I. S. Samsonis*, I.7, I.48, ed. Flobert *La Vie ancienne*, 156–7, 216–7. The author's allusions to his own research in the *Vita* are collected by Kerlouégan, 'Les Vies', 200–1, and Joseph-Claude Poulin, 'La circulation de l'information dans la Vie ancienne de S. Samson de Dol et la question de sa datation', in Olson (ed.), *St Samson of Dol*, 37–82: 53–5; their overall probability is endorsed by Barry Lewis, 'The saints in narratives of conversion from the Brittonic-speaking regions', in Roy Flechner and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (eds), *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles I* (Turnhout, 2016), 431–53: 437.

<sup>11</sup> *Historia Brittonum*, 27, ed. Edmond Faral, *La légende arthurienne, études et documents*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1929), vol. III, 1–62: 20–21; transl. John Morris, *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), 24–5.

<sup>12</sup> Ivor Williams and Rachel Bromwich (ed. and transl.), *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain from the Book of Taliesin* (Dublin, 1972); for discussion and references, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 519–35.

<sup>13</sup> *Vita S. Paterni*, 4, in A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944), 252–69: 255.

<sup>14</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci* (BHL 1491–2), 35, ed. and transl. A. W. Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944), 24–141: 96–9.

<sup>15</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 295–303.

the Welsh ‘classical tradition’.<sup>16</sup> The *Bonedd y Saint* tracts compiled in Wales in the central Middle Ages, which list the names and origins of Welsh saints, held that a group of Welsh saints came from *Llydaw* – Brittany; but Bartrum and others balked at believing this, and dealt with the difficulty by arguing that *Llydaw* was the name of a region in South Wales.<sup>17</sup> This scepticism may be contrasted with the readiness of historians of Brittany to accept the historicity of Welsh traditions relating to Brittany, and to assert Brittany’s place in a continuum of British-Celtic tradition.<sup>18</sup> I shall return in the final section to what this literary phenomenon may imply about the real-life relationship between the early Welsh and Breton Churches. But for now, I will simply suggest that the readiness of Breton hagiographers to accept their dependent status in relation to the British Church may say as much about the British Church as it does about Brittany – about its self-confidence and the relative abundance of its resources in the little-known period between the sixth century and the ninth.

To obtain the fullest possible picture of Christianity in early medieval Wales we may need not only to highlight the most obviously Welsh-oriented passages in Breton hagiography, but to study the whole corpus as providing unexpected sidelights and points of comparison for the development of Welsh saints’ cults. I will start with some familiar examples, and go on to some that are slightly less obvious, of what Breton hagiographers can tell us about the early phases of saints’ cults in Wales, before the surviving Welsh saints’ Lives were composed.

I have mentioned the First Life of St Samson, composed between about 650 and 700, perhaps the best-known and most fully studied of Breton Vitae. Its information about Samson’s early life in Gwent under his

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<sup>16</sup> As collected by Peter C. Bartrum in *A Welsh Classical Dictionary: People in History and Legend Up To About A.D. 1000* (Aberystwyth, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, 420; David Howlett and Charles Thomas, ‘*Vita Sancti Paterni*: the Life of St Padarn and the original Miniu’, *Trivium*, 33 (2003), 1–103: 68–75, 95–7. More recently the importance of Breton saints in the schema of *Bonedd y Saint* has been recognised: Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 617; Barry J. Lewis, ‘Approaching the genealogies of the Welsh saints’, in David Parsons and Paul Russell (eds.), *Seintiau Cymru, Sancti Cambrenses: Astudiaethau ar Seintiau Cymry/Studies in the Saints of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2022), 65–100: 98–100.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Léon Fleuriot, ‘Langue et société dans la Bretagne ancienne’, in Léon Fleuriot and P. Ségalen (eds.), *Héritage celtique et captation française, apud J. Balcou and Y. Le Gallo* (eds.), *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*, vol. I (Paris/Geneva, 1987), 7–28; *idem*, ‘Old Breton genealogies and early British traditions’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1974), 1–6; Bernard Merdrignac, *D’une Bretagne à l’autre. Les migrations bretonnes entre histoire et légendes* (Rennes, 2012).

saintly mentors, Abbot Illtud and Bishop Dyfrig, importantly corroborates and extends the information about these saints' cults given in Welsh sources from the ninth century onwards. One might say that the first surprising thing about the Life of Samson is that the two major figures of the sixth-century Welsh Church whom it names do persist as two of the principal figures of the cultic landscape until the Norman Conquest and beyond: a testimony to the staying power of church establishments in Gwent. Particularly striking is the stable and continuous cult of St Illtud. The 'magnificent monastery in Gwent' where Samson was brought up is almost certainly Llanilltud Fawr, which has an impressive series of monumental inscriptions of the eighth and ninth centuries; its clergy appear regularly in the witness lists of charters dating between the eighth and the eleventh centuries preserved in the Book of Llandaf.<sup>19</sup> The Life of Samson also claims that St Illtud, the founder, had been trained by the fifth-century heresy-fighter, St Germanus of Auxerre;<sup>20</sup> so here the Breton evidence shows us that a Welsh church-establishment with centuries of success ahead of it already existed in the sixth century and was proclaiming its orthodox late-Roman origins by the seventh.

Another well-known example of a Welsh saint who appears in early evidence from Brittany is St David, who would become the pre-eminent and representative saint of Wales. David is first mentioned in Irish sources of the ninth century,<sup>21</sup> but it is the Life of St Paul Aurelian, composed in the west of Brittany in 884, that contains the earliest reference to his nickname of 'the watery', referring to his abstinence from alcohol. This is narrowly ahead of the first surviving references to David by Welsh writers, Asser in his Life of King Alfred (893) and the tenth-century poem *Armes Prydein*:<sup>22</sup> and it shows that not only the saint's name and cult but important

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Wooding, 'The representation of early British monasticism and *peregrinatio* in *Vita Prima S. Samsonis*', in Olson (ed.), *St Samson of Dol*, 137–61: 142–9; Mark Redknap and John M. Lewis, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales. Volume I. Breconshire, Glamorgan, Monmouthshire, Radnorshire, and geographically contiguous areas of Herefordshire and Shropshire* (Cardiff, 2007), G63–G71, 369–96; Patrick Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf as a Historical Source* (Woodbridge, 2019), 165–6, 168.

<sup>20</sup> *Vita I.S. Samsonis*, I.7, ed. Flobert, *La vie ancienne*, 156.

<sup>21</sup> In the Martyrology of Tallaght, the Martyrology of Óengus the Culdee and the Catalogue of the Saints of Ireland: for references see John Reuben Davies, 'The saints of South Wales and the Welsh Church', in Thacker and Sharpe (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches*, 361–95: 377.

<sup>22</sup> Asser, *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, 54, ed. and transl. W. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of St Neots erroneously ascribed to Asser* (Oxford,

aspects of his saintly personality were fixed and widely known, long before they were celebrated in the earliest surviving Life attributed to Rhygyfarch.<sup>23</sup>

Having briefly mentioned the First Life of Samson and the Life of Paul Aurelian, I would like to focus on the evidence for Breton-Welsh contact in a group of slightly less well studied Breton saint’s Lives, the ninth-century Lives of St Machutus, Machlou or Malo. The various forms of this saint’s name are a subject of study in their own right, but to avoid complications I shall call him by his most widely recognised name, St Malo.<sup>24</sup> By the early ninth century Malo was believed to be the founding saint of the diocese of Alet in north-eastern Brittany. Like St Samson, he was thought to have migrated there from Wales. Three ninth-century Lives of him survive, one composed by a named author, Bili, who worked between about 865 and 872, and two by anonymous rewriters.<sup>25</sup>

St Malo’s biographers state that he was brought up and educated at one of the great south-east Welsh monasteries, Llancarfan.<sup>26</sup> Llancarfan’s own traditions are clear that its founder and patron saint was St Cadog, whose Life was written by Lifris at the end of the eleventh century.<sup>27</sup> Apparently genuine charters from Llancarfan as early as the eighth century

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1904), 51–9; *Armes Prydein*, lines 51, 105, 129, 140, 196, ed. and transl. Williams and Bromwich, 4–5, 8–9, 10–11, 12–13.

<sup>23</sup> Rhygyfarch, *Vita S. David* (BHL 2107), ed. and transl. R. Sharpe and J. R. Davies, ‘Rhygyfarch’s Life of St David’, in J. Wyn Evans and J. Wooding (eds.), *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* (Woodbridge, 2012), 107–55.

<sup>24</sup> Barry Lewis, ‘St Mechyll of Anglesey, St Maughold of Man and St Malo of Brittany’, *Studia Celtica Fennica*, 10 (2013), 24–38, 29–30, 34–36; Anthony Harvey, ‘Some observations on Celtic-Latin name formation’, in John Carey *et al.* (eds.), *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana* (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), 53–62: 58–9; Paul Quentel, ‘Sur quelques mots et toponymes bretons et celtiques III’, *Ogam* 6 (1954), 113–18: 113.

<sup>25</sup> For the *vitae* of Malo and their textual relationships see Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 142–98. The relevant texts are Bili, *Vita S. Machutis* (BHL 5116), ed. F. Lot, ‘*Vita Sancti Machutis* par Bili’, in F. Lot, *Mélanges d’histoire bretonne (VI<sup>e</sup>-XI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, 1907), 331–430; *Vita anonyma longior S. Machutis* (BHL 5118a), ed. F. Lot, ‘La plus ancienne Vie de Saint Malo’, in Lot, *Mélanges d’histoire bretonne*, 287–329; *Vita anonyma brevior S. Machutis* (BHL 5117), ed. A. de la Borderie, ‘Autre Vie de saint Malo écrite au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle par un anonyme’, *Bulletin Ille-et-Vilaine*, 16 (1883), 265–32.

<sup>26</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.1–14, ed. Lot, 353–61; *Vita anonyma longior*, 1, ed. Lot, 295.

<sup>27</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, ed. and transl. Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 24–141. For the date of composition of *Vita S. Cadoci* see Christopher N. L. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1986), 73, 89.

record grants of land to ‘God and St Cadog’.<sup>28</sup> But, strangely enough, the Lives of St Malo do not mention Cadog. Instead, they allege that the abbot of Llancarfan who mentored the young Malo was St Brendan – who was actually the founder of Clonfert in Ireland, and the hero of *Navigatio S. Brendani*.<sup>29</sup> They depict St Malo as having taken part in Brendan’s famous voyage to the paradisaical ocean island of Imma. Clearly, St Malo’s biographers had access to oral or written versions of the legend of St Brendan. Such are the difficulties of dating the texts relating directly to St Brendan – his own *Vita* and the *Navigatio S. Brendani* – that Bili’s Life of St Malo provides a vital fixed point in the tradition.<sup>30</sup> This tradition was apparently derived by Malo’s biographers from, or through, Llancarfan. In Bili’s *Vita*, the token that proves the truth of St Brendan’s voyage is a miraculous seedling gathered on one of the islands he visited, which was planted at Llancarfan and shown to visitors, including Bretons. ‘Many coming from our parts [i.e. Brittany] to that country have seen this flourishing plant but no one knows what kind of tree it may be.’<sup>31</sup> The implication is that Bretons were regular visitors at Llancarfan, but, at least in the case of the hagiographers of St Malo, they were more interested in what they could learn there about the Irish St Brendan than they were in the monastery’s own founding saint, Cadog.

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<sup>28</sup> Llancarfan charters appended to Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci* (London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. XIV, late twelfth century), ed. and transl. Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 124–36. For discussion of the charters, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 256–67; Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf as a Historical Source*, 15–16, 28–9, 38–41, 92, 99–102.

<sup>29</sup> For Brendan’s life and cult, see Rossana E. Guglielmetti and Giovanni Orlandi (eds.), *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Editio Maior* (Florence, 2017); Jonathan Wooding, ‘The medieval and early modern cult of St Brendan’, in Boardman, Davies and Williamson (eds.) *Saints’ Cults in the Celtic World*, 180–204 and references.

<sup>30</sup> For the relationship between Brendan’s *Vita*, the *Navigatio* and the Lives of St Malo see Guglielmetti and Orlandi (eds.), *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, xciv–xcvi; C. Strijbosch, *The Seafaring Saint, Sources and Analogues of the Twelfth-Century Voyage of St Brendan*, transl. T. Summerfield (Dublin, 2000), 125–65; Séan Mac Mathúna, ‘Contributions to a study of the voyages of St Brendan and St Malo’, in C. Laurent and H. Davis (eds.), *Irlande et Bretagne. Vingt siècles d’histoire. Actes du Colloque de Rennes (29–31 mars 1993)* (Rennes, 1994), 41–55; reprinted in Jonathan Wooding (ed.), *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism* (Dublin, 2000), 157–74. For the dating of the texts see David Dumville, ‘Two approaches to the dating of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*’, *Studi Medievali*, 29 (1988), 87–102; Jonathan Wooding, ‘The date of *Navigatio S. Brendani Abbatis*’, *Studia Hibernica*, 37 (2011), 9–26.

<sup>31</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.25, ed. Lot, 368.

If one reads them between the lines, however, the Lives of St Malo can also perhaps give a clue as to what sort of traditions about Cadog may already have existed. The Lives of the two saints, Malo and Cadog, by Bili and Lifris, although over two centuries apart in date, are strikingly similar. Both are unusually long and rambling in structure, with no coherent chronology, and with one or more ‘false endings’ where extra episodes have been tacked on. In both Lives, the saint is constantly on the move (even by the usual standards of Celtic saints), and ends up dying a long distance away from his principal church (Malo’s relics are eventually repatriated, Cadog’s are not). Both saints are particularly irascible, given to cursing opponents, and blinding those who infringe their rights of protection: opposition to saints from powerful and wicked laymen, who are then subjected to divine punishment, is a recurrent motif in Welsh hagiography, starting from the earliest surviving fragments reproduced in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, but is less prevalent in Breton hagiography.<sup>32</sup> Apart from these general similarities, there are individual, unusual miracle-stories which appear in both Lives.

The attempt to trace the origins of specific types of miracle-story, and to draw lines of dependency between texts on the basis of their treatment of such miracles, is a treacherous enterprise. Many of us will have had the experience of coming across a miracle-story in a coherent group of texts and venturing to designate that particular miracle as a regional speciality, perhaps ‘Celtic’ or ‘Insular’, only to find it appearing in all kinds of other places. Story-motifs can seem like the ever-recombining DNA of hagiography, a tangle without beginning or end. Any links I now try to trace between Ireland, Wales and Brittany by means of such motifs must be regarded as provisional; but it does seem worthwhile to draw attention to them.

Presented below is the strange story of a long-dead pagan of gigantic size who is resurrected and baptized. It is found only in the Lives of Cadog and Malo and in two works of Irish hagiography, Tirechán’s *Collectanea* on the Life of St Patrick, and the *Vita S. Brendani*. Curiously, given the

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<sup>32</sup> See Wendy Davies, ‘Property rights and property claims in Welsh *Vitae* of the eleventh century’, in E. Patlageán and P. Riché (eds.), *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IV<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2–5 mai 1979)* (Paris, 1981), 515–33, reprinted in Wendy Davies, *Welsh History in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Societies* (Farnham, 2009), no. XIV; Wendy Davies, ‘Adding insult to injury: property, power and immunities in early medieval Wales’, in Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds.), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1995), 137–64.

clear presence of Brendan traditions in the Lives of St Malo, the *Vita S. Brendani* version is different from the Patrick/Malo/Cadog version of the story (which I shall call PMC) in several respects.

*Vita S. Brendani*<sup>33</sup>

Not long after they had departed from thence, they saw long sea shores on which they found a girl dead, who, they saw, had been wounded between the shoulders. She was of astonishing size, that is, a hundred feet long. Then the holy father prayed alone to God for her, and his prayer was heard, because he brought her to life and baptized her. And when he asked her of what country she was, or of what people, she replied: 'I am one of the inhabitants of the ocean, and we await the general resurrection'. Then Brendan said to her: 'Choose now one of these two things, whether you want to go to your people, or to heaven.' And she replied in a language that was unknown except to the Elder alone: 'I wish to live with my king, and to see him every day, and to dwell with the angelic spirits who praise him without ceasing.' And at once, after she had chosen the part of Mary, she rested in peace without labour or pain, and was buried in the same place.

Tirechán, *Collectanea*<sup>34</sup>

And holy Patrick came through the plains in the territory of Macc Erce in Dichuil and Aurchuil. (2) And in Dichuil Patrick came to a huge grave of astounding breadth (?) and excessive in length, which his people had found, and they were amazed, with great astonishment, that it extended a hundred and twenty feet, and they said: 'We do not believe that there could have been such a thing as a man of this length.' (3) Patrick answered and said: 'If you wish you shall see him', and they said: 'We do', and he struck the stone on the side of the head with his staff and signed the grave with the sign of the cross and said: 'Open, o Lord, the grave', and it opened. (4) And a huge man arose whole, and said: 'Thanks be to you, o holy man, that you have raised me even for one hour from many pains', (5) and, behold, he wept bitterly and said: 'May I walk with you?' They said: 'We cannot have you walk with us, for men cannot look upon your face for fear of you. (6) But believe in the God of heaven and receive the baptism of the Lord, and you will not return to the place in which you were. And tell us to whom you belong.' (7) 'I am the son of the son of Cass son of Glas; I was the swineherd of Lugar king of Hirota. The warrior band of the sons of Macc Con killed me in the reign of Coirpre Nie Fer' (a hundred years ago from now). (8) And he was baptized, and confessed God, and fell silent, and was laid again in his grave.

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<sup>33</sup> Version in Oxford Bodleian Library Rawlinson B.485 and 505, ch. lxxvii: ed. Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1910), vol. I, 98–151.

<sup>34</sup> Tirechán, *Collectanea* (BHL 6496), ed. and transl. Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), 154–5.

Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*<sup>35</sup>

In the seventh year of their voyage they came to an island on which was an extremely long mound. Then St Brendan said: ‘O holy Machu, ask of the Lord your God that he may resurrect the man who is placed inside this mound.’ [St Malo does so.] And when he had said this, behold the whole tomb moved, and like a man when he rises from sleep, thus the spirit came from its punishment to join the body, and as they all watched, the soul entered the body and the man rose up alive. And when they asked him where he was at rest and under what law he had lived, he revealed that he had lived as a heathen and was in punishment. And when they asked his name, he said it was Milldu. (ch. 17) And when he had said this, he said to St Machu: ‘Pray for me, good shepherd, for I believe that through you I shall come to be saved. Baptize me, redeem me and have mercy on me, and may God be merciful to you. For now I believe that there is no God but the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the dead rise again ...’ Then St Machu baptized him, praying that all his sins might be forgiven. (ch. 18) Then they said to him: ‘Do you know the island of Imma, which we have been seeking for a long time?’ And he said, ‘Only once have I barely seen an island while I was walking in the sea, but a strong wind and a surging sea kept me away from it. This island was surrounded by a golden wall but I saw no gate in it, for its walls shone like a mirror or like glass.’ Then they asked if he would take them there, and he held the ship’s anchor in his hand and went ahead of the ship through the depths of the ocean. But he was unable to find the island, and as the wind blew strongly, the anchor broke in his hand, with the elements battling against one another, that is the contrary wind and the sea throwing up great waves. They went with him once again to the place where they had found him and placed him in his tomb, asking for rest for his soul.

Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*<sup>36</sup>

One day, when saint Cadog was digging the ground about a monastery to be built, he found a collar (or neck) bone of some ancient hero, monstrous and enormous, of incredible bulk, through which, wonderful to relate, a champion on horseback could (or might) ride without check. Which being found, saint Cadog, wondering, said, ‘I will not approach meat or drink, but prayer in place of food and tears in place of drink will be mine, until this prodigious thing, what it may be, is revealed to us by God.’ That same night a sound of angelic speech addressed him from heaven, saying, ‘Behold, the cry of thy prayer is acceptable in the ears of the Lord, for what thou hast humbly asked of God, God will grant thee... For to-morrow in the first hour of the day this ancient giant will be raised from the dead, who will be your digger as long as he lives.’ ... Lo, there straightway appeared to them a revived giant of huge stature, horrible and

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<sup>35</sup> Bili, *Vita S. Machutis*, I.16–18, ed. Lot, 363–4. The miracle appears in a similar version in the *Vita anonyma longior*, 9–11.

<sup>36</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 26, in Wade-Evans (ed. and transl.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 80–85.

immense, altogether exceeding human measure in size... the monstrous hero immediately falls at the feet of the man of God, saying, 'O saint Cadog, excellent servant of God, be thou blessed of God and men. For I earnestly beseech thy great benignity, that thou by no means permit my wretched soul, till now exceedingly tormented in the awful whirlpools of Cocytus, to return thither afresh.' Saint Cadog says, 'Who, pray, art thou, or of what kindred sprung? Explain, too, carefully, the manner of thy exit from this life.' The giant answered, 'Beyond mount Bannog formerly I reigned for very many years. It happened that by devilish impulse I with troops of my plunderers arrived on these coasts for the sake of pillaging the same and wasting them. But the king who at that time reigned over this kingdom, pursuing us with his army, slew me and my host, when we had joined battle together. From that day of our killing we were tormented till now in the devouring flames of hell...' The man of the Lord asks by what name he was called. And he replies, 'Caw (with surname) Prydyn, or Cawr, was I called formerly.' One day, when saint Cadog was digging the ground about a monastery to be built, he found a collar (or neck) bone of some ancient hero, monstrous and enormous, of incredible bulk, through which, wonderful to relate, a champion on horseback could (or might) ride without check. Which being found, saint Cadog, wondering, said, 'I will not approach meat or drink, but prayer in place of food and tears in place of drink will be mine, until this prodigious thing, what it may be, is revealed to us by God.' That same night a sound of angelic speech addressed him from heaven, saying, 'Behold, the cry of thy prayer is acceptable in the ears of the Lord, for what thou hast humbly asked of God, God will grant thee... For to-morrow in the first hour of the day this ancient giant will be raised from the dead, who will be your digger as long as he lives.' ... Lo, there straightway appeared to them a revived giant of huge stature, horrible and immense, altogether exceeding human measure in size... the monstrous hero immediately falls at the feet of the man of God, saying, 'O saint Cadog, excellent servant of God, be thou blessed of God and men. For I earnestly beseech thy great benignity, that thou by no means permit my wretched soul, till now exceedingly tormented in the awful whirlpools of Cocytus, to return thither afresh.' Saint Cadog says, 'Who, pray, art thou, or of what kindred sprung? Explain, too, carefully, the manner of thy exit from this life.' The giant answered, 'Beyond mount Bannog formerly I reigned for very many years. It happened that by devilish impulse I with troops of my plunderers arrived on these coasts for the sake of pillaging the same and wasting them. But the king who at that time reigned over this kingdom, pursuing us with his army, slew me and my host, when we had joined battle together. From that day of our killing we were tormented till now in the devouring flames of hell...' The man of the Lord asks by what name he was called. And he replies, 'Caw (with surname) Prydyn, or Cawr, was I called formerly.' To whom the man of God, 'Rejoice,' said he, 'and be of good cheer, for it has been allowed me of God that thou shalt live longer in this world, and after the course of this present life, if thou shalt show faithful and devoted service to God and shalt humbly attend to my teachings, and shalt perform due satisfaction for thy sins, thy soul at length will migrate to everlasting glory from this mournful prison of the body, and will there

reign in felicity with God.’ To these words the giant made reply thus, ‘All the things which thou hast bidden, seem light to me, and I will willingly bring the same to effect.’ Therefore from that same day till his death the digger of the blessed man wrought by digging what things were commanded him, in that place.

In PMC the dead body is that of a man, in the Life of Brendan a girl; in PMC, the body is buried, as opposed to lying unburied on the shore in the Life of Brendan; in PMC, the giant is a human sinner undergoing punishment in hell, while in the Life of Brendan the dead girl is described as a separate kind of being, non-human, one of the ‘people of the sea’, innocent and ‘awaiting the general resurrection’. The Patrick/Malo/Cadog versions are thus closer to each other than any one of them is to the Brendan tale, and the Malo/Cadog versions are especially close (although differently elaborated) in that they depict the giant performing a task to help the saint, as a redemptive act, before he dies again.

The positioning of the ‘resurrected giant’ story in the Lives of St Malo makes it clear that it is part of the package of Irish material that is explicitly associated with Llanccarfan by Bili, the original author. The still older version of the story in Tírechán’s *Collectanea* belongs to a context of recent conversion to Christianity, when the spiritual status of dead ancestors was a matter of pressing concern to converts and potential converts. To have to consign one’s respected but pagan forebears to eternal torment in hell was a serious barrier to conversion. One solution adopted in Ireland, more noticeably than elsewhere in early medieval Europe, was the idea of the naturally good pagan who might either survive to a great age to be baptised (anecdotes in Adomnán’s Life of St Columba and in Muirchú’s Life of Patrick) or receive the ‘baptism of desire’ (in the death-tale of King Conchobar of Ulster).<sup>37</sup> The story by Tírechán is an extension of these, combined with an interpretation of megalithic tombs in the landscape as the burial-places of giants. The story thus fits into an Irish background: it is less adapted to the British context, where conversion to Christianity was conceived as having taken place in the distant past.<sup>38</sup> As if aware of this incongruity, the Cadog and Malo authors place the story in ‘foreign’ settings, Lifris in the context of an attempt to expand his saint’s cult into a

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), 199–201.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, ‘The saints in narratives of conversion’, 441.

more recently converted Alba (Scotland), and Bili on an ocean voyage.<sup>39</sup> However, the story was developed in the Lives of Malo and Cadog in a sufficiently similar way that we may imagine it as having ‘bedded down’ at Llancarfan thanks to Irish contacts like those that brought the Brendan legend there, and perhaps already to have been associated with the cult of Cadog by the ninth century, when the hagiographers of St Malo borrowed it.

Another miracle shared by the Life of Cadog and a Life of Malo (in this instance the longer Anonymous Life) is what I will call the miracle of the ‘servant and the coals’.<sup>40</sup> The origin of this story is a more complex problem. The basic miracle in which a holy man or woman demonstrates power over fire, being unharmed by it or miraculously able to extinguish it, is very common in hagiography from many parts of the world. One source is biblical: Proverbs 6.27-9 compares the destructive power of fire with adultery, and accordingly, some early examples of this motif in hagiography are of saints carrying fire unharmed as a proof of chastity. There are two examples in the works of Gregory of Tours.<sup>41</sup> The motif becomes common in Irish hagiography from the late medieval collections, but with a different moral significance: typically a junior monk is ordered to touch or carry fire by one of his superiors, and his ability to do so unharmed proves his faith, obedience and devotion.<sup>42</sup> However, the Cadog and Malo examples belong to a rare sub-group of the miracle-type in which a young monk in training is told to carry the fire in his clothes not by a superior as a test of obedience, but as a malicious joke by a servant who begrudges providing help and a proper container. The miracle illustrates,

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<sup>39</sup> For the significance of the ‘giant’ story in Lifris’s Life of Cadog, see further Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 216–7. Thomas Clancy has argued that the Scottish anecdotes in the Lives of Cadog originate ‘in contacts between ecclesiastics in southern Wales and in Scotland, and most probably in St Andrews’ in the eleventh century: Thomas Clancy, ‘St Cadog in Scotland’, in David Parsons and Paul Russell (eds.), *Seintiau Cymru, Sancti Cambrenses: Astudiaethau ar Seintiau Cymry/Studies in the Saints of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2022), 317–31: 323

<sup>40</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 7, in Wade-Evans (ed. and transl.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 36–9; *Vita anonyma longior S. Machutis*, 6, ed. Lot, 31–2.

<sup>41</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum Decem*, II.1, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SS RMI.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Hanover, 1951), 38; transl. L. Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks* (Harmondsworth, 1974), 105. Gregory of Tours, *Liber de Gloria Confessorum*, 75, 342–3 ed. B. Krusch, MGHSS RMI.2 (*Gregorii episcopi Turonensis miracula et opera minora*) (Hanover, 1869), 284–370: 342–3.

<sup>42</sup> Examples are listed in Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. I., cxxxviii, note 6.

not the young saint’s moral virtue, but his status as a chosen vessel of divine power despite his youth and apparent insignificance. There is a latent element of class-conflict in the story: to the stupid and sullen rustic, the child-monk seems unimpressive and may be insulted with impunity. We might suppose that Llancarfan was the origin-point for this miracle variant, as it appears in the Life of Cadog as a detailed, localised topographical legend, whereas its presence in the Anonymous Life of St Malo is much more fleeting (and less vindictive).

It would be unsafe to argue on the basis of these similarities that a *written* Life of Cadog was available to the hagiographers of Saint-Malo, any more than that their source for the Brendan material was necessarily a written one. It seems even less likely that Lifris, when he authored the Life of St Cadog, had access to a Life of St Malo in manuscript – although Bili’s Life of St Malo, and an Old English translation, did circulate in eleventh-century England.<sup>43</sup> There are no precise verbal correspondences, and the stories have in both cases made themselves very much at home in their extant hagiographical contexts. The similarity is more likely to be an example of the process Barry Lewis describes: ‘stories passed on by visiting clerics ... heard while visiting other churches, during the liturgy or at table afterwards. Most of the clichés of hagiography surely spread through the early medieval West in just these kinds of untraceable ways’.<sup>44</sup>

On balance, though, I think the Life of St Malo suggests that the cult of St Cadog was already well established at Llancarfan in the ninth century, and probably earlier, in much the same form that we encounter in Lifris’s Life: that he was already the subject of a rich and somewhat chaotic tradition, and reputed to be a vengeful saint and a maker and breaker of kings, as also was St Germanus in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*; and that this influenced the presentation of St Malo in the Lives by Bili and

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<sup>43</sup> Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 147–54; *Vita S. Machutis* [Old English Life], ed. Gwenaël Le Duc, *Vie de saint Malo, évêque d’Alet* (Rennes, 1979). A version of the *Navigatio S. Brendani* influenced by the Lives of St Malo, which presents Malo as Brendan’s leading disciple, is found in the *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium* manuscript, London Cotton Vespasian A.XIV part i; but recent textual study suggests that this version was created in England or north-western France where it was in circulation by the late twelfth century, and is not in itself evidence for direct contact between south-east Wales and Brittany. See Joshua Byron Smith, ‘The Legend of Saint Brendan in Cotton Vespasian A. xiv’, in David Parsons and Paul Russell (eds.), *Seintiau Cymru, Sancti Cambrenses: Astudiaethau ar Seintiau Cymry/Studies in the Saints of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2022), 31–42: 37–41.

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, ‘The saints in narratives of conversion’, 436.

his rewriters.<sup>45</sup> It is also evidence that in the ninth century, Llancarfan was already a centre where Irish hagiographical material could be obtained and an Irish saint – Brendan – was revered. Moving on to the late eleventh century, Lifris's *Life of St Cadog* contains references to contacts between Llancarfan and monastic centres in Ireland, and these are corroborated on the Irish side by anecdotes about St Cadog and Llancarfan in the *Life of St Finnian of Clonard*, similar but not identical to Lifris's material. These episodes were discussed by Kathleen Hughes – inconclusively in terms of the date and nature of the implied contact between Clonard and Llancarfan.<sup>46</sup> More recently, Pádraig Ó Riain has suggested that these and similar references to Irish saints in Welsh hagiography (and vice versa) are likely to result from new contacts in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>47</sup> But, as Jonathan Wooding has pointed out, the *Lives of St Malo* are incontrovertible evidence that a chain of contacts between Ireland and Llancarfan, extending as far as Brittany, was already in place in the ninth century.<sup>48</sup> The evidence comes from Brittany; Breton interest in Irish material was not reciprocated in Ireland, even to the limited extent that it was in Wales.

Although Cadog's name does not appear in the *Life of St Malo*, it was apparently known in Brittany. Cadog is the eponym of Pleucadeuc, north-west of Redon (*Plebs Catoc* or *Plebs Cadoc* in ninth-century charters) and he appears (next to St Illtud) in a tenth-century litany of saints that originated either in western Brittany or among Breton exiles in England (Salisbury 180).<sup>49</sup> This implies that the influence of Llancarfan in Brittany was long-lasting, or repeated, not confined to a single episode of scholarly

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<sup>45</sup> *Historia Brittonum*, 32–5, 39, 47–50, ed. Faral, *La légende arthurienne*, 23–37; transl. Morris, *Nennius*, 26–33. For the literary career of St Germanus in Britain see Ben Guy, 'The *Life of St Dyfrig*', 3; Lewis, 'The saints in narratives of conversion', 451–3.

<sup>46</sup> Hughes, 'The historical value of the *Lives of St Finnian of Clonard*'.

<sup>47</sup> Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Hagiography without frontiers: borrowing of saints across the Irish Sea', in D. Walz (ed), *Scripturus Vitam. Lateinische Biographie von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart: Festgabe für Walter Berschin zum 65. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 2002), 41–8; *idem*, 'The Irish element in the Welsh hagiographical tradition', in *Irish Antiquity: essays and studies presented to Professor M. J. O'Kelly*, ed. D. Ó Corráin (Dublin, 1981), 291–303.

<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Wooding, 'The figure of David', 12–13.

<sup>49</sup> *Cartulary of Redon*, ed. Aurélien De Courson, *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Redon en Bretagne* (Paris, 1863), nos. 10, 13, 115, 255, 257, 267: 10, 13, 88, 205–6, 207–8, 216–7. Litany in Salisbury Cathedral MS 180, ed. Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints* (Woodbridge, 1991), 259–64: see Bernard Tanguy, 'De l'origine des anciennes litanies bretonnes des X<sup>e</sup> et XI<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Britannia Monastica*, 10 (2006), 43–61.

contact. A saint of almost the same name, but with a different feast-day, was St Catbodu, the eponym of Île Cado on the south coast of Brittany – as I will explain below, he was identified with St Cadog of Llancarfan in the eleventh century. But whether he originated as an offshoot of St Cadog, or as a different individual, is unclear.

After the Norman Conquest, Llancarfan again becomes visible as a node of contact between Wales and Brittany and an important centre for the propagation of hagiography. By this time we no longer have to infer contact from saints’ lives that were written centuries apart. Hagiography blossomed in Wales from the late eleventh century onwards, and a closely contemporaneous group of texts show Breton and Welsh hagiographers developing the same ideas and using the same techniques, to the extent that Brittany and Wales have to be regarded as a single hagiographical zone: any investigation of one without the other would be incomplete. Having compared Lifris’s *Life of St Cadog* to the much earlier *Lives of St Malo*, we may now compare it to Breton hagiographical texts that were produced at the same time as it and a little later.

In the twelfth century, Llancarfan’s visible contact point in Brittany was the abbey of Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé, in the region of Cornouaille, in western Brittany. Quimperlé was a new Benedictine abbey (founded around 1050), which was competing for patronage and property with older (and also with more up-to-date) establishments.<sup>50</sup> After winning a hard-fought lawsuit against the abbey of Redon, the community decided to create a collection of documents that could be referred to in any future proceedings.<sup>51</sup> The result was the *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, the work of a monk named Gurheden between about 1120 and 1133, which included *Lives of two saints associated with the abbey, Gurthiern and Ninnoc*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cyprien Henry, Joëlle Quaghebeur and Bernard Tanguy (eds.), *Cartulaire de Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé* (Rennes, 2014), 60–62; Karen Jankulak, ‘Breton *Vitae* and political need in the *Cartulary of Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé*’, in Jonathan Wooding and P. O’Neill (eds.), *Literature and Politics in the Celtic World: Papers from the Third Australian Conference of Celtic Studies, University of Sydney, July 1998* (Sydney, 2000), 218–48: 240–41; Joëlle Quaghebeur, ‘Aristocratie et monachisme autour de Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles’, in *Sous la règle de saint Benoît: structures monastiques et sociétés en France du Moyen Âge à l’époque moderne: Abbaye bénédictine Sainte-Marie de Paris, 23–25 octobre 1980* (Geneva, 1982), 199–211: 206–9.

<sup>51</sup> Jankulak, ‘Breton *Vitae* and political need’, 225–7.

<sup>52</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Léon Maître and Paul De Berthou, *Cartulaire de l’abbaye de Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé (Finistère)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Rennes, 1904); facsimile edition, Henry, Quaghebeur and Tanguy (eds.), *Cartulaire de Sainte-Croix de Quimperlé*.

(Usefully, unlike several other Breton saints' Lives of a similar period, these texts in their surviving forms can be dated and localised thanks to their manuscript context.)

St Gurthiern and the female St Ninnoc were saints who apparently had genuine, rooted, though small-scale local cults in Brittany near Quimperlé. However, their Lives emphasise and elaborate on their Insular British origins. Nora K. Chadwick, discussing these texts in 1954, supposed that the Lives, or at least the traditions contained in them, had travelled from Wales to Brittany at some unspecified period between the sixth century and the twelfth and had 'become associated' with churches in the Vannetais and Cornouaille, presumably as part of a long-term process of cultural influence.<sup>53</sup> However, in 1989 Bernard Tanguy showed that Lifris's Life of St Cadog provides much more immediate evidence for contact between Quimperlé and Llancarfan.<sup>54</sup> Lifris's Life includes an episode set in Brittany, in which Cadog is credited with building a church and a bridge on the island called 'Inis Catbodu' (Île Cado, Belz, near Lorient).<sup>55</sup> This island church existed and still exists. Lifris spelled its name correctly and described its topography more or less accurately: it is an island in a tidal estuary, connected to the mainland by a causeway, but Lifris described this as a bridge. Quimperlé Abbey acquired the church of Île Cado as a property in 1089, at about the time that Lifris would have been working on the Life of Cadog, and it was almost certainly from Quimperlé that Lifris obtained his information: the clincher is the name of the prior whom Cadog appoints to govern his Breton foundation when he goes home, Cadwaladr. A Cadwaladr appears as *presbyter Sancti Catuodi* in one of the charters in the Cartulary of Quimperlé relating to the acquisition of Île Cado.<sup>56</sup>

Since Tanguy wrote, other scholars, notably Ben Guy, have re-examined the Quimperlé material and found more evidence of contact with south-east Wales and with the Llancarfan community in particular.<sup>57</sup> It

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<sup>53</sup> Nora K. Chadwick, 'A note on the name Vortigern', in H. M. Chadwick and N. K. Chadwick (eds.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), 34–46: 44.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard Tanguy, 'De la vie de saint Cadoc à celle de saint Gurthiern', *Études celtiques*, 26 (1989), 159–85.

<sup>55</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, 35, in Wade-Evans (ed. and transl.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 96–9.

<sup>56</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, nos. 101–107, 112, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 255–62, 270.

<sup>57</sup> Ben Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy: An Introduction and Textual Study* (Woodbridge, 2020), 79–99; Ben Guy, 'Explaining the origins of Brittany in the twelfth century: St Cadog's solution', in Caroline Brett, Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (eds.),

seems that the contact initiated when Lifris was writing the Life of Cadog in the 1090s continued for the next generation, up to and including the time of composition of the Quimperlé cartulary (of course it may have begun still earlier, and continued longer). Importantly, the Quimperlé cartulary was in gestation at precisely the same time as the similar south-east Welsh manuscript, the Book of Llandaf (c. 1132), which clerics from Llancarfan played a leading role in compiling.<sup>58</sup> The Llandaf and Quimperlé cartularies were both inspired by specific legal challenges.<sup>59</sup> Both consisted of a combination of partly forged charters with saints’ Lives in which the cults of saints that had no original connection with the church in question were appropriated to give the establishment a borrowed antiquity and prestige. Both relied heavily on a genre of writing which Wendy Davies christened the ‘hagiographical charter’, in which a hagiographical narrative – a saint’s life or an individual miracle-story – was presented with little or no alteration as if it were a charter, giving the church title to definite properties and privileges.<sup>60</sup>

There are some even more specific tropes that are shared between the Quimperlé cartulary and the Book of Llandaf. One is the role of an island as the burial place of multiple saints and a source of relics: the Book of Llandaf records how the relics of St Dyfrig were discovered on the island of Enlli and ceremonially translated to Llandaf, as were those of a more recent saint, Elgar; in the Cartulary of Quimperlé, the Île de Groix, off the south coast of Brittany, is the source of a collection of relics.<sup>61</sup>

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*Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Medieval Brittany: Connections and Disconnections*, forthcoming.

<sup>58</sup> John Reuben Davies, *The Book of Llandaf and the Norman Church in Wales* (Woodbridge, 2003), 105–8; Ben Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 92.

<sup>59</sup> The legal claims set out by Bishop Urban of Llandaf in the Book of Llandaf are examined in Davies, *The Book of Llandaf*, 9–75; Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf as a Historical Source*, 17–21.

<sup>60</sup> Wendy Davies, ‘Property rights and property claims’, 525–6; Caroline Brett, ‘Hagiography as charter: the example of the Cartulary of Landévennec’, in the forthcoming proceedings of the conference ‘Defining the Boundaries of Celtic Hagiography: Textual Sources Outside Lives and Martyrologies’, held on 25 May 2018 at the School of Celtic Studies, 10 Burlington Road, Dublin.

<sup>61</sup> *Liber Landavensis*, ed. John Gwenogvryn Evans and John Rhys, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav Reproduced from the Gwysaney Manuscript* (1893, repr. Aberystwyth, 1979), 5, 84; *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 45. The translation of Dyfrig’s relics forms §§19–20 of the new edition and translation of *Vita S. Dubricii* by Ben Guy available on the *Vitae Sanctorum Cambriae* website: [www.welshsaints.ac.uk/theedition/](http://www.welshsaints.ac.uk/theedition/).

A second shared theme is the attempt to gather in all the churches named after a certain saint, as possessions or at least as tribute-payers. The Life of St Gurthiern in the Quimperlé cartulary contains a passage explicitly asserting Quimperlé's rights in this respect:

Commendavit autem angelus Domini ut in quacumque regione Britanniae minoris sit omnis ager sancti Gurthierni, serviat Anaurut, quia electa est civitas a Deo; promisitque angelus victoriam belli omnibus regibus qui custodierint pactum sancti Gurthierni. Quicumque reges et principes vel duces non custodierint, maledicti erunt a Domino.

The angel of the Lord stipulated that in every region of lesser Britain where there is an estate of St Gurthiern, it should do service to Anaurut (Quimperlé), for this city is chosen by God; and the angel promised victory in war to all kings who keep the pact of St Gurthiern. But any kings or princes or leaders who do not keep it will be accursed by the Lord.<sup>62</sup>

The Book of Llandaf implicitly states a claim by the church of Llandaf to all ecclesiastical property named after its founding saint, Teilo, even outside the saint's diocese.<sup>63</sup> In both cases a pre-existing network of churches, connected by a shared eponym, was being claimed by a new superior owner, although on a more modest scale in Quimperlé's case: only a handful of places with Gurthiern as a possible eponym (or dedicatee) have been identified.<sup>64</sup> (This of course leaves open the question of exactly what kind of pre-existing connection such shared eponyms implied.<sup>65</sup>) Perhaps

<sup>62</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 44 (translation mine).

<sup>63</sup> *Liber Landavensis*, ed. Evans, *The Text of the Book of Llan Dav*, 124, 254; Davies, 'The saints of South Wales', 366–9. For Llandaf's annexation of Teilo's cult, see Ben Guy, 'The Vespasian Life of St Teilo and the evolution of the *Vitae Sanctorum Wallensium*', in David Parsons and Paul Russell (eds.), *Seintiau Cymru, Sancti Cambrenses: Astudiaethau ar Seintiau Cymry/Studies in the Saints of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 2022), 1–30. The most recent editions of both lives of Teilo are by Ben Guy, *Vita Sancti Teliaui (Vespasian A. xiv)*, and *idem, Vita Sancti Teliaui (Liber Landavensis)*, both at [www.welshsaints.ac.uk/theedition/](http://www.welshsaints.ac.uk/theedition/).

<sup>64</sup> Apart from the church of St Gurthiern on the Île de Groix mentioned in *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, no. 10, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 150, Gurthiern is probably the eponym of Locoyarne in Caudan (Morbihan) and of Locouviern in Ségalien (Morbihan): see Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 179.

<sup>65</sup> Davies, 'The saints of South Wales', argues tentatively that the existence of a number of church-sites named after a single saintly eponym in Wales indicates a proprietary relationship between the churches. Various alternative explanations for such multiple

the ultimate model for an angelic ‘charter’ justifying such a wide-ranging claim is again one from Ireland, connected with St Patrick: the eighth-century *Liber Angeli* in the Book of Armagh.<sup>66</sup>

These similarities suggest very strongly that the clergy at Llandaf and at Quimperlé were assembling their respective cartularies in full knowledge of one another’s activities. But of the two, it is the Quimperlé cartulary that looks derivative. It is a less far-reaching and less tightly organised piece of work than the Book of Llandaf.<sup>67</sup> The Book of Llandaf uses information obtained from Brittany but integrates it fully into the compiler’s local aims.<sup>68</sup> The Quimperlé compiler seems to be unsure what to do with his Welsh information in a local context: its mere presence seems to be enough. Even in the twelfth century, while Bretons were participating in the Norman Conquest of Wales, the readiness to depend on Welsh scholarship and to defer to the Welsh Church was alive and well in Cornouaille.

The motive of the clergy of Quimperlé in adopting Gurthiern and Ninnoc as patron saints was that these saints had pre-existing local cults that could be exploited. The Lives of these saints in the Quimperlé cartulary make it clear that they did have local cults of this kind and, in Gurthiern’s case, relics. However, a local identity was apparently not prestigious enough and Insular origins had to be researched and foregrounded. This is particularly obvious in the case of Gurthiern, whose Life falls into two stylistically incompatible parts, the second part probably derived from local traditions in the Vannetais and Cornouaille;<sup>69</sup> the first part, however, is effectively a Welsh text reproduced in a Breton manuscript.

The Life opens with the famous and often-quoted genealogy of the saint:

Haec est genealogia sancti Gurthierni, nobilis genere, incliti officio,  
quam quidam laicus fidelis nomine Iuthael filius Aidan demonstravit,

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dedications are explored in Thomas Owen Clancy, ‘The Big Man, the footsteps and the fissile saint: paradigms and problems in studies of Insular saints’ cults’, in Steve Boardman and Eila Williamson (eds.), *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland* (Cambridge, 2010), 1–20.

<sup>66</sup> fols. 20b1–22a1 (at 21a2); ed. and transl. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, 184–91.

<sup>67</sup> For the disorganised and contradictory nature of the information presented in the Cartulary, see Jankulak, ‘Breton *Vitae* and political need’, especially 241.

<sup>68</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 300–301.

<sup>69</sup> Michel Debary, ‘Saint Gurthiern’, *Mémoires de la société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Bretagne*, 38 (1960), 17–27: 23; Jankulak, ‘Breton *Vitae* and political need’, 239–40.

non pro terreno munere sed pro celesti. Gurthiern filii Boni filii Glou filii Abros filii Dos filii Jacob filii Genethauc filii Iudgual filii Beli filii Outham Senis filii Maximiani filii Constantii filii Constantini filii Helene qui crucem Christi habuisse refertur. Haec est genealogia Gurthierni ex parte matris suae: ergo Gurthiern filius Dinoi filiae Lidinin regis qui tenuit principatum totius Britanniae Maioris. Beli et Kenan duo fratres erant, filii Outham Senis. Ipse Kenan tenuit principatum quando perrexerunt Britones ad Romam. Illic tenuerunt Laeticiam et reliq...Beli filius Anne quam dicunt esse consobrinam Mariae genetricis Christi.

This is the genealogy of St Gurthiern, noble in birth and renowned in office, which a certain faithful layman called Iuthael son of Aidan has revealed, not for earthly but for heavenly reward. Thus, Gurthiern son of Bonus son of Glou son of Abros son of Dos son of Iacob son of Genethauc son of Iudgual son of Beli son of Outham the Old son of Maximianus son of Constantius son of Constantinus son of Helena, who is said to have had the cross of Christ. This is the genealogy of Gurthiern on his mother's side: Gurthiern son of Dinoi, daughter of King Lidinin who held the principate of all Greater Britain. Beli and Kenan were two brothers, sons of Outham the Old. This Kenan held dominion when the Britons went to Rome. From there they held *Leticia* [Letavia?], and... Beli was the son of Anna whom they say was cousin of Mary, mother of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

The name of the claimed author of the genealogy, Iuthael son of Aidan, is given in Welsh orthography, as are some of the names in the genealogy itself.<sup>71</sup> The Gurthiern of this first part of the Life seems to be in some way identifiable with Vortigern, the well-known villain of *Historia Brittonum*, the king of the Britons who allegedly betrayed his people to the Saxons. (That Vortigern's reputation was higher in some quarters is indicated by his important position in the inscription on the ninth-century Pillar of Eliseg.<sup>72</sup>) The name Gurthiern is Vortigern, phonetically updated.<sup>73</sup> The paternal

<sup>70</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 42; partially transl. Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 87.

<sup>71</sup> Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 173; Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 88.

<sup>72</sup> For the significance of Guorthigirn's (Vortigern's) position in the Pillar of Eliseg genealogy, see Owain Wyn Jones, 'Hereditas Pouoisi: the Pillar of Eliseg and the history of early Powys', *Welsh History Review*, 24 (2009), 41–80, and references.

<sup>73</sup> Tanguy, 'De la Vie', 174.

ancestry of Gurthiern begins with Bonus and Glou, two of the ancestors of Vortigern listed in *Historia Brittonum*.<sup>74</sup> But there are also attempts to connect him with other lineages, including that of St Cadog. His genealogy includes the Roman emperor Maximianus, who is made the son of Constantius and grandson of Constantine. This sequence is otherwise found uniquely in the pedigree of St Cadog created by Llancarfan hagiographers in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>75</sup> Gurthiern’s mother is named as ‘Dinoi, daughter of King Lidinin’: she was the mother of St Kentigern of Glasgow, according to that saint’s ‘Fragmentary Life’ from slightly later in the twelfth century (1147 × 1164).<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the author of the genealogy actually intended to identify Gurthiern with Kentigern.<sup>77</sup> Whoever Gurthiern was believed to be, his connections with multiple saintly and royal lineages of Britain seem designed to add to his appeal in Brittany. However little sense his genealogy may make biologically, chronologically or even in terms of the accepted synthetic history of the Welsh kingdoms, it is coherent in that it consists entirely of information that can be shown to have been available at Llancarfan, as I shall demonstrate further below.<sup>78</sup>

The other saint’s Life in the Cartulary of Quimperlé, the Life of St Ninnoc, although it is more unified, without the cut-and-paste that suggests disparate written sources in the Life of Gurthiern, has just as great an emphasis on its saint’s Insular background. For example, a role is given to King Brychan, the eponym of the kingdom of Brycheiniog. The earliest datable text to mention the character of Brychan is Lifris’s Life of St Cadog, in which Brychan is the king of Brycheiniog and St Cadog’s maternal grandfather.<sup>79</sup> In the Life of St Ninnoc, Brychan (*Brochanus*) is Ninnoc’s father, and is said to have had fourteen sons who all entered religious life.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Historia Brittonum*, 49, ed. Faral, *La légende arthurienne*, 35–6; transl. Morris, *Nennius*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 89; Ben Guy, ‘Constantine, Helena, Maximus: on the appropriation of Roman history in medieval Wales, c. 800–1250’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 44 (2018), 381–405: 390–94.

<sup>76</sup> *Vita S. Kentegerni imperfecta* (BHL 4645), 1–2, in A. P. Forbes (ed. and transl.), *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern, Compiled in the Twelfth Century, Historians of Scotland 5* (Edinburgh, 1874), 121–33, 243–52: 125–7, 245–7.

<sup>77</sup> Tanguy, ‘De la Vie’, 174.

<sup>78</sup> Evidence for the availability of *Historia Brittonum* at Llancarfan accompanying a version of the ‘St Davids collection’ of genealogies is presented by Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 79–99.

<sup>79</sup> Lifris, *Vita S. Cadoci*, Prologue, in Wade-Evans (ed. and transl.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, 24–9.

<sup>80</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 55.

Thus, the Life of Ninnoc is the earliest firmly dated text to present Brychan in what became his established role— as the progenitor of a large group of saints. Tracts on him and his descendants were elaborated in the period between 1050 and 1150, perhaps at Llan-gors or Brecon Priory, and were available at Llancarfan, where he was obviously of interest as an ancestor of St Cadog.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Ninnoc, on her father's side, was related to St Cadog, but her maternal ancestry, like Gurthiern's, branches out to the north. Her mother was 'Meneduc, of the race of the Scots, the daughter of King Constantine, of the line of Julius Caesar'.<sup>82</sup> Meneduc's name is otherwise unknown, but the mention of a Scottish King Constantine may reflect some knowledge of the royal saint Constantine who was venerated at Govan, the central church of the kingdom of Strathclyde.<sup>83</sup> Like Gurthiern's mother Dinoi and her father Lidinin, King Constantine of Strathclyde is connected with St Kentigern, appearing as a character in the Life of Kentigern by Jocelin of Furness.<sup>84</sup>

Just as we saw in the case of the Life of St Malo three centuries earlier, Llancarfan emerges as the centre of a hagiographical network: now its contacts extend as far as Strathclyde in one direction, and southern Brittany in the other, as well as to Ireland. It seems to have engaged in an exchange of hagiographical material with the guardians of St Kentigern's cult, similar to its exchange with Quimperlé. The Life of St Kentigern by Jocelin of Furness mentions Llancarfan: it claims that the monastery, which it accurately names *Nantcharvan*, was founded by Kentigern himself on a visit to Wales, and it includes a series of miracles derived from Lifris's Life of St Cadog.<sup>85</sup> One of them is the miracle, discussed earlier in connection with St Malo, in which a junior monk is told by a servant to carry fire in his clothing and does so without being burned. (Yet St Cadog is not mentioned:

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<sup>81</sup> Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 130–36; Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 307–10.

<sup>82</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 55.

<sup>83</sup> Alex Woolf, *Where was Govan in the Early Middle Ages?* (Glasgow, 2007), 5–8; Alan Macquarrie, 'Early Christian Govan: the historical context', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 24 (1990), 1–17; David N. Dumville, 'Cusantín mac Fercussa, rí Alban: a misidentified monastic ditch-digger', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 19 (1999), 234–40.

<sup>84</sup> Jocelin of Furness, *Vita S. Kentegerni* (BHL 4646), 33, in Forbes (ed. and transl.), *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern*, 95, 219.

<sup>85</sup> Jocelin of Furness, *Vita S. Kentegerni*, 23–25, in Forbes (ed. and transl.), *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern*, 73–81, 199–208; for discussion, see John Reuben Davies, 'Bishop Kentigern among the Britons', in Boardman, Davies and Williamson (eds.), *Saints' Cults in the Celtic World*, 66–90: 83–7.

the miracles are attributed to Kentigern and his disciple Asaph, an odd parallel with the way that the ninth-century Life of St Malo banished Cadog from his own monastery in favour of Brendan, and appropriated his miracles. Did these hagiographers feel, as modern readers tend to, that Cadog was a particularly un-lovable saint?)

Hovering over this hagiographical activity is the ghostly figure of the most active literary promoter of the British and Breton past in the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth – author of the ‘History of the Kings of Britain’, or as it should perhaps better be called, *De Gestis Britonum*, completed in 1137 or 1138, which launched the idea of a historical King Arthur and much else.<sup>86</sup> What was the relationship between Geoffrey’s writings and the hagiography in the Cartulary of Quimperlé, completed just a few years earlier?

John Reuben Davies has suggested that it was Geoffrey of Monmouth who was responsible for transmitting hagiographical material from Llancarfan to Jocelin of Furness and the promoters of the cult of St Kentigern. Geoffrey was interested in the legends surrounding St Kentigern, and he was appointed Bishop of St Asaph in north-east Wales in 1151, in which position he could act as a relaying-point between south Wales and Strathclyde.<sup>87</sup> However, this argument does not take account of the fact that already in the 1120s, well before Geoffrey published *De gestis Britonum*, a north British, Kentigern-related cast of characters had appeared in the two saints’ lives from Quimperlé in Brittany. This suggests that hagiographical information was passing from north to south, probably via Llancarfan, through pre-existing contacts; Geoffrey became part of this network, rather than personally creating it.

The most notorious element in the Cartulary of Quimperlé is the reference in the genealogy of St Gurthiern to the settlement of Brittany by a founding hero named Kenan. As Conan Meriadoc, this figure was to become a principal character in Geoffrey’s *De Gestis Britonum*: the alleged leader of the British settlement in Brittany and ancestor of King Arthur, he took a symbolic place in Breton national history that was not seriously challenged until the seventeenth century.<sup>88</sup> As Cynan, he had figured in

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<sup>86</sup> M. D. Reeve and N. Wright (ed. and transl.), *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain. An Edition and Translation of De Gestis Britonum* (Woodbridge, 2007): discussion of the title, lix. For Geoffrey’s work in general, see Georgia Henley and Joshua Byron Smith (eds.), *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Leiden, 2020).

<sup>87</sup> Davies, ‘Bishop Kentigern among the Britons’, 83–7.

<sup>88</sup> Karen Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Cardiff, 2010), 54–66; Joseph Rio, *Mythes fondateurs de la Bretagne: aux origines de la celtomanie* (Rennes, 2000); Wendy

Welsh political prophecy since the tenth century at least: he is mentioned in the poem *Armes Prydein*, albeit without reference to his ancestry or an explicit association with Brittany.<sup>89</sup> Most historians have considered, cautiously, that the Quimperlé authors and Geoffrey derived the figure of Conan independently from earlier tradition.<sup>90</sup> But with the demonstration that some of the material in the Lives of Gurthiern and Ninnoc can be traced specifically to Llancarfan, comes the possibility of a closer link with Geoffrey of Monmouth also. Geoffrey, too, was in contact with the hagiographers of Llancarfan. His early education may have been at Monmouth Priory, which was established in a pre-existing church of St Cadog and which maintained an interest in Cadog's patronage. His reference to the hagiographer Caradog of Llancarfan as 'my contemporary' in his *De Gestis Britonum* might translate as 'my classmate, or fellow-alumnus'.<sup>91</sup> And as Ben Guy has demonstrated, he made use of the Harleian genealogies and *Historia Brittonum* in versions similar to those used by the hagiographers of St Cadog.<sup>92</sup>

It is possible that the compilers of the Quimperlé cartulary were in touch with Geoffrey himself, or at least knew of his ideas, before he committed *De Gestis Britonum* to publication. For instance, in the Life of St Ninnoc Wales is referred to as *Combronensi regio*.<sup>93</sup> *Cambria* and *Cambrensis* as Latin terms for Wales and Welsh, derived from Welsh Cymry, are believed to have been coined by Geoffrey of Monmouth: they are not otherwise found earlier than the publication of *De Gestis Britonum*, and never became common even afterwards: few medieval writers other than Gerald of Wales took them up.<sup>94</sup>

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Davies, 'Franks and Bretons: the impact of political climate and historiographical tradition in writing their ninth-century history', in Paul Fouracre and David Ganz (eds.), *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages. Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester, 2008), 304–21.

<sup>89</sup> *Armes Prydein*, lines 89–91, 163–70, 182–4, ed. and transl. Williams and Bromwich, 8–9, 12–15, 44, 69. For discussion see Marged Haycock (ed.), *Prophecies from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2013), 10–11; David Dumville, 'Brittany and "Armes Prydein Vawr"', *Etudes celtiques*, 20 (1983), 145–59: 153–8; Guy, 'Constantine, Helena, Maximus', 392.

<sup>90</sup> Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 63; Merdrignac, *D'une Bretagne à l'autre*, 174–5.

<sup>91</sup> Guy, 'Explaining the origins of Brittany' (forthcoming).

<sup>92</sup> Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 90–92; *idem*, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth's Welsh sources', in Georgia Henley and Joshua Byron Smith (eds.), *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Leiden, 2020), 31–66: 49–58.

<sup>93</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 55.

<sup>94</sup> Huw Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National identity in twelfth-century Wales', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), 775–801: 797–8.

Quimperlé may have been an early recipient of Geoffrey’s ideas, but it is not clear that he gleaned any information in return: his often-noted approval of the Bretons is not backed up by much real interest. Despite his claim that he based his history on an ‘ancient book brought out of Brittany’, *De Gestis Britonum* does not include any of the ideas about the early history of Brittany that are known to have circulated in Brittany itself before his lifetime.<sup>95</sup> Rather than develop the legends of early rulers who appear in Breton hagiography, like Gradlon, the king of Cornouaille, and Waroch, the ruler of Vannes, Geoffrey preferred to invent his own series of kings of Brittany.<sup>96</sup> They all have the names of historic rulers from the 850s onwards – Budic, Hoel, Salomon – with one exception, Aldroen. What prompted Geoffrey to use that name? It is a genuine Breton – not a Welsh – name, appropriately meaning ‘high lineage’, and is found in a number of charter witness-lists from the ninth century onwards, but is not borne by any obvious models for Geoffrey such as kings, dukes, counts or bishops.<sup>97</sup> It was, however, the name of the donor of the Île Cado monastery to Quimperlé,<sup>98</sup> and of several eleventh-century monks at Quimperlé, including one Aldroen *grammaticus*, mentioned in a charter from soon after 1084, who may have been in post when Lifris of Llancarfan arrived to make enquiries about St Cadog.<sup>99</sup> Possibly Geoffrey used the name Aldroen as a discreet compliment to a collaborator in the Llancarfan-Quimperlé research project. But on the whole, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s relationship with

<sup>95</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Prologue 2.9–10, xi.186.168–9, xi.208.605, ed. and transl. Reeve and Wright, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, 4–5, 258–9, 280–1. For Bretons’ ideas of their own history prior to Geoffrey, see Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, especially 100–113, 190–203, 220–30.

<sup>96</sup> For Gradlon as a literary character, see Bernard Tanguy, ‘Grallon, roi de Cornouaille. À la recherche d’un héros populaire’, *Ar Men*, 14 (1988), 30–44; André-Yves Bourguès, ‘“Mémoires graphiques”, hagiographie, archéologie et épigraphie: Landévennec et le “cas Grallon” (V<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)’, online at <http://www.hagio-historiographie-medievale.org/> (posted 21 November 2021; accessed 21 January 2022). For the historical career of Waroch of Vannes, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 62–71; for his literary afterlife, Rachel Bromwich, ‘Celtic dynastic themes and the Breton Lays’, *Études celtiques*, 9 (1961), 439–74: 464–6.

<sup>97</sup> Bernard Tanguy, ‘Index generalis’, in *Cartulaire de l’abbaye Saint-Sauveur de Redon*, 2 vols. (facsimile edition, Association des Amis des Archives historiques du diocèse de Rennes, Dol et Saint-Malo, 1998/2004), vol. 2, 61–128: 63; Gary D. German, ‘Breton patronyms and the British heroic age’, <https://www.wales.ac.uk/Resources/Documents/Research/BretonPatronymsBritishHeroicAge.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2022), 10.

<sup>98</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, no. 107, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 262–3.

<sup>99</sup> *Cartulary of Quimperlé*, nos 41, 102, ed. Maître and Le Berthou, *Cartulaire*, 177–8, 256–7.

Brittany falls into the pattern of scholarly relations that I have described: Breton literati were more receptive to Welsh material than vice versa: Wales was the donor, Brittany the recipient.

It seems likely that the literary contacts with south Wales indicated by the Quimperlé *Vitae* are the visible layer of a deeper relationship, perhaps involving other intangible benefits such as educational placements, hospitality, mutual prayer and commemoration. The shortage of liturgical sources from medieval Wales and Brittany deprives us of direct evidence for such activities. A relationship of this sort would have allowed the literate members of the Quimperlé community a privileged preview of the latest thinking about British – and Breton – origins at Llandaf and Monmouth.

Earlier scholars of medieval Welsh literature, for example Nora K. Chadwick and Peter Bartrum, were dismissive about the Lives of Gurthiern and Ninnoc. Peter Bartrum called the Life of Ninnoc ‘very fictitious’ and its detail as ‘too anachronistic to be worth mentioning’.<sup>100</sup> Nora Chadwick wrote: ‘Nothing historical is to be looked for in the two Lives [i.e. of Gurthiern and Ninnoc]; but all the elements are familiar to us already, whether from the *Historia Brittonum*, the *Bonedd y Saint*, or other texts such as the *De Situ Brecheniauc*, or from ... Geoffrey of Monmouth.’<sup>101</sup> These remarks imply two ways of judging the worth of such literary texts: either as sources of factual historical details, or as conduits of an authentic, anciently rooted, Welsh oral tradition. The Quimperlé Lives seem to fail on both counts. Chadwick’s comment assumes that, as saints’ Lives from a Latinate, ecclesiastical milieu, they must be further from the fountainhead of this basically vernacular, secular learned tradition than the other texts she cited, even though they actually pre-date most of them.

But an alternative approach is to focus more closely on these Welsh and Breton materials as *texts*, authored works that took shape at particular times for particular purposes. Vernacular texts, and those presented in a secular format such as the royal genealogy, do not necessarily represent an ancient and unmediated tradition any more accurately than do the Latin saints’ Lives. The different versions of the tradition do not vary infinitely or at random. The variations, if analysed closely, can help to pin down their points of origin and textual affinities and the specific contacts through which they were shared – here I have found Ben Guy’s recent work hugely

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<sup>100</sup> Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, 575–6.

<sup>101</sup> Chadwick, ‘A note on the name Vortigern’, 40.

illuminating.<sup>102</sup> What the genealogies of Gurthiern and Ninnoc perhaps show us is a relatively early and experimental stage in the codification of the ancestry of the Welsh saints and their connections with the ancient royal dynasties of the British-speaking world that eventually gave rise to the *Bonedd y Saint* tracts.

To sum up the main points of this paper: Breton-Latin literature adds considerably to the sum of the evidence for literary production in the Welsh Church in the early Middle Ages. Breton evidence – alone – allows us to identify Llancarfan as an important literary centre, in contact with Ireland, as early as the ninth century, and to show that it had access to hagiographical traditions from northern Britain in the early twelfth century, before these were used by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Jocelin of Furness. It reveals the possible existence of more hagiographical writing in ninth-century Wales comparable to the fragments that survive in *Historia Brittonum*. The contents of the Cartulary of Quimperlé shed light on the gestation of the Book of Llandaf, the Welsh genealogical collections, and the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth. I have discussed only a sample of the available evidence: much more could be said about the Welsh dimension of other Breton texts like the Life of St Paul Aurelian and the Life of Gildas from Rhuys.<sup>103</sup> And beneath the upper literary layer of hagiography lies the impenetrable undergrowth of place-names, recording dozens more obscure saints’ cults that indicate personal, familial or institutional contacts at some time between Wales and Brittany (and also Cornwall).<sup>104</sup>

To conclude, I will return to the question of why ecclesiastical writers in Brittany were so ready to be deferential towards the Welsh Church. I suggest that this may reflect a position of real dependency by

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<sup>102</sup> See, in particular, Guy, ‘Constantine, Helena, Maximus’, 382–6; *idem*, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 31, 39–50, and *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> Wrmonoc, *Vita S. Pauli Aureliani* (BHL 6585), ed. C. Cuissard, ‘Vie de saint Paul de Léon en Bretagne, d’après un manuscrit de Fleury-sur-Loire conservé à la Bibliothèque publique d’Orléans’, *Revue Celtique*, 5 (1881–83), 413–60; *Vita Gildae* by a monk of Rhuys (BHL 3541), ed. Ferdinand Lot, ‘Gildae vita et translatio’, in Lot, *Mélanges d’histoire bretonne*, 431–73; transl. H. Williams, *Two Lives of Gildas by a Monk of Ruys and Caradoc of Llancarfan* (Felinfach, 1990), 7–83. For comment, see Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 264–307, 454; Gilbert H. Doble, ed. D. Simon Evans, *Lives of the Welsh Saints* (Cardiff, 1984), 146–56; François Kerlouégan, ‘La *Vita Pauli Aureliani* d’Urmonoc de Landévennec’, in Bernard Tanguy and B. Daniel (eds.), *Sur les pas de Paul Aurélien. Colloque international Saint-Pol-de-Léon 7–8 juin 1991* (Brest/Quimper, 1997), 55–65; Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 134–9, 213–20.

<sup>104</sup> For an introduction, see Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 256–90.

Breton churches on the churches of Britain from the sixth to the eighth centuries.<sup>105</sup> There were richer and longer-lived ecclesiastical centres in Wales than there were in Brittany. Patrick Sims-Williams's recent work on the Book of Llandaf has highlighted the institutional stability of a major bishopric in Gwent and of the monasteries of Llandochoau, Llanilltud and Llancarfan in the eighth century, and the orderly career paths of their clergy.<sup>106</sup> The Breton Church may have relied on these and similar establishments for ecclesiastical training, and for expensive goods like manuscripts.<sup>107</sup> Ninth-century evidence suggests that the Church in Brittany was very well provided with church-buildings, clergy and small monasteries at a village level, but that large and rich institutions were few and far between. West of Saint-Malo, the only large monastery that can be proved to have existed before 800 is Landévennec, and even it has very modest material remains compared with Llanilltud or Llancarfan in Wales.<sup>108</sup> Few and basic inscriptions, no monumental sculpture, no precious ecclesiastical metalwork and no elaborately decorated manuscripts have survived from pre-Viking Brittany; there is no archaeological evidence for churches being centres of trade or consumption comparable to the evidence from, say, Portmahomack among the Picts or Llandochoau in Wales.<sup>109</sup> The Church was not poor – priests were among the wealthiest denizens of village communities – but its wealth was very dispersed.<sup>110</sup> Secular society, too, seems to have been unusually 'flat' and the resources and power of the elite quite limited in Brittany up to the Viking Age.<sup>111</sup> These factors made Bretons readier to adopt the Latin and Romance culture

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<sup>105</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 341.

<sup>106</sup> Sims-Williams, *The Book of Llandaf as a Historical Source*, 166.

<sup>107</sup> Largillière, *Les saints et l'organisation chrétienne primitive*, 226, suggested that Insular British clergy provided priestly services for the 'colony' in Brittany over an extended period, rather as French seminarians might have volunteered for mission work in newly created parishes in French Canada in his own lifetime.

<sup>108</sup> Caroline Brett, 'Monastères, migration et modèles: l'Église bretonne du haut Moyen Âge', in Claude Evans (ed.), *Monastères, convergences, échanges et confrontations dans l'Ouest de l'Europe au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout, forthcoming); Annie Bardel, 'L'abbaye Saint-Gwénolé de Landévennec', *Archéologie médiévale*, 21 (1991), 51–101, and other publications by the same author.

<sup>109</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 55–64; Martin Carver, *Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts* (Edinburgh, 2008); Jeremy K. Knight, 'From villa to monastery: Llandough in context', *Medieval Archaeology*, 49 (2005), 93–107.

<sup>110</sup> Davies, 'Priests and rural communities'.

<sup>111</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 52–3, 64–7, 341–2.

of the powerful adjacent Frankish kingdoms – as they were already adopting Carolingian script in the ninth century: and although they celebrated the role of the British Church in their past, they did so in a Continental way, through Latin hagiography. The earlier and more copious production of saints’ Lives in Brittany reflects the extent to which hagiographical production was routine in late antique, Merovingian and Carolingian Gaul compared to its rarer use in the early medieval Insular world.<sup>112</sup>

The relative isolation of Wales may have entailed self-confidence rather than defensiveness, and the ‘connectedness’ of Brittany with the Frankish kingdoms may have entailed a corresponding insecurity: this is suggested by a comparison of the first two texts I discussed, Lifris’s Life of St Cadog and Bili’s Life of St Malo. Although the Lives are similar in length, arrangement, specific miracles and the personalities of their saints, their differences are equally evident. Bili’s Life of Malo is stitched together from a variety of literary sources; it opens with episodes borrowed from the tradition of St Brendan but ends with identifiable extracts from several Frankish saints’ lives.<sup>113</sup> Lifris’s Life of Cadog consists mostly of topographical legends and secular traditions that had evolved for centuries in a single locality. St Malo is beholden to St Brendan and later to St Columbanus for his spiritual development. He eventually goes into exile because he is vulnerable, driven out of his own diocese by hostile locals. St Cadog invariably wins his contests, and bulldozes all other figures that he encounters, saintly and secular. When he travels it is to give other religious centres the benefit of his teaching and miraculous power. To read Lifris’s Life of Cadog is to get a powerful impression of the self-confidence, as well as the conservatism, of an important Welsh church, undented by several decades of Norman conquest. To read Bili’s Life of Malo is to feel oneself in the presence of a rolling identity crisis. To be fair, no other Breton saint’s Life is as conflicted, but neither does any Breton Life approach the triumphalism of Lifris’s Life of Cadog.

The Breton Church, then, was different from the Welsh Church from its inception, and saints’ Lives provide one reflection of that difference. But although different, they were interdependent. Thanks to their respect for their British past, Breton authors captured a facet of that past which might otherwise have vanished. ‘These are the Armorican Britons and they never

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<sup>112</sup> Brett, Edmonds and Russell, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago*, 114.

<sup>113</sup> Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne*, 156–9.

came back', wrote the author of *Historia Brittonum*<sup>114</sup> – but in fact, as we have seen, a good many of them must have come back at one time or another to take advantage of (and enhance) the riches of the Welsh Church.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Historia Brittonum*, 27, ed. Faral, *La légende arthurienne*, 20–21; transl. Morris, *Nennius*, 24–5.

<sup>115</sup> I would like to thank Ben Guy for valuable feedback on this paper, and Paul Russell for his help in preparing it for publication.

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