



universität
wien

DIPLOMARBEIT / DIPLOMA THESIS

Titel der Diplomarbeit / Title of the Diploma Thesis

„The peregrinatio pro Christo of the Irish in the sixth and seventh century. Identity and context“

verfasst von / submitted by

Lukas Albert Russ

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

Wien, 2019 / Vienna, 2019

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A 190 344 313

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch
UF Geschichte, Sozialkunde, Polit.Bildg.

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Doz./PD Dr. Adelheid Krah

Danksagung

Ich möchte allen Personen danken, die mich während meines Studiums unterstützt haben.

Meinen Eltern, Eva und Emmerich und auch meinem Stiefvater Rudi.

Meinem Freund Patrick.

Meiner Familie, allen voran meinem Bruder Alexander und seiner Freundin Juliane, meiner Taufpatin Ingeborg und meiner Großmutter Friederike.

Meiner Schwiegerfamilie, Ulli, Dominik, Jürgen, Heinz, Christa, Michael und Jacqueline.

Meinen Freunden, allen voran Max, Stefan, Paul, Sam, Kathie und Alex.

Mein großer Dank gilt auch meiner Diplomarbeitsbetreuerin und Mentorin Adelheid Krah von der Universität Wien, sowie Elva Johnston vom University College Dublin ohne die diese Arbeit nicht entstanden wäre.

Weiters gilt mein Dank auch der Europäischen Union und dem Erasmus+ Programm, ohne die diese Arbeit in der Form auch nicht entstanden wäre.

Die Erforschung der Geschichte und Vergangenheit anderer Länder und Kulturen ist faszinierend. Noch faszinierender ist es, dies an Ort und Stelle zu tun und auch das aktuelle Zeitgeschehen dort selbst zu erleben.

Vielen Dank!

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	On-going debates within the research field	7
2.1	Nativists and Anti-Nativists – the internal debate	9
2.1.1	Roman contact with Ireland	12
2.1.2	Early Irish Literacy	18
2.2	Iromania und Irophobia – the Continental debate	24
3	Towards a definition of the Irish form of <i>peregrinatio</i>	26
3.1	The colours of martyrdom	31
4	Patrick – an inspiration or even the first <i>peregrinus</i> ?	36
4.1	Themes of <i>peregrinatio</i> within Patrick’s work.....	40
4.1.1	Themes of <i>peregrinatio</i> within the <i>Confessio</i>	42
4.1.2	Themes of <i>peregrinatio</i> within the <i>Epistola</i>	48
4.2	Themes of <i>peregrinatio</i> within hagiographical accounts of the seventh century.....	52
4.2.1	Themes of <i>peregrinatio</i> in Muirchú’s <i>Vita Sancti Patricii</i>	53
5	The political context of <i>peregrinatio</i> to the continent	57
5.1	Columbanus – the ideal <i>peregrinus</i>	63
5.1.1	The Easter controversy – Columbanus’ letters to the papacy.....	67
5.1.2	The <i>Vita Columbani</i> by Jonas	71
6	Discussion.....	75
7	Conclusion.....	77
8	References	79
8.1	Primary sources	79
8.2	Secondary literature	79
8.3	List of illustrations.....	82
9	Abstract.....	83

1 Introduction

During my time at University College Dublin, I studied early medieval Ireland as a student of Associate Professor Dr Elva Johnston. Within the seminar *Ireland and Empire 400-700 AD*, I was especially interested in the migration of early Christian Irish clerics, the so-called *peregrini* out of their homeland towards Britain, the North Atlantic and Continental Europe. This unique religious, as well as socio-political movement on the brink of the late Antique period towards the early middle ages fascinated me and inspired me to compile my diploma thesis about this topic. This diploma thesis investigates the multiple contexts and themes of the early phase of the *peregrinatio pro Christo* in the sixth and seventh century. Along the process of writing this thesis, I want to find out what motivated these early Christian pilgrims to go on their dangerous journey. Thereby, I aspire to trace internal as well as external factors that inspired them to leave their homeland in order to face an unknown fate beyond foreign shores.

The main temporal focus of this thesis is on the early years of this development in the sixth and seventh century, in which influential *peregrini* such as Columba of Iona (died in 597) and Columbanus of Luxeuil and Bobbio (died in 615) operated. Yet, also the time before these men, who are traditionally associated with this movement, is explored in further detail. It is this crucial period in which this tradition of Irish clerics moving out of Ireland to primarily Britain, the Continent and the North Atlantic sea region gradually emerges. A tradition that continued in many parts of Europe throughout the middle ages. The purpose of these initially spiritual voyages is critically evaluated and thus, it is illustrated that these undertakings frequently served both, religious as well as political purposes, as multiple *peregrini* tried to install their religious supremacy in regions in which they founded new monasteries. At the end of this development, Irish monks were prominently present in Britain as well as the Continent and culturally acknowledged for their alleged spirituality and wisdom. A myth was created to present the Irish as particularly saintly and scholarly in order to legitimize Irish monastic foundations in Europe and to impose their religious as well as political authority on the Continent in the aftermath. Henceforth, this thesis also tries to deconstruct the still widely present myth of ‘the isle of saints and scholars.’

The method which is applied is a close as well as critical reading of contemporary primary sources, as well as a critical analysis, evaluation and interpretation of primary as well as secondary literature. Thereby, the overall goal of this thesis is to find out more about how the

peregrinis’ minds worked, to find out what inspired them and motivated them to leave Ireland. Therefore, this thesis explores concrete push factors and internal spiritual motivations which triggered the *peregrinatio pro Christo* in the sixth and seventh century. Moreover, its aim is to investigate how these early Christian pilgrims perceived the world as well as how they identified and located themselves within a post-Roman world that was still centred around the Mediterranean. Eventually, this thesis is targeted at giving an insight into a common mindset as well as a shared identity that operated throughout a period of great transformation but also of lasting continuous developments along a transition which modern scholars manifest as a bridge from late Antiquity to the early middle ages.

In the first chapter, the thesis is addressing ongoing debates within the research field. This discussion is not only done to express the necessity of a neutral perspective towards the topic, but also to address the limitation of this qualitative analysis of selected sources for this specific period and issue. Primarily, this theory chapter should show how history has been and is still thought in definite discourses and binary structural concepts. Especially in the founding period of history as a modern academic field of study, the discipline was shaped by different ideologies and emerged in a climate of nationalism. Irish history was thereby used to justify independence from Britain. Throughout the struggle for political autonomy from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Irish national historians tried to present the Irish people and their history as culturally separate and even as ‘odd’ in order to distinguish them from the British. This obvious bias towards a certain preconceived idea of history as the ‘history of a nation’ is discussed along the development of the scientific discourse of early medieval Irish studies. This chapter should also raise awareness for the major approaches which shaped and formed the discourse and how modern-day historians should look beyond certain biases within the field of study.

The next three succeeding chapters are dealing with distinct aspects of the *peregrinatio pro Christo*. The first of these chapters is about finding a working definition for the specifically Irish form of *peregrinatio* and discusses the formation of the term as well as the various definitions there are within recent academic literature. The research on *peregrinatio* by contemporary scholars covers religious, political and social motives within early Irish society. In the following chapter, the focus is explicitly on the analysis of primary sources dealing with Patrick and the coming of Christianity to Ireland and on the development of a genuinely new ‘Christian’ way of thinking. New Christian ideas entered Ireland, first and foremost through the

Romano-British missionary Patrick and other early Christian individuals who were not documented. Patrick's writings constitute the first longer pieces of Latin writing in Ireland and are thus an invaluable source for the Irish Sea area in the fifth century. Through a thorough analysis of these two genuine sources, this thesis tries to show how omnipresent the various themes and motives of early Christian *peregrinatio* are already within Patrick's work. Thereby, it is claimed that the legend of Patrick was of central importance to early Irish Christians and his work as well as the dynamic hagiographical productivity on his personality shaped ideas on *peregrinatio* considerably. Hence, this thesis argues that Patrick can be recognized as a great inspiration for Irish clerics at the time and claims that his personality served as a role model for later *peregrini*, as main themes of the *peregrinatio* fit his reconstructed biography and the genuine declarations of his work. Among further push factors, the legacy of Patrick within Ireland contributed towards a common Irish mindset that admired the leaving behind of one's ancestral home and the turning towards the unknown. Following the example of Patrick, the *peregrini* left Ireland to seek a new form of martyrdom. The martyrdom of exile.

In the end, the political context of the *peregrinatio pro Christo* is featured within the frame of an early medieval post-Roman world on the continent. Ireland was not affected by the great migration period and prospered during the late Antique period, while the political stability of central Europe breached in the fifth century. The changing political and religious circumstances in the aftermath of this development are investigated through an analysis of the sources on the famous monastic founder Columbanus. His *peregrinatio* identity and activity is assessed towards underlying political motives in the context of a canonical as well as a political debate displayed within the sources. The Easter controversy transmitted within his letters to the papacy and his political controversy with the Merovingian dynasty as well as his lasting legacy on the continent through his Vita is examined towards political and religious aspects in the context of the rise of monasticism as well as an establishment of the papacy as a respective authority in western Christendom.

By contrasting the two characters of Patrick and Columbanus, two genuine early Christian voices from the Western periphery of the late Roman world are presented and assessed in a diachronic way along the process of the conversion of the Irish and the transformation of the continent. Patrick as a representative of the first development and Columbanus as a representative of the second one. Both convey a great deal of early Irish or insular Christian

identity from the fifth to the beginning seventh century. Both targeted foreign areas in order to preach Christianity and both left a legacy which is recorded within hagiographical accounts.

In the end, this thesis re-evaluates known primary sources as well as scholarly literature in a way of creating a new perspective on transcultural relations in a late Antique world. It questions previous approaches to the field and sets out for a new, more elaborate image of the early medieval mind. Bringing together previous approaches as well as new perspectives in combination with a close analysis of the sources, it tries to de-mystify the dawn of Irish history in this dark period of Irish historiography. The sources are there and as easily accessible as ever before. Therefore, they should be frequently assessed according to new questions, while established theories should be re-evaluated. This is the main objective of this thesis.

2 On-going debates within the research field

The moment we talk about Irish history, we talk about an academic discourse that has been shaped by national history and as such, has always been influenced by many different political interpretations and perspectives on Irish historiography. Historiography is always used in order to construct a certain political ‘reality’ or to justify ambitious political goals or the status quo. Irish history writing has since its beginning at some point in the late fourth or fifth century A.D. been used to achieve certain political objectives. Individuals and institutions, such as the Irish Church or subordinate branches of it, like monastic networks or confederations have used hagiography as a branch of historiography in order to justify their supremacy. Petty kings and tribal leaders in early medieval Ireland have used mythological narratives and historical persons to create a kind of pseudo-history to legitimize their rule and implement their political power. Henceforth, it is not a novelty that the political figures and historians of their time have continued to exploit historiography for political and religious purposes. Historians of the era of the Reformation have used Patrick and the peculiarities of a so-called Celtic Church in order to emphasize on the differences between the Catholic Church and the Irish one. Irish historians of the nineteenth century interpreted their history driven by the ideas of nationalism and tried to construct a myth of a distinct Irish nation.¹ Throughout its existence, Irish historiography has been generated and interpreted in a way that it would justify a common sense of distinctiveness

¹ Flechner, Roy; Meeder, Sven. “Introduction: Saints and Scholars”. In Flechner, Roy; Meeder, Sven (eds.). *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe. Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 1-18. See 7-9.

or oddity that would create a comprehensible and genuinely exclusive narrative for the newly established Irish nation.

While this thesis does not seek to undermine the distinctiveness of the Irish and their history, it does emphasize on the interconnectedness of Irish history with British as well as Continental history as being part of a greater European framework. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that this thesis also addresses the history of the Catholic Church and a theological interpretation of historiography critically. While this text comprises respectable amounts of clerical history, it clearly is not a theological work. I am not a church historian but rather a political historian and in the early middle ages and beyond, political history and religious history are not only closely connected but continuously interwoven. Hence, this text aims at the deconstruction of preconceived teleological narratives about the past. For instance, when personalities like Patrick or Columbanus are treated within a sixteenth-century historical discourse, they are frequently positioned and portrayed within a contemporary religious discourse and as being either more Protestant than Catholic in their spirituality or vice versa. Similarly, the early Irish Church is depicted as being closer to the Protestant one, due to their peculiarities.² Such frequent political as well as religious biases in historiography should be omitted and replaced by a more neutral as well as objective view towards the field of study through an awareness of the previous scholarly discourse.

Historiographical accounts are not only shaped by their chroniclers or their initiators but also always subjected to the time in which they were created. ‘Zeitgeist’ as a multitude of contemporary ideas and theories will always have an impact on history writing and the interpretation of historiography. Each generation constructs the past from its own understanding and political reality. Power politics and political agendas have and will always influence and sometimes even determine an academic discourse, but as an autonomous and independent student and researcher of history, I set out to look beyond those conscious as well as unconscious biases and try to take an overall neutral perspective and focus on an objective approach towards the early medieval period. Thereby, this thesis raises awareness to these issues and tries to interpret primary sources as well as secondary literature within the socio-political context of the time of their creation.

² Wood, Ian. ‘Columbanian Monasticism: A Contested Concept’. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 86-100. See 86-87.

2.1 Nativists and Anti-Nativists – the internal debate

When it comes to the discussion of pre-historic Ireland, scholars tend to differ in their theories concerning the nature of pre-Christian “Celtic” Irish society. As this society had not developed the cultural technique of script earlier on, it did not leave longer textual traces behind and all which can be done from a historian’s perspective is theorizing how this society looked like by consulting written sources from outside of Ireland. As a result, this internal absence of written sources paved the way for a multitude of hypothetical theories on the nature of ‘Celtic’ Irish society before the arrival of Christianity and the dawn of Irish history. The established theories operate within a continuum of two opposing binaries at the respective ends of it. Nativism and Anti-Nativism are those two theoretical as well as ideological concepts that oppose each other at the end of this theoretic spectrum. While nativists believe that Ireland was before the coming of Christianity an overly closed society on an isolated island, anti-nativists assume that Ireland was as open as any other place to external cultural influences and does not display an isolated instance of a genuinely Celtic society. This academic debate has been around for most of the twentieth century and has ever since influenced the work of scholars who supported or refuted one or the other theory. The agenda of this thesis is to look beyond these fixed categories and to present an objective look on the sources in order to deliver an accurate image of how Irish society emerged and developed in the period immediately after the advent of Christianity. Therefore, cultural concepts and features which are recognized as Christian are contrasted with features deriving from pre-Christian times.

For a long time, the dominant approach within late Antique and early medieval Irish studies was the nativist one. This approach originated and was shaped by the Indo-European theory of the nineteenth century. This initially linguistic theory explored similarities in contemporary and past European languages and compared them to the Indo-Iranian language family. The insights of the linguistic analysis of common features and similarities of ancient European languages like Latin and Greek to Indo-Iranian languages like Sanskrit gave rise to a theory of a common ancestry of these languages. The assumption of a common linguistic heritage paved the way for the perception of common socio-cultural closeness between cultures identified as Indo-European. Old Irish was grouped together with other British languages like Welsh, Cornish and Breton into the group of Celtic languages, which were systematically categorized as Indo-European languages. Under the contemporary notion that linguistic

closeness implies cultural closeness or at least some sort of cultural penetration, early Irish society was interpreted as having more than just linguistic ties but shared cultural heritage with other archaic Indo-European cultures spanning over the spheres of law, institutions, mythology and oral literary techniques.³

To infer cultural similarity of pre-historic Irish society to archaic Indo-European culture according to its literature is however thought to be fatal, as the exclusively oral tradition of pre-historic Irish society remains for most of its part unknown. Early Irish literature is a product that emerged after the introduction of script and the Roman alphabet in Ireland from the fifth century onwards and does to an overall extent reflect on contemporary narrative traditions and only to a limited extent on genuine features of a pagan past.⁴ While McCone clearly states that pre-Christian Ireland had been until the introduction of Roman script a non-literate society, she admits that monastic traditions could not eradicate pre-Christian oral traditions completely. However, the existence of a ‘secular’ literature that was strongly influenced by an oral tradition or a genuinely pagan heritage is still seen critically by McCone, as those literary texts were created in monastic centres by Christian scribes and rather feature narratives of the Christian present, than of the pagan past.⁵

Theoretical conjecture on the degree of ‘native-ness’ of Irish society was not only constrained to the cultural sphere but also encompassed the political one. In terms of rulership in early Christian Ireland, views on how symbolical and political power was divided among the hierarchy and the diverse set of small petty kingdoms or *Tuatha* (singl. *Tuath*) played a role in the comparison with the Indo-European concept of tribal kingship by modern nativists. Renowned scholars of the twentieth century argued that the relative political stability of the time before the beginning of Viking attacks on Ireland around 800 was a result of the disunited political system and a clear set of law tracts that was acknowledged all over Ireland. D. A. Binchy investigated early Irish law tracts and indicated certain taboos which existed specifically for kings and in warfare. He concluded that sustainability and relative peace existed because of these taboos up to the beginning of the Viking raids. Further on, he argued that the existence of neutral zones and the taboo of attacking those assisted monasteries and other areas of clerical land, which paved the way for economic prosperity and monastic growth throughout this period. The Viking raiders, however, did not submit to these rules and taboos and thus this time of

³ McCone, Kim. Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature (Maynooth 1990). 3.

⁴ McCone, Pagan past and Christian present, 4-5.

⁵ McCone, Pagan past and Christian present, 5.

relative peace and safety ended with their advent.⁶ However, McCone states that laws and taboos do not automatically imply actual practice. According to her, this inference would be a rather plain jump to conclusions, as it unquestionably presupposes the strict abiding of the law by all members of society.⁷ Thereby, she argues that in order to get a valid picture of how early medieval Ireland worked, one has to examine the annals in order to get a more authentic image about how Irish kingship and society functioned in this later period of Christianization.⁸ Nonetheless, it is certain that it did not exclusively follow the pattern of an Indo-European tribal kingship. There might have existed certain similarities and overlaps in theory but severe differences in practice, as early medieval Ireland was still a quite violent place and certain overlords frequently exploited weaker petty kings as their resources would allow it. Thereby it was closer to other early medieval European forms of kingship than nativists would like to admit and did not serve as a vivid example of a primitive Indo-European society.⁹ Latest academic historical research is portraying an image of late Antique Ireland as a place of great diversity as well as local variation and is opening up the presumed boundaries of the Irish sea. Comparative approaches of Irish speaking communities on both sides of the Irish Sea deconstruct the limited perspective of Ireland as genuinely archaic and isolated even further.¹⁰

A frequently debated term referring to pre-Christian and especially pre-historic Ireland is the term Celtic. Originally a linguistic term, describing a common language family, it was also applied to the ethnic groups who interacted with them. Hence, the Celts are a very diverse ethnic group that was spread all over central and western Europe during antiquity from the area of modern-day Austria over France and Britain to Ireland. Until this day, scholars are in dissent about the exact century when Celtic people arrived in Ireland. It is estimated that the first Celtic invasion happened at some point during the second half of the first millennium BC.¹¹ The only evidence for the time before the Celtic invasion is of archaeological nature and involves great Neolithic sites like Tara or Newgrange, which had been cultural centres associated with spiritual leadership and religious worship long before the Celts arrived in Ireland.¹² Unfortunately, there is no other traceable account on the people who inhabited Ireland before the coming of the Celts.

⁶ McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present*, 8.

⁷ McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present*, 8.

⁸ McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present*, 8.

⁹ McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present*, 9.

¹⁰ Johnston, Elva. 'Ireland in late Antiquity. A forgotten frontier?'. In: *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1(2) (2017), 107-123. See 109.

¹¹ Ó Corráin, Donnchadh. 'Prehistoric and early Christian Ireland'. In: Robert F. Foster (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland* (Oxford 1989), 1-31. See 1.

¹² Ó Corráin, *Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland*, 3.

It can be assumed that their traditions survived and continued at least partly within the culture of the Celtic invaders. Ó Corráin supposes that much of what is regarded as Indo-European myth and cult actually derived from much earlier traditions, mentioning the sacred marriage of king and goddess as well as the linking of fertility with the reign of the good king, as an inheritance of Neolithic inhabitants and their metal-using successors in the Iron Age.¹³ This point would raise another argument against Indo-European hypotheses by modern nativists, as also the Celtic invaders were not discovering a new island and settled there without contact to a native population in possession of their own culture and traditions. Consequently, prehistoric Celtic culture cannot be perceived as genuinely native and constitutes a mix of different elements, which are to an overall degree diverse and different depending on the area and time which one investigates.

2.1.1 Roman contact with Ireland

Another major point which makes it even more evident that late Antique Ireland cannot be observed as an untouched land by external culture is the fact that there unquestionably was exchange with Roman Britain at least from the first century A.D. onwards. Numerous Roman finds all over the east coast of Ireland suggest that there was vivid contact through trade from the Empire to Ireland through Britain. This clearly speaks for a society that was all but a closed and isolated system on a remote island in the Atlantic. While Ireland itself never had been part of the Roman Empire, it still was heavily influenced by it on multiple levels throughout the four hundred years of Roman economic and cultural presence in Britain. While trade is a current feature of the relationship between Ireland and Britain in the first and the second century A.D., raids and plunder become the dominant nature of the relationship from the fourth century onwards. These circumstances can be reconstructed by archaeological finds from this time and from written accounts by external Roman sources as well as from the internal witness Patrick. However, the lasting impact the Roman Empire had on Ireland did not come through goods and products, but through a new religion, a new language and most importantly, with the introduction of script. Trade and raiding activities were only the vehicle for this development along the Roman frontier on the cultural highway of the Irish sea. Understanding this crucial period before 400 A.D. is essential for understanding how these cultural novelties emerged into Ireland and

¹³Ó Corráin, *Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland*, 3.

makes it clear how Ireland was culturally shaped before Patrick and the chronological boundary of the fifth century.¹⁴

Roman sources are the sole written accounts on Ireland before the fifth century. They include multiple writers of Roman antiquity from several centuries, with Ptolemy, a Graeco-Roman geographer in Alexandria who designed a map of Ireland in the second century A.D., over Tacitus and his work *Agricola*, to Ammianus Marcellinus who wrote about a barbaric conspiracy in the year 367, featuring the decline of Roman power in Britain. These references to Ireland within classical literature confirm an awareness the Romans had of Ireland. Especially within the course of the Roman invasion of Britain, Ireland became central in an expansionist speculation by the Roman governor Gnaeus Julius Agricola, within the work of Tacitus.¹⁵ In this short passage, the Roman term for Ireland, *Hibernia*, is mentioned as well as its geographical location between Britain and Spain. Ireland's geographical and topological features are also briefly described and the fact that it is well known by traders. Ireland's similarity with Britain is also emphasized and the presence of an Irish tribal leader in Britain. The garrison of Roman troops along the west coast facing Ireland is mentioned as well in a way of expressing a longing to invade it in the near future. Tacitus cites Agricola expressing the notion that the military effort it would take to conquer and occupy Ireland would be quite low, as only one legion and a few auxiliaries would in his opinion suffice to hold it.¹⁶ The passage in Tacitus' *Agricola* shows an immediate awareness of the Roman military of Ireland and of its topological features and they also point towards economic and political relations between the Romans and Irish tribal kings. Moreover, it expresses an existing debate as well as an indefinite plan about invading Ireland. While this event certainly never took place, the Roman presence in Britain nonetheless shaped the course of Irish history through mutual relations across the Roman frontier.¹⁷ The concept of the frontier is applicable for the border areas of the Roman Empire due to the Roman ideology of an *imperium sine fine*, an Empire which does not end in space nor in time. The concept of a fixed boundary was alien to the Romans, as they perceived their Empire as being at a state of constant expansion, with only temporal defended borders to secure newly conquered territories in order to prepare for further expansion.¹⁸

¹⁴ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 108-109.

¹⁵ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 110.

¹⁶ Freeman, Philip. Ireland and the Classical World (Austin 2001), 56-57. See Tacitus, *Agricola*, 24.

¹⁷ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 110.

¹⁸ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 111-112.

After their territorial peak in the second century A.D., the changing political reality altered the position of the Romans from an expansionist to a defensive one. Throughout the third and the fourth century, the Romans witnessed a phase of military decline and a break down of their frontiers. Their borders became porous and not to the advantage of the Romans. A contemporary Roman historian and military officer of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus mentioned a treaty that was made by the Romans with the barbarians before the year 360, but it was broken which resulted in a great catastrophe that happened in 367, with a combined attack by the barbarians on Roman Britain. Those massive raids that even resulted in settlement by the Irish in Britain suggest that the Irish had strong strategic leaders as well as a considerable number of ships.¹⁹ Further on, it can be assumed that the Irish had ongoing trade relations with Britain even before the year 360, which is supported by archaeological evidence. The finding of common Roman trading goods as well as of coins and hordes, which can be traced by archaeology, testify that there had been an ongoing exchange between Roman Britain and Ireland.²⁰

The next crucial source for the presence of Ireland within classical literature is of geographical nature. It is a geographical description of Ireland by the great Graeco-Roman mathematician, astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemy from the second century. The main input for Ptolemy is undoubtedly the work of Marinus of Tyre, who took most of his knowledge about Ireland from Philemon, a Roman writer at the time of the invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. under Emperor Claudius. He knew the sea-routes and the ports and strongholds as well as place and tribe names. It is assumed that Philemon did not travel to Ireland himself but took the information from travellers and merchants.²¹ In his work *Geographia* II, Ptolemy refers to 53 names of rivers, tribes, islands and settlements in Ireland, whereby six of them are different forms of the same location. Toner, on the basis of previous scholars, identified and located twenty out of these 47 place names in his article.²² He, however, insisted that there is still an ongoing debate about the identification of these names and that only nine of those geographical places are agreed on by scholars. In the end, he concluded that about twelve or thirteen of these

¹⁹ Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. *After Rome* (Oxford 2003), 25.

²⁰ Loveluck, Christopher; O'Sullivan, Aidan. 'Travel, transport and communication to and from Ireland, c. 400–1100'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe* (London 2016), 19–37. See 20–22.

²¹ Toner, Gregory. 'Identifying Ptolemy's Irish Places and Tribes'. In: David N. Parsons and Patrick Sims-Williams (eds.), *Ptolemy: towards a linguistic atlas of the earliest Celtic place-names of Europe* (Aberystwyth 2000), 73–82. See 73.

²² Toner, *Identifying Ptolemy's Irish Places and Tribes*, 81–82.

place names “have been identified beyond reasonable doubt.”²³ The reason for this rather high degree of uncertainty when it comes to the identification of these names has to do with the long and complicated way these place and tribal names were translated. One noticeable characteristic these Irish names share is that they all show linguistically British features, which has been recognized by scholars before. This has to do with their origin from British merchants, who served as first-hand source for them. Before they were written down by Ptolemy in Greek, they were probably translated from British dialects into Latin, the language Marinus of Tyre wrote in, before being translated again into Greek.²⁴ Illustration 1 shows an image of Ptolemy’s map with numerous identified Irish place names and Illustration 2 a Florentine reconstruction of the world according to Ptolemy from the 15th century.

²³ Toner, *Identifying Ptolemy’s Irish Places and Tribes*, 80.

²⁴ Toner, *Identifying Ptolemy’s Irish Places and Tribes*, 73.



Illustration 1: Ireland according to Ptolemy's Work ²⁵

²⁵ Map from Ptolemy's Geographica published in Rome in 1490. Image accessed via the platform Ireland's History in Maps. Online: <<http://sites.rootsweb.com/~irlkik/ihm/maps/ptolemy1490.gif>> (12/04/19).



Illustration 2: Renaissance reconstruction of Ptolemy's World Map ²⁶

This illustration of the world from the 15th century reflects how the Romans perceived the world geographically. It is a remarkably accurate representation of the three known continents of the ancient world. Ireland was located at the fringes of the known world in the periphery of the Atlantic, a remote western outpost of the Roman sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the contact with this ancient world by being linked to its sphere of influence shaped Ireland and changed it sustainably with the development of the essential cultural technique of script as well as the transfer of a new religion. The expansion and political power of the Roman Empire is at a peak in the second century. At the same time, the economic relation between Britain and Ireland is at a height, before declining in the course of the third century, according to archaeological evidence.²⁷ The fourth century is characterized by a change in the socio-economic relationship between Ireland and Roman Britain. The trading relationship is continued, while intensive forms of raiding start to take place along the west coast of Britain. The main Roman source for this development in the fourth century is the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who is a

²⁶ A mid-15th century Florentine map of the world based on Jacobus Angelus's 1406 Latin translation of Maximus Planudes's late-13th century rediscovered Greek manuscripts of Ptolemy's 2nd-century Geography. Accessed via the British Library. The Catalogue of Illuminated manuscripts. Harleian MS 7182, ff 58–59. Online: <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=28894>> (12/04/19).

²⁷ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 111.

contemporary witness of the barbarian invasions in the 360s.²⁸ According to him, Roman Britain was attacked by the Picts, the Scots, as well as the Saxons from Northern Germany. Additionally, he mentioned a people called the Attacotti, a tribe which has not been identified yet, but is assumed to be of Irish origin like the Scotti.²⁹

The frequent attacks by the barbarians changed the power relations on the isles sustainably and put an end to the expansion of the Roman Empire. With the Roman province of Britain being in a defensive position and after the withdrawal of the legions in 410, raids along the coast became frequent business for the inhabitants of Britain. One direct witness to these raids by the Irish is Patrick, who was a victim of them as a youth. However, while the military Roman presence vanished abruptly, the cultural Roman presence did not. The crumbling Roman frontier became porous and turned into a cultural highway transporting ideas along with luxury goods and booty to Ireland. Through this development Roman and later on Christian presence would transform Ireland and its inhabitants massively through a new religion and a new language as well as script settling in, which would lay the foundations of the succeeding Irish cultural expansion in the form of the *peregrinatio*.

2.1.2 Early Irish Literacy

One of the most significant changes Roman contact with Ireland brought about is the emergence of script along the Irish frontier area. In the later phase of Roman presence in Britain, a primitive form of literacy developed on both sides of the Irish sea, called ogham. Inscriptions of this ogham alphabet are found all over Ireland as well as the West coast of Britain and Scotland. In Ireland alone, more than four hundred ogham inscriptions have been discovered. Ogham is traditionally engraved on the edges of stones being read vertically from the bottom to the top. It is widely acknowledged that ogham inscriptions served mainly a commemorative purpose for individuals whose names they contained as well as territorial boundary markers, as most inscriptions contain personal names as well as place names. According to Johnston, the emergence of ogham signifies the birth of Irish writing.³⁰ Depending on the dating of ogham inscriptions, these stones give testimony of a literate class in late Antique Ireland which initially dates back to the pre-Christian era and thus challenge traditional views of an exclusively illiterate pre-Christian society.

²⁸ Freeman, Philip. Ireland and the Classical World (Austin 2001), 95-96.

²⁹ Freeman, Ireland and the Classical World, 96.

³⁰ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 117.

In order to understand the function of ogam stones, one has to understand the meaning of the inscriptions at least to a certain extent. Since the scientific discovery of ogam stones, researchers have concerned themselves with the translation of the inscriptions. Today, the ogam alphabet has been completely deciphered and inscriptions can therefore be translated. Historical linguists found out that each of the twenty ogam symbols representing a sound in early Irish corresponds to a letter within the Latin alphabet. Henceforth, especially bilingual stones, with engravings in both Latin and ogam served the purpose of de-coding the ogam alphabet as well as early medieval manuscripts containing its code. The fact that the ogam alphabet directly corresponds to the Latin one as well as the peculiarity of bilingual ogam stones upholds the notion of Irish contact with Roman Britain and thereby disproves ultimate nativist ideas of an untouched Ireland again even further.

In illustration 3, one can see a bilingual ogam stone dating back to the first half or the early second half of the fifth century with inscriptions in both Latin and ogam. The pillar stone on which it was discovered has a size of 1,57 x 0,28 x 0,28 m and was found at a site called Killeen Cormac in Colbinstown, County Kildare, a place which is considered having served a burial as well as ecclesiastical purpose at that time.³¹ In contrast to most ogam stones, this one is found to be a bilingual one, containing two incoherent inscriptions of Latin and ogam script. In terms of its function, the stone inscription most likely serves a commemorative aim, which can be inferred from the meaning of the inscription. The complete inscription on the stone states the following:

Ogham: OVANOS AVI IVACATTOS

Roman: IVVEN/rE DRVVIDES

While OVANOS is most likely the name of a person and IVACATTOS refers to the title of that person, meaning ‘yew of battle’,³² there is still a debate on the meaning of the Latin inscription. Earlier accounts on the Latin inscription suggested that it means IV VERE DRVVIDES ‘four true druids’, IVVENE DRVVIDES ‘the druid youths’ or even ‘Juvan the druid’ corresponding to the name OVANOS of the ogam inscription.³³ Different interpretations of the Latin inscription have since come up due to the uncertainty of one letter being an ‘N’ or an ‘R’. Nevertheless, the

³¹ ‘Ogham in 3D’ Online:

<https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/stone.php?lang=en&site=National_Museum&stone=19._Colbinstown_I&stoneinfo=d&description> (16/10/18).

³² McManus, Damian. A guide to ogam (Maynooth, 1991), 102.

³³ Macalister, Robert Alexander Stewart. ‘The "Druuides" Inscription at Killeen Cormac, County Kildare’.

Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature 32 (1914 - 1916), 227-38.

word DRVVIDES has been acknowledged as the plural form of ‘druids’ in a local variety of Latin or early Irish by McManus.³⁴

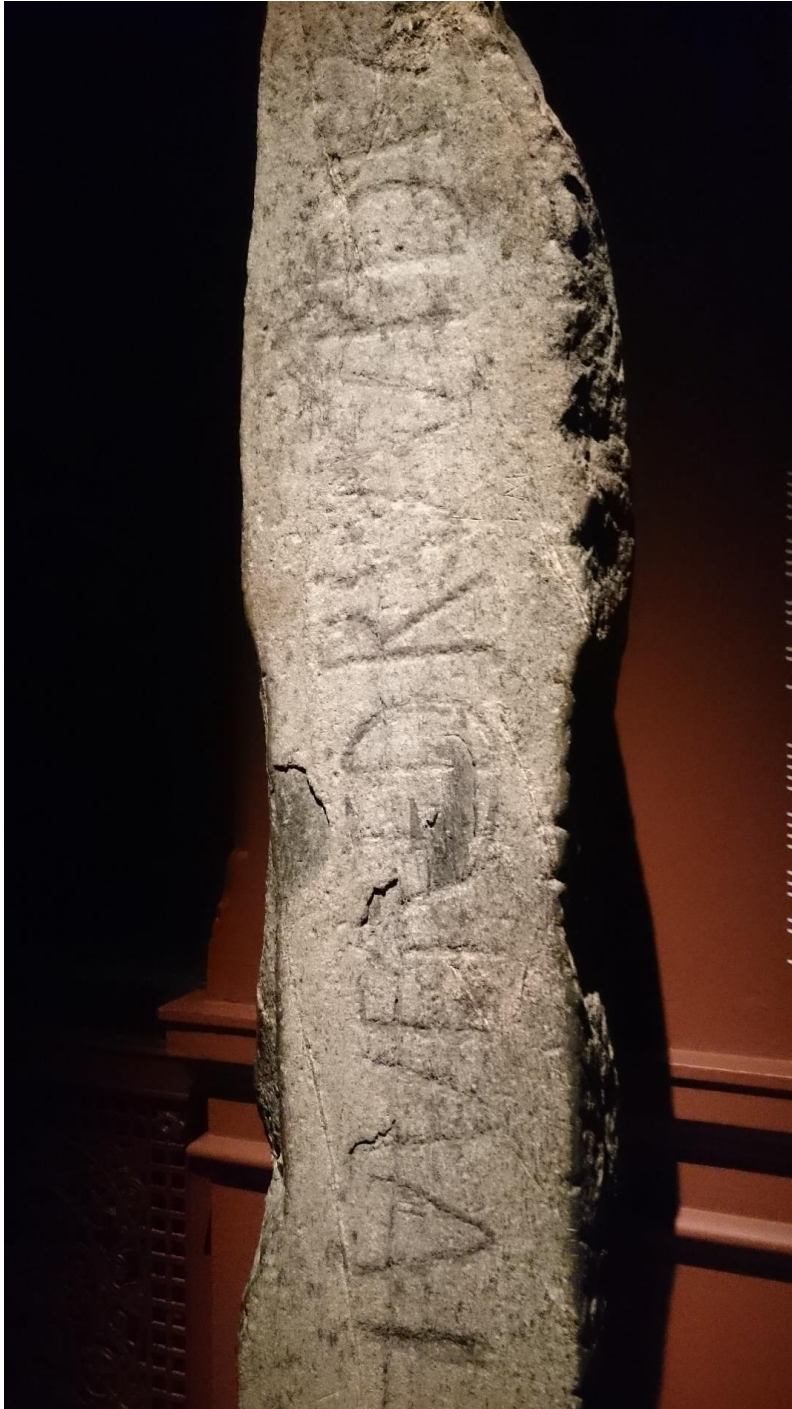


Illustration 3: Bilingual ogam stone from the National Museum of Ireland ³⁵

³⁴ McManus, *A guide to ogam*, 61.

³⁵ Image accessed via the platform ‘Ogham in 3D’. Online:
<https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/resources/sites/Colbinstown/19._Colbinstown_I/19._Colbinstown_I.jpg> (26/04/19).

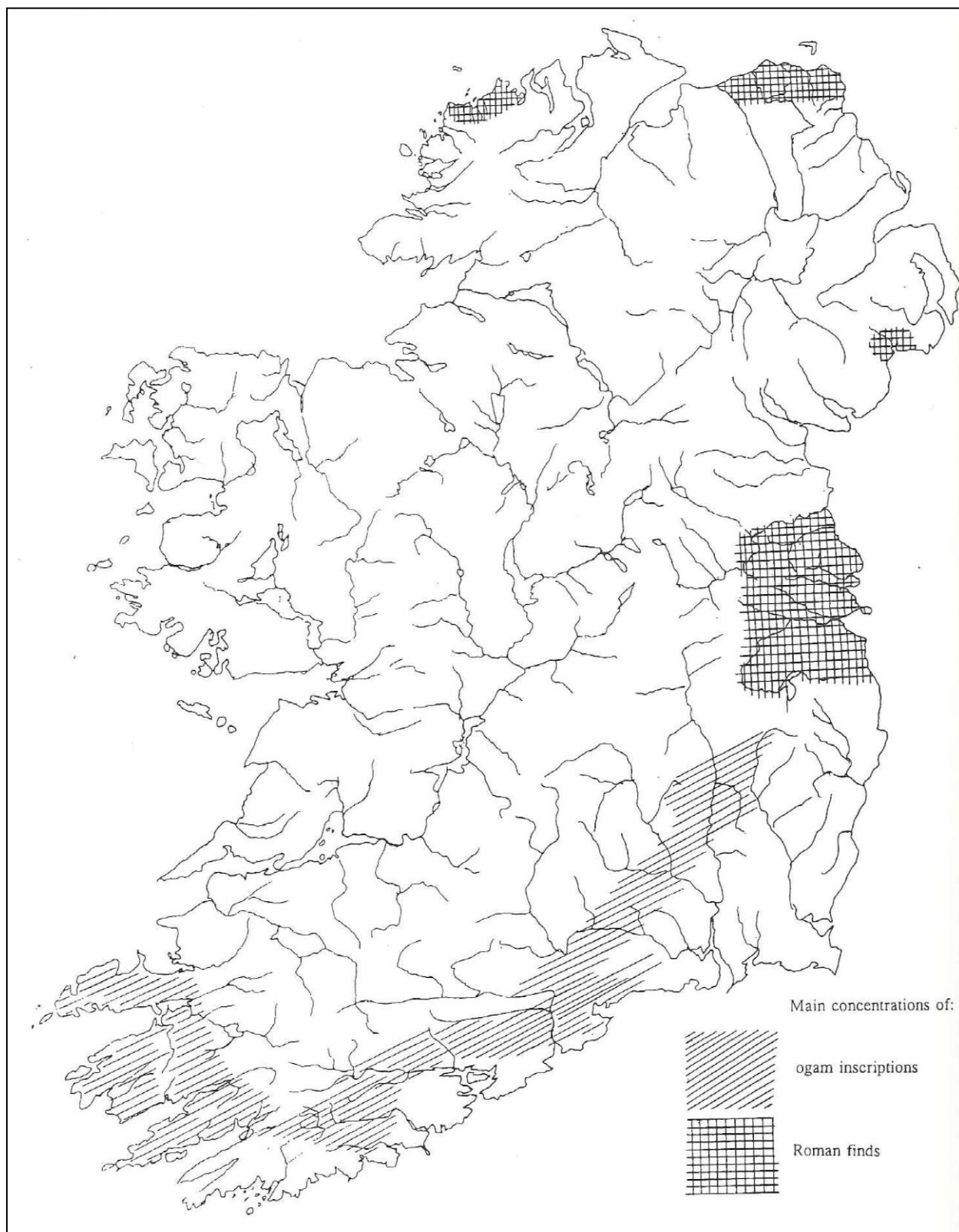


Illustration 4: Zones of Roman influence in Ireland ³⁶

³⁶ Map taken from Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 174.

As mentioned previously, the ogham stone inscription is estimated to descend roughly from the middle of the fifth century. If McManus is right in dating the ogham stone, this would be a clear indication for script in pre-Christian Ireland and would therefore refute nativist ideas of an utterly untouched Ireland in Antiquity. The Latin script would further on serve as strong evidence for cultural contact with Roman Britain. Thomas Charles-Edwards speaks of the Irish Sea in the post-Roman era as a highway. According to him, the Roman military retreat functioned as a catalyst for more contact than in previous times when the Roman frontier was still intact and the ogham stones carry a clear indication of this change.³⁷ Especially the bilingual ogham stone inscriptions found in Wales represent cultural transfer, as he views the commemoration of people with stone inscriptions as a genuinely Roman act.³⁸ After the disappearance of the Roman authority, an Irish dynasty established the Kingdom of Dyfed in Wales. The Roman tradition of stone inscriptions was continued by the new Irish elite, as it was most likely regarded as prestigious.³⁹ At this point, the established connection via the Irish Sea came into play and transferred people with bilingual knowledge to Ireland. The ogham stone inscriptions in Ireland can therefore be considered a mixed tradition of Roman-Irish heritage and are a remarkable example of cultural transfer between the two islands in late Antiquity.

The next issue discussed concerns the function and purpose of ogham stones, which can be clearly identified as commemorative as well as displaying. Considering the inscriptions and the context in which the previously analysed stone *CIIC 19, Colbinstown I* was found, one could argue that the stone served as a public monument or memorial, commemorating both a war proven tribal leader as well as a group of druids. Druids come up frequently in many Irish sources throughout the seventh and eighth century and were the once powerful religious elite in early Irish society. This group was the greatest victim of Christianization, according to Charles-Edwards. He highlights this by mentioning an eighth century Irish law tract in which it is forbidden to care for an injured druid, no matter which sacred status he might claim to have.⁴⁰ However, as far as the purpose of this stone inscription is concerned, the question remains how many people could actually read the inscription. With an average estimate of two per cent of the male population of the late Empire being literate,⁴¹ the notion that even one per cent of the male Irish population being able to read comprehensively seems quite appropriate. Therefore, one can

³⁷ Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. *After Rome* (Oxford, 2003), 116.

³⁸ Charles-Edwards, *After Rome*, 118.

³⁹ Charles-Edwards, *After Rome*, 118.

⁴⁰ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 190-191.

⁴¹ Johnston, Elva. *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge 2013), 7.

infer that a vast majority of the Irish population was not able to read this inscription. This suggests that this inscription was in fact written for the highest elite of early Irish society and even they would most likely not be able to read it. The question on the purpose of the inscription remains somehow disguised when one considers the ultimate function of the inscription as the determination of being read. However, supposing that the ultimate purpose of the inscription is not to be read but rather to be seen, one could conclude that the main purpose of the inscription is display. Script was regarded as one of the ‘instrumentum imperii’,⁴² thus one of the main foundations of the success of the Romans and most likely admired, not only within the Empire but also throughout the frontier areas. In so far is the medium and not the message the most crucial part of the inscription, as the medium of script on its own evokes clear connotations even within illiterate people. The message which is conveyed is one of power and prestige. It does not only accredit authority and legitimacy to the people addressed by the inscription but also to the people inscribing them into stone. In brief, this inscription was meant to be seen rather than read and thereby serves the purpose of display.

One remaining question concerns the background of the people who created those ogam inscriptions and how they can be linked to the learned class of the Irish poets in the following centuries. Looking at the evidence, it is obvious that the professional class of the *filid* (poets) knew the ogam script, as Johnston mentions ogam autographs in manuscripts and points out that a prominent grammatical and linguistic text of the *filid*, the so-called *Poet's Primer*, featured elements of ogam as well.⁴³ Therefore, the notion that the poets stand in the tradition of the people who inscribed the ogam stones is not far-fetched at all. The development of literacy in Ireland has to be seen as a process and this process apparently involved a cultural encounter of people in the frontier area of the Roman Empire. For nearly four centuries, there had been a presence of an army in Roman Britain which was completely reliant on script.⁴⁴ This environment engaged in literacy left a legacy behind which was taken up by people travelling at some point between the islands and transferred this skill via the post-Roman highway across the Irish Sea. Those people lay the foundation of a tradition of early Irish script in Ireland as well as the foundation of a literate class that was neither fully Christian nor pagan. The ogam stone

⁴² Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, 3.

⁴³ Elva Johnston, *Literacy and conversion on Ireland's Roman frontier: from emulation to assimilation. Transforming landscapes of belief in the early medieval Insular world and beyond; Converting the Isles II* (2017), 38.

⁴⁴ Johnston, *Literacy and conversion*, 43.

inscriptions are just the beginning of this gradual development towards literacy which over the course of two hundred years constituted a tradition of text writing by a professional literate class.

2.2 Iromania und Irophobia – the Continental debate

Despite the fact that Irish history is an odd case study in many ways, it has always been closely connected with British, Roman and Christian history, in short, European history. However, numerous scholars throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century came to perceive pre-historic Irish society as being completely isolated and thus as utterly native. Without any external influences, archaic Ireland can be seen as a direct window into the Iron age, some nativist scholars tended to claim. Contrastively, it has been shown within this chapter that there had been Irish contact with Europe in the form of a trading and raiding relationship with the Roman Empire via Britain. The contact with the continent intensified over the years after the Western Roman Empire has ceased to exist. The beginning of a recorded presence of Irishmen in Continental Europe starts in the sixth century, when Irish clerical exiles emigrated towards Europe. The representation of these Irish individuals in the sources and the successful installation of monastic networks made some popular academic discourses circle around the idea that it had been the Irish who brought Europe out of the crisis of a presumed ‘dark age’. This notion of the Irish as being the saviours of European civilization is a clear over-exaggeration on behalf of the achievements of these Irish *peregrini* and would constitute an act of clear *iromania*. Johannes Duft speaks in his frequently cited article of ‘Iromania – Irophobia’, two binary opposing terms which he had defined as being the over-exaggeration and the underestimation of the Irish presence and cultural impact on early medieval European culture. Duft stated that his article is not intended to be ‘irophobe’, while he obviously relativizes some preconceived ‘Celtomanic’ notions about the Irish influence in Continental Europe. Duft regards the monastery of Sankt Gallen, for instance, as an Irish foundation but not as a lasting Irish colony, a circumstance that can be ascribed to many of the early medieval Irish foundations on the continent. While it is traceable that it was Gall who settled there in the first place, he did not establish an Irish community there and after his death Alemannic monks took over and upheld the cultural heritage of their founder.⁴⁵ Only later on, from the ninth to the twelfth century, numerous Irish and

⁴⁵ Duft, Johannes. ‘Iromanie – Irophobie: Fragen um die frühmittelalterliche Irenmission exemplifiziert an Sankt Gallen und Alemannien’. In: Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte 50, (1956), 241-262. See 243.

Continental references to insular manuscripts and visitors can be observed. This concentration of Irish traces for the later centuries has to do with the upheld Irish heritage, which Continental monks continued over centuries. In the following centuries, many Irishmen came to the Irish foundations and brought books and manuscripts with them, but under completely different political and religious realities in the tenth century than in the seventh. The push and pull factors for undertaking *peregrinatio* had changed. While early *peregrini* started their pilgrimage with asceticism and martyrdom beyond foreign shores in mind, later *peregrini* had an established network of Irish foundations and sometimes even Carolingian patronage in prospect when turning towards exile. Therefore, one has to distinguish between the different waves of Irish immigration to Europe, as Irishmen coming to Europe in different centuries differ to a great extent in their underlying motivations. Duft suggested a clear distinction between what he called different “invasions of the Irish”,⁴⁶ to speak of invasions or a migration of a large number of people is however a clear exaggeration of the actual state of facts and an improper use of terminology.

As potential reasons for the succeeding waves of Irish emigration towards the continent, Duft mentions the Viking raids from the ninth century onwards. These are identified by him as constituting another push factor that drove Irish clerics to migrate towards Europe. He is convinced that these Irishmen turned their misery into a virtue and became ideal pilgrims who visited the foundations of their countrymen due to the threatening pressure of the Vikings.⁴⁷ The third and final wave of migration during the middle ages is defined by Duft as occurring in the twelfth and thirteenth century, with the English invasion happening from 1169/70 onwards under King Henry II., many Irishmen decided to flee to the continent from warfare in Ireland.⁴⁸

The extent to which the Irish triggered or influenced Continental religious culture is still a debated topic in early medieval studies. The number of foundations of Irish clerics has been re-evaluated and limited to a great extent. At the same time, the impact of prominent monastic founders, like Columbanus has been re-evaluated as well. A considerable number of researchers have already confronted the exaggeration of the Irish monastic presence on the continent in relation to actual or estimated figures. Although the number of monastic foundations in Francia by the time of Columbanus’ arrival in 590 had already been as high as 220, the number of monasteries increased after the year 600 to approximately 550 by the early eighth century.

⁴⁶ Duft, *Iromanie und Irophobie*, 249.

⁴⁷ Duft, *Iromanie und Irophobie*, 249.

⁴⁸ Duft, *Iromanie und Irophobie*, 249-250.

However, co-occurrence does not imply co-dependence. At first, these figures denote a major expansion of monastic foundations, but Francia had already been at the top of monastic sites before Columbanus' activities, compared to other regions in Western Europe, like Italy with a hundred monasteries and Spain with eighty-six at the time of Columbanus' arrival.⁴⁹ This means that Columbanus did not trigger a large-scale monastic activity in Gaul alone, but was only one of many monastic founders of that time.

As this thesis has set its scope on the first wave of Irishmen turning towards Europe, it is not going into detail with the two other waves of Irish *peregrinatio*. However, the scholarly debate on the first wave *peregrini* is still subdued under the discourse of iromania vs. irophobia and so the question remains: How does one balance the two sides for clear and objective findings? The answer is the critical study of the sources as well as a reflection on the literature with a distinct awareness of certain biases. Therefore, this thesis has addressed these issues in the first place and is now further elaborating on the subject by defining the concept of *peregrinatio* and the term *peregrinus* in general by looking at sources and common definitions within academic literature.

3 Towards a definition of the Irish form of *peregrinatio*

At this point, it is useful to think about a working definition for the Irish *peregrinatio pro Christo*, which can be applied within this text in order to observe and describe a historical development that is still present within collective Irish and European memory and identity. Renowned scholars on early medieval Ireland, such as Elva Johnston, have identified the sixth and seventh century as a founding phase of the Irish *peregrinatio*.⁵⁰ According to Johnston, the concept of *peregrinatio* is remembered and collectively present within cultural Irish identity and memory, while individual *peregrini* faded and were forgotten within Ireland. Thereby, it is crucial to discuss certain questions, define the concept and point out the genuine features of this movement in order to be able to identify instances of *peregrinatio* in individual examples within the primary sources.

The *peregrinatio pro Christo*, which translates in meaning as 'exile for Christ' is a movement which is in its essence of a diverse nature, when one views the individual examples

⁴⁹ Wood, Columbanian Monasticism, 91.

⁵⁰ Johnston, Elva. 'Exiles from the edge? The Irish contexts of Peregrinatio'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion (Basingstoke 2016), 38-52. See 50.

that constitute as well as define the term. The concept defines itself partly according to the general collective identity and self-perception of the people who participated within it and partly through a definition imposed by later writers and historians. Some *peregrini* were immediately aware of their special status and identity as a *peregrinus*, such as Columbanus.⁵¹ Others were later on identified as such by applying to and going along with the general concept of it.⁵² The general concept of the *peregrinatio* is defined by Johnston as a “religious renunciation, inspired by the words of Jesus in the Gospels challenging believers to put aside home and family to follow God.”⁵³ This definition mirrors and encompasses previous and currently acknowledged scholarship. While it is essential to have a fixed set of definitions, it is still important to look beyond the established ones and constantly re-evaluate the term as well as look for further motives for and forms of *peregrinatio*.

The original meaning of the term *peregrinus* is found within classical and medieval Latin sources and changed from initially meaning ‘stranger’ or ‘foreigner’ to be interpreted as ‘pilgrim’ or ‘exile’.⁵⁴ The term *peregrinatio* was used by a great number of authors with different connotations in mind and in a diverse set of contexts, but in an early medieval Irish context the main connotation of *peregrinatio* is clearly one incorporating exile.⁵⁵ Hence, the Irish form of *peregrinatio* came to be seen as temporary or permanent exile for the sake of God.⁵⁶ This exile could be either voluntary or enforced and it could take place within Ireland or abroad. Moreover, the Latin word *peregrinus* is also indirectly reflected within Old Irish, which had multiple forms that referred to the word ‘foreigner’. A stranger could be referred to as *deorad*, which meant ‘foreign settler’ or as *ambue* ‘outsider’, or even as *muirchuirthe*, which translates as ‘one thrown up by the sea’. While the first two refer to men coming from another *tuath* (petty kingdom), the third one would be used to refer to a person from outside of Ireland. Thus, there existed two different kinds of foreigners: those who came from Ireland were perceived as less foreign than those who came from across the sea.⁵⁷ According to Richter, this directly reflects the common cultural unity of the Irish that existed despite the high degree of political disunity in

⁵¹ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 39.

⁵² Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 38-39.

⁵³ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 39.

⁵⁴ Richter, Michael. *Ireland and Her Neighbours in the Seventh Century* (Dublin 1999). 41.

Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 39.

⁵⁵ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 41.

⁵⁶ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 41. Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 39.

⁵⁷ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 42.

early medieval Irish society.⁵⁸ This distinction between two kinds of foreigners is further on also present within the perception of two kinds of *peregrinatio*, with one targeting destinations within Ireland and the other targeting destinations outside. This dual aspect of what Richter defines as the “Hiberno-Latin concept of Christian *peregrinatio*”⁵⁹ is also present within the *Vita Columbani* by Jonas of Bobbio. Richter mentions the part in which Jonas tells of Columbanus’ encounter with a female hermit, who tells him that if she was a man, she would go on *peregrinatio* abroad. However, she thinks that it was not appropriate for a woman to do so but states that a man is frequently afflicted with temptation if he stays home.⁶⁰ The encounter with this woman inspired Columbanus to leave his home permanently, according to Jonas. At first, he went to the monastery of Bangor where he stayed for twenty years, before setting out for his overseas *peregrinatio* in the year 590, to live for rest of his life in exile, never returning to Ireland again.⁶¹ In that sense, Columbanus lived “a voluntary ascetic exile for life” by exposing himself intentionally to danger. According to Charles-Edwards, this was the “most intelligible form of ascetic renunciation available to Irishmen.”⁶² The turning towards the sea as well as the act of leaving behind one’s home and one’s family became acknowledged as the primary and most devoted form of penance within early Christian Irish society.

While it became generally understood to refer to Irishmen who left their home permanently by going abroad in order to serve God as *peregrinatio*, the motives for undertaking this alleged spiritual voyage changed throughout the centuries. Times and political realities changed and the main motives of the early *peregrini* in the sixth and seventh centuries might have differed considerably from those who set out for their journey to Britain and the Continent in succeeding centuries. The push and pull factors for the *peregrinatio* shifted after the successful establishment of an existing network of Irish monastic foundations abroad. While the early *peregrini* followed essential push factors such as religious asceticism and spiritual exile, later Irish *peregrini* were motivated by pull factors of Carolingian patronage or prestigious clerical occupation within Irish foundations in Europe.⁶³ Thereby it is crucial to differentiate between the early *peregrini* of the sixth and seventh century who founded and established these

⁵⁸ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 41.

⁵⁹ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 42.

⁶⁰ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 42.

⁶¹ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 42-43.

⁶² Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. ‘The social background to Irish peregrinatio’. In: *Celtica* 11 (1976), 43-59. See 56. Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 43.

⁶³ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 40.

Irish monastic networks all over Europe and those who came after the establishment of these monastic communities across Europe.

This thesis is mainly dealing with the motivations and the collective identity of the early *peregrini*, who sought to undertake a lifelong religious exile in order to serve God. Although many sources do not mention the term *peregrinatio* directly, inferring it from the context is important in order to discern and identify Irish *peregrini* and different kinds of *peregrinatio* activities. Thus, this thesis approaches the concept of *peregrinatio* in a broader sense than just self-perception and identification by themselves or by the authors of sources. Most of the time, indirect hints and references of exile and asceticism within the primary sources only refer covertly to the concept of *peregrinatio*. One of the major references is present in one of the defining sources on this religious movement and features the concept of exile as a form of martyrdom. The *Cambrai Homily* is a short prayer written in both, Old Irish and Latin and is dated around the year 700,⁶⁴ the later phase of the investigated time period. It was found on a parchment between the pages of a canonical codex (*Collectio Canonum Hibernisis*) compiled towards the end of the eighth century by a Carolingian scribe and bishop, Alberic, in Cambrai. This manuscript collection is securely dated between the years 763-90, even though the Old Irish text of the homily is dated at least two generations earlier.⁶⁵

The *Cambrai Homily* defines three kinds of martyrdom, which are referred to as red, white and green (or blue) martyrdom. Within the homily, there is a definition of each kind included, which states the following:

This is the white martyrdom to man, when he separates for sake of God from everything he loves, although he suffers fasting and labour thereat.

This is green martyrdom to him, when by means of them (fasting and labour) he separates from his desires, or suffers toil in penance and repentance.

*This is the red martyrdom to him, endurance of a cross or destruction for Christ's sake, as has happened to the apostles in the persecution of the wicked and in teaching of the law of God.*⁶⁶

These lines have frequently been associated with the main idea of *peregrinatio* by a number of scholars in the field of early medieval Irish studies. The homily ranks the three kinds of

⁶⁴ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 39.

⁶⁵ Stancliffe, Clare. 'Red, white and blue martyrdom'. In: Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (eds.). *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1982), 21-46. See 22-23.

⁶⁶ 'The *Cambrai Homily*'. In: W. Stokes & J. Strachan (eds. & transl.), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse 2* (Cambridge, 1903), 244-7. See 246-247.

martyrdom in line according to their severity starting with the lightest one. White martyrdom is related to renunciation of earthly matters through fasting and labour. People who endured this martyrdom got literally pale due to deprivation and suffering for the sake of God. Green martyrdom was one level ahead of white one, even though it also included fasting and labour, its essence was about the separation from all that one cherishes in order to suffer penance and repentance. In the context of *peregrinatio*, this account on the forms of martyrdom had been interpreted as including the separation from one's home and one's family, from all that one was familiar with. Nonetheless, the highest form of martyrdom was still considered the death for one's faith by suffering red martyrdom. The notion that this form was rather rare in the days of the creation of the homily is reflected in the phrase in which it is said that the apostles suffered this form of martyrdom through persecution when teaching the word of God.⁶⁷ In Christian societies, however, the days of religious persecution were over and only when going abroad to teach the word of God among pagans, one could eventually suffer this form of martyrdom. Yet, this short text also emphasizes that there is more than one form of martyrdom, and one does not have to die in order to be considered a martyr, despite the fact that it was still regarded as the most prestigious way of finding martyrdom.

The *Cambrai Homily* continues with verses that once again clearly state that there are three kinds of martyrdom which are necessary in order to achieve true repentance. In all of them, it is necessary to leave behind one's desires and earthly matters and to work hard, suffer or exercise radical asceticism for the sake of Christ.

*These three kinds of martyrdom are comprised in the carnal ones who resort to good repentance, who separate from their desires, who pour forth their blood in fasting and in labour for Christ's sake.*⁶⁸

The homily closes with highlighting one last time the existence of three types of martyrdom and concludes with how important they are for God. It essentially claims that a martyr is rewarded for his hard labour, fasting and chastity.

*Now there are three kinds of martyrdom which are precious in God's eyes, for which we obtain rewards if we fulfil them*⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Cambrai Homily, 247.

⁶⁸ Cambrai Homily, 247.

⁶⁹ Cambrai Homily, 247.

An ascetic lifestyle including the separation of all human desires, all one loves and cherishes is a way of finding God. This religiously quite radical statement summarizes the theological doctrine of the *peregrinatio* of the Irish to an overall extent. It is the ideological framework of the spiritual component of the push factors that motivated the early *peregrini* in the sixth and seventh century to undertake their dangerous journey to an unknown fate. The additional type of martyrdom, the green one is understood to be a peculiar Irish way of finding martyrdom through exile. Therefore, this primary source is crucial for a general understanding of the Irish concept of *peregrinatio* and in order to comprehend how early Irish Christians thought and acted. Furthermore, it gives insight into a shared set of early Christian beliefs of the Irish and helps to reconstruct a peculiar insular identity and mindset.

3.1 The colours of martyrdom

The idea of the colours of martyrdom in the context of early Irish pilgrimage was developed by Clare Stancliffe. She noticed a significant distinction between different types of martyrdom in a few early medieval Irish as well as Continental texts. She argues that the early Irish church acknowledged not only those who died for their faith as martyrs of Christ, but also those who practiced an ascetic lifestyle. This by itself is not an exclusively Irish feature. However, the distinction between three genuine forms of martyrdom, which are red (*derg*), white (*ban*) and blue/green (*glas*), is an exclusively Irish peculiarity.⁷⁰

The main source for Stancliffe's hypothesis is the previously analysed *Cambrai Homily*, the Old Irish prayer text authored between the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century. Stancliffe compared this text to two Latin texts from the Continent and concluded that all of them showed an association of various colours with different kinds of martyrdom.⁷¹ The colours which were featured in all the text were white (*albus*, *candidus*, *ban*) and red (*rubincundus*, *ruber*, *derg*). The other two colours were *iacinthus* and *millenicus* in the Latin texts and in the Old Irish text, *glas*. The colour to which the word *glas* corresponds to is slightly ambiguous, as it could refer to both, a light tone of green and blue. The reason for this is that the Irish did not have the same precise colour spectrum which is common today, as they

⁷⁰ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 21.

⁷¹ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 27.

differentiated more towards the tone than towards the actual colour.⁷² The word for dark tones of blue and green in Old Irish would be *gorm*, but this colour adjective could also have been used in a wider sense for deep blue and purple. The Old Irish word for black men is for instance *fir gorma*, which literally translates to “blue men”, while *glas* is also used to describe objects like grass and foliage.⁷³ On the contrary, the adjective *derg* can also be interpreted in a literal sense. It can be translated as ‘red with blood’ or ‘bloody’. It is the direct opposite of the term *ban*, which corresponds to ‘white’ and/or ‘bloodless’. A fight could be described as bloodless using the adjective that also refers to white: *Is ban in gléo sa* – ‘This fight is white/bloodless’. On the other hand, the reason for the choice of *glas* instead of *gorm* for the third kind of martyrdom can be inferred from the first term’s strong connotation with kingship. It would not have been feasible to choose the colour that represents the king for expressing the idea of penitence. *Glas*, however, is frequently associated with meaning ‘fresh, raw and sharp’, especially in combination with weather, and ‘harsh’ additionally in a moral sense. Thereby, it lends itself to the idea of asceticism, according to Stancliffe.⁷⁴ This awareness of the symbolic meaning of the colours white, red and blue/green helps to a great extent with understanding the different forms of martyrdom and how they developed their meaning.

All the same, it is useful to think about the idea of martyrdom in general, as it is not a genuinely Irish nor a Roman idea but a Christian one. The idea of martyrdom came to Ireland via the continent, where it was formed throughout the various phases of persecution of the Christians from the reign of Nero to Diocletian. The term ‘martyr’ was initially exclusively applied to men and women who had given their life for their faith through suffering persecution and lastly execution for their truthfulness to the Christian religion. In a broader sense, it was, however, also applied to people who had been imprisoned, exiled or enslaved due to their faith. At the same time, the idea of lifelong martyrdom had developed in the east of the empire, in the deserts of Egypt and Syria. The concept of lifelong martyrdom originated from Clement of Alexandria and literally meant “bearing daily witness to Christ” instead of death.⁷⁵ The origin of this idea can be traced from Clement to Athanasius’ Life of Antony and further hagiographical accounts with a focus on asceticism in the second half of the fourth century. It is the time of the ascension of Christian monasticism with the idea of the monk as *milita spiritualis* becoming increasingly popular. A martyr who fought the devil in spiritual combat instead of wild beasts and gladiators

⁷² Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 28.

⁷³ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 28.

⁷⁴ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 28-29.

⁷⁵ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 29.

in the arena. The physical fight for one's faith became a spiritual one and while conventional martyrs suffered bodily torment, an ascetic martyr suffered physical deprivation through hard work, fasting and hermitage in the desert to become freed from their worldly desires and live a transcendent life for the sake of Christ.⁷⁶

In the course of the fourth century, monasticism spread from the east of the Imperial dominion to the west and brought with it the idea of martyrdom through an ascetic way of life. Athanasius' *Vita Antonii* was translated into Latin and became popular in the western parts of the empire. Even though Antony desired to become a martyr under the persecution during the reign of Diocletian, he survived and returned to his monastery. This story was known to two other Latin authors who spread this idea and popularized it even further. Jerome and Sulpicius Severus were two major influential writers in the development of monastic ideals in the West and were particularly influential in Ireland. Jerome developed the idea of eternal chastity as a form of martyrdom and in one incident, he described the ascetic lifestyle of a widowed woman and mother as an example of continuous martyrdom. On the other hand, Stancliffe mentions Sulpicius Severus, the author of the *Vita sancti Martini*, as a good example for bloodless martyrdom, as his image of Martin of Tours reflects both, the tradition of the Life of Anthony as well as further African martyr literature.⁷⁷ Already previous publications on early monasticism, like the one by Friedrich Prinz clearly stated that Sulpicius Severus was not only inspired by the Life of Anthony, he rather copied the merits of Anthony and directly ascribed them to Martin. Furthermore, Prinz defines the beginning of monasticism in the West with Martin of Tours. It was his fame that was promoted by his disciples and in particular the propagandist work of Sulpicius Severus that established a cult of worship around his personality.⁷⁸ The narrative of Martin in general served as an example of an ideal Christian life, which does not necessarily have to end in martyrdom. Even though, Martin is described as being willing to suffer it, if he had lived during times of persecution. Despite his death of natural causes, Martin is described as having literally endured 'martyrdom without blood' through an ascetic life. According to Stancliffe, the *Vita sancti Martini* was well-known and present in Ireland throughout the seventh century and, therefore, she argues that this text had a sustainable impact on the development of Irish ideas about non-physical forms of martyrdom.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 30.

⁷⁷ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 31.

⁷⁸ Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, 19-20.

⁷⁹ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 31.

Traditionally red and white are the two colours associated with martyrdom in many Christian sources. The Irish received the Christian idea of physical martyrdom from the continent, as well as the idea of an ascetic lifestyle as a form of martyrdom from the east through Western Europe. This binary concept of martyrdom of being red or white was taken over from the continent and became the Irish equivalent of *derg*- and *banmartrae*, referring to Irish connotations of ‘bloody’ and ‘bloodless’. This binary opposition between two forms of martyrdom is not only present within the Irish sources but also within Sulpicius’ work.⁸⁰ Another reason for terming the non-violent form of martyrdom *ban*, has to do with the Irish belief that too much blood within the human body increases lust and earthly desires and through fasting and hard labour, one could counter this effect. Early Irish Christians thought that the skin of a non-physical martyr would eventually become pale and bloodless (white) through fasting and an ascetic lifestyle. Thus, Stancliffe argues that the definition of ascetic martyrdom within the *Cambrai Homily* is just an extension of Sulpicius’ concept of bloodless martyrdom.⁸¹

This third peculiar kind of martyrdom still remains an oddity, as it is found only within Irish sources. However, the issue of the origin of the concept and the term can be explained by acknowledging the importance of penance within the early Irish church, according to Stancliffe. The close association of penance with monasticism as a very challenging way of life is somehow linked to the concept of ascetic martyrdom. Yet, the austerity of green martyrdom makes it even more demanding and therefore, it is termed *glas*, as its practitioners literally became pale of cheek.⁸² In the end, the general idea that penitence and penance could enable a person to be identified as a martyr is only found within two continental texts of Irish origin and nowhere else.⁸³ Stancliffe concludes that the general idea of non-physical martyrdom originates in sources from the continent. Yet, she also states that the categorization of this concept into three distinct kinds of martyrdom was developed by an Irish person, who thought in their own language and culture.⁸⁴

The theoretical concept of the three kinds of martyrdom can be used to infer how actual spiritual practices were like in early Irish Christianity. As red martyrdom, the death for one’s belief in Christ, did not play a great role in early Christian Irish society, the finding of other forms of martyrdom was successfully promoted. There is considerable evidence that the Irish

⁸⁰ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 35.

⁸¹ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 35.

⁸² Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 35.

⁸³ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 36.

⁸⁴ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 36.

seriously thought in these binary categories of martyrdom with a literal and a non-literal form of it, as the Old Irish rule of Columcille states that his monks should be spiritually prepared for ‘red martyrdom’ and have a strong mind in enduring ‘white martyrdom’.⁸⁵ However, there is an ongoing academic debate about the meaning of the different forms of martyrdom mentioned in the *Cambrai Homily*. Especially the inconsistent definition of white and blue/green martyrdom has given rise to a number of different interpretations. Robin Flower, for instance, understood white martyrdom as being the complete separation from everything one loves and is therefore comprising ‘perfect pilgrimage’. Whereas he understands blue martyrdom as staying in one’s homeland and only separate spiritually from one’s desires. Gougaud, on the other hand, argues that white martyrdom is simply the form which implies living an ascetic life, while *glas* martyrdom is understood as being the life of a penitent, a sinner undergoing the process of penitence through severe hardships.⁸⁶ John Ryan supports Gougaud’s idea of white martyrdom as an ascetic way of life, but perceives it only as a first step towards renunciation and green martyrdom as the strong and continuous practice of austerity. Still, it is not possible to verify which colour stands for *peregrinatio* by looking at the *Cambrai Homily* in isolation. Other sources, however, suggest that the colour white actually stands for the daily martyrdom of an ascetic life. Further associations of white within patristic sources agree on that and suggest that white represents chastity. Henceforth, the primary meaning of white martyrdom is the one of an ascetic life.⁸⁷

If one looks at the application of these principles, one can observe that already Columbanus was aware of the fact that practising asceticism was a form of martyrdom, even though he did not mention any colour. However, when red martyrdom stands for death, white martyrdom would correspond to Columbanus’ reference of a ‘mortification of the will’ as a kind of martyrdom. While the majority of the sources associates white martyrdom with a daily mortification of an ascetic life through fasting and abstinence, blue martyrdom has to be linked to the idea of penitential discipline, according to Stancliffe.⁸⁸ She concludes by giving a concrete interpretation of the three kinds of martyrdom comprising the definitions found within the investigated sources. Red martyrdom, as the most obvious form, signifies the physical form of martyrdom. It means the literal death for one’s religious conviction. White martyrdom is defined as a continuous martyrdom through an ascetic lifestyle and blue, standing for the tears one sheds,

⁸⁵ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 37.

⁸⁶ Stancliffe, *Red white and blue martyrdom*, 38-39.

⁸⁷ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 39-40.

⁸⁸ Stancliffe, *Red, white and blue martyrdom*, 40.

signifies suffering the fate of hard labour and fasting going through the penitents. Finally, Stancliffe leaves it open whether this last form of martyrdom is meant as a lifelong commitment or whether it was dependent on a limited period of time.⁸⁹

To conclude, Stancliffe indicated that the Irish teaching of the three types of martyrdom represented a synthesis of patristic ideas from the eastern Mediterranean deserts that developed further in Western Europe during the fourth and the fifth century. This development, which would later on be defined as the genesis of monasticism, culminates in an extension as well as a re-interpretation by the Irish in the seventh century.⁹⁰ These aspects of development show how ideas of non-violent martyrdom shaped the early Irish church and gave rise to a particularly insular identity. In Ireland during the seventh century, asceticism was quite strong and was acknowledged as a way of finding martyrdom. Ultimately, it becomes clear that penance played an important role within early Christian Irish society. While the Irish favoured personal penance in contrast to public penance, which was more popular on the continent, the notion that one had to undertake a very private form of penance, for themselves in order to change, developed into a form of martyrdom for Christ. Thereby, the penitent could be ranked among other spiritual *militates*, such as monks and martyrs, as having been part of a positive penitential form of martyrdom.⁹¹

4 Patrick – an inspiration or even the first *peregrinus*?

The direct references to the Irish concept of *peregrinatio* are occurring relatively late when one thinks of the fact that the actual phenomenon they describe can already be observed as early as the sixth century with the examples of Columba of Iona and Columbanus of Luxeuil and Bobbio. Therefore, the question of the origin of this peculiar Irish idea of *peregrinatio* has to be traced further back in time, which means back to its roots in the time of the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. The fifth century does not only mark the coming of Christianity to Ireland, but also the dawn of Irish history, with only two written documents originating from within Ireland. The lack of further internal Irish sources makes the understanding of these two remarkable accounts in context even more essential. Eventually, the Patrician texts hold the key to understanding the

⁸⁹ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 44.

⁹⁰ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 44-45.

⁹¹ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 45.

roots of spiritual *peregrinatio* themes that can be observed even further in Irish hagiographical texts of the seventh century.

Without doubt, the most important individual within the earliest phase of Irish history is a person commonly referred to as Patrick. Patrick was a Romano-Briton who lived at some point in the fifth century and left two genuine pieces of writing that constitute an authentic as well as invaluable insight into fifth century Ireland and thus into a society that was scarcely literate in a modern sense. The *Confessio* and the *Epistola* authored by a man who referred to himself as *Patricius* are regarded as the oldest pieces of coherent text that have survived from fifth century Ireland and are perhaps even the earliest textual documents that were compiled on its soil. Thus, one cannot underestimate the value of these two texts, as they provide a unique perspective on the Irish sea region in the fifth century and even beyond that on the process of Christianization itself, which started on a small scale before Patrick's arrival in Ireland with a marginal but apparently worth mentioning Christian community on the island.

The fact that there had already been Christians in Ireland before Patrick's activity on the island becomes evident when one assumes that Patrick came to Ireland in the first half of the fifth century. His use of the Vulgate, which was compiled by Jerome around the year 404, suggests that he wrote after this year. However, passages of the Vulgate could also have been added to later editions of his work. Thus, a closer dating of his works is not possible, as his texts feature characteristics, which could date it in the late fourth or early fifth century.⁹² Traditionally, he is dated in the early fifth century. For approximately the same period, there exist three continental references to a first bishop of Ireland ordained by the Pope, Palladius. These three references in a Gallo-Roman chronicle by Prosper of Aquitaine are the only contemporary sources on him, as there are no written accounts authored by Palladius. In this chronicle, Palladius is referred to as a deacon, who first convinced the Pope to send a mission under Bishop Germanus of Auxerre to Britain in 429 in order to combat the spread of the Pelagian heresy.⁹³ The second reference to him occurs in Prosper's chronicle in the year 431, when he states that Pope Celestine had sent him on a mission to 'the Irish believing in Christ'.⁹⁴ Therefore, it can be assumed that there had already existed a small Christian community in Ireland prior to the year

⁹² Flechner, Roy. 'Patrick's reasons for leaving Britain'. In: Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (eds.), *Tome: Studies in Medieval History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards*, *Studies in Celtic History* 31 (Woodbridge 2011), 125–134. See 126–127.

⁹³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 185; 203–204.

⁹⁴ O'Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and his works*, 15. See Prosper of Aquitaine, *Chronicle*, s.a. 431 In: Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII.*, *MGH Auctores Antiquissimi* 9(1) (Berlin 1892), 341–485. See 472.

431 and if we date Patrick's activity after that year, before his arrival on the island. The third and final reference to Palladius comes from Prosper's transmission of a Papal sermon on the achievements of Pope Celestine in the Northwest. First, he mentions the victory over heresy on the Roman island (Britain) and, second, he mentions the conversion of the barbaric island, which was back then a common term used for Ireland.⁹⁵

These references to Christians within Ireland from outside mark the beginning of the record on the process of Christianization. It is the beginning of a long development that continued over the following three centuries. The notion that Ireland was fully converted within only one generation exceeds all estimations to an overall extent and it is commonly estimated that around the end of the seventh century, an overall majority of the Irish had adopted the Christian faith. To which degree at any concrete point in time a majority of the inhabitants of the island were converted can even nowadays only be estimated roughly, due to the lack of quantifiable data for that period. However, the dating of the earliest Christian activities in Ireland for the year 431, makes it reasonable to assume that Christianity had already expanded to Ireland in the course of the fourth century, when it parallelly became the Roman state religion under Emperor Theodosius in 381. During the fifth century, it was common Papal policy to only send a papal legate to places where Christian communities had already been established, so only to places where Christians were in need and willing to receive of a bishop.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, it is also quite likely that Palladius' mission was consecrated in response to the greater mission to Britain by Germanus and that he was a disciple of the bishop of Auxerre, who was sent first to the Pope to seek permission for the expedition to Britain. In this case, Palladius came to Ireland through Britain sent by Germanus, who wanted to preserve the orthodoxy of Irish Christians and sent him as a bishop in agreement with the Pope. Their temporal as well as their spatial proximity makes it reasonable to think that the two missions, the one by Germanus as well as the one by Palladius, were connected as they were both sanctioned by Papal authority.⁹⁷

In contrast to Palladius, Patrick completely lacks the existence of any contemporary external reference to him. The only textual traces on him are the two authored by himself, the *Confessio* and the *Epistola*. The absence of any contextual frame, both the temporal as well as the spatial one in which he occurred, makes it extremely difficult to contextualize Patrick's

⁹⁵ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 205-206. Johnston, *Literacy and Identity*, 35.

⁹⁶ Flechner, Roy. 'Pope Gregory and the British: Mission as a canonical problem'. In: Hélène Bouget and Magali Coumert (eds.), *En Marge, Histoires des Breagnes 5* (Brest 2015), 47-65. See 60-61.
Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 205.

⁹⁷ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 203-205.

activity. The issue of dating his lifetime has led to a long debate that will apparently never be solved. One can only infer meaning from his work and make educated guesses through a close reading and a thorough analysis of his texts. The case of Palladius, however, constitutes the exact opposite of Patrick's, as there are contemporary references to him by a reliable Gallo-Roman source but no recorded written accounts by himself. These circumstances define the everlasting puzzle between the two characters associated with bringing Christianity to Ireland. Their historical existence had for centuries been blurred and confused in order to construct a founding myth of Christianity in Ireland, which unfortunately cannot be solved within this thesis. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance to distinguish and mention the difference between these two characters identified with the conversion of Ireland. However, the rest of this chapter is going to focus on the figure of Patrick and his legacy, as his fame surpassed Palladius already in the seventh century. Ultimately, his accounts and his *Life* are identified as major sources on the development of the *peregrinatio* and thus further discussions of Palladius end at this point.

Apart from Patrick's exceptional worth as the crown witness of the earliest part of Irish history, he was probably also one of the most influential churchmen in Ireland at the time. During his lifetime, he promoted and pushed the conversion of the Irish and converted, according to himself, a significantly high number of Irish individuals to the Christian faith. His missionary activities in Ireland became an object for myth building and all sorts of legends that were created around his historical personality. This legendary image was constructed from the day he died, on the seventeenth of March in an unknown year, supposedly in the second half of the fifth century. In these one and a half millennia of legend-building, a character has been created that does by far outweigh the existing facts on the historical person. Henceforth, it is more than necessary to distinguish between the legendary Patrick and the historical Patrick, an actual person whose historicity exclusively constitutes itself from only two distinctive autobiographical accounts, due to the lack of any further contemporary reference to him.

Through his work and especially through the legends, Patrick was stylized as the supreme saint of the Irish. His later biographers Muirchú and Tírechán from the seventh century wrote formative hagiographical accounts on the character of Patrick, which however cannot be consulted for reliable research on the historical Patrick. These non-contemporary accounts rather represent an ongoing process of legend-building around his historical personality two centuries later and can be used as sources for the discourse about Patrick in the seventh century. Furthermore, these accounts testify that already back then, the character of Patrick was

institutionalized and abused for a political power struggle between church federations.⁹⁸ On the contrary, these accounts also show how present the character of Patrick was in the seventh century within the collective memory of the Irish. This clearly traceable cultural presence suggests that the personality of Patrick, both the historical and the legendary one, constituted an inspiration for the *peregrini* in the seventh century and probably even before that time.

Upon closer consideration of Patrick's two textual sources which describe his active participation in the process of conversion at 'the end of the world' and the accounts on his penance through his missionary activities, this thesis claims that his own work as well as the posthumous legend-building around his personality inspired the *peregrini* to participate in God's work abroad. As Patrick himself left his homeland Britain in order to preach the word of God beyond foreign shores, he was valued for this most prestigious act a Christian could perform in order to appeal to God according to Christian doctrine of the time. A considerable number of early Christian Irishmen followed his example, which embodied ultimate penance, by going into exile and preach Christianity in distant and unknown territories among alien people beyond foreign shores. Patrick was thus perceived as a role model for an indefinable number of Irish exiles in the sixth and seventh century, as his work and his legend is thought of as contributing towards the genesis of the phenomenon termed *peregrinatio*.

4.1 Themes of *peregrinatio* within Patrick's work

As mentioned previously, the *Confessio* and the *Epistola* authored by Patrick constitute the only contemporary written sources historians have on his personality and on his mission to Ireland. Apart from their value as a source for the Irish Sea area in the fifth century, the two texts also give an insight into Patrick's deliberate way of thinking and hence into a genuine intellectual Christian mind of the fifth century. Not only through his description of his missionary activities, but also through his particularly Christian way of interpreting the world, Patrick most likely had a significant impact on early Irish Christians and subsequent generations in the sixth and seventh century. The essence of the *peregrinatio* movement is thereby not only one of an individual spiritual call from God to go and teach his word abroad, but also the result of a particularly dominant world view which originated from an early Christian discourse was popularized in a peripheral outpost of the late Roman world. Ultimately, this insight into Patrick's genuine way of

⁹⁸ O'Loughlin, Thomas. *Saint Patrick. The Man and His Works* (London 1999). 9.

thinking through his work helps not only to understand what his own personal motives for his mission had been, but also what the later *peregrinis*' motives for leaving their homeland in the immediate centuries after Patrick were.

The main intertextual source and the one work that Patrick is constantly referring to in his work is the Bible. Patrick draws on the great authority of the holy script, which he uses and includes in his writings and which he recites frequently throughout the text. Thereby, Patrick's work displays a considerable amount of intertextuality with biblical accounts. This indicates that Patrick could read and interpret as well as recite the Bible at a highly proficient level, due to an extensive Roman and Christian education. As Stansbury rightly pointed out, the holy script was full of difficulties in understanding for the people of late Antique Britain. The scripture is full of names of places, plants, animals, concepts and customs, which Western European insular people would not understand.⁹⁹ In order to understand these sometimes foreign, exotic and even alien terms and cultural concepts, it would have needed intensive hermeneutic training in order to get a versed understanding of late Antique biblical exegesis. Patrick obviously possessed these competences, which made him a learned voice of fifth century Britain and a professed late Antique clerical authority in this peripheral outpost of the Roman world.

The general notion on which historians agree on is that Patrick lived in the fringes of a Roman world, which was centred around a Mediterranean core. An insular world that was, according to modern scholars, part of a frontier area of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁰ The Irish Sea served thereby not only as a geographical border but also as a thriving cultural as well as economic highway on the large scale. Contemporary historians have long acknowledged the cultural impact the Romans had on Ireland through their presence in Britain, supported by archaeological finds of Roman origin on Irish soil.¹⁰¹ However, nativist theories of a genuinely untouched and unpenetrated Irish society and culture before Patrick are still present, not necessarily within the academic discourse, but definitely within a more popular historical discourse. In schools, for example, for the purpose of simplification, it is still taught as if it was Patrick alone who brought Christianity and script to Ireland, and thereby transitioned Ireland from the pre-historic into the historical era. As there neither exist any statistical figures which can be calculated, nor a way of securing a concrete percentage of how many people Patrick did

⁹⁹ Stansbury, Mark. 'Irish Biblical Exegesis'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe* (London 2016), 116-130. See 116-117.

¹⁰⁰ Johnston, Ireland in Late Antiquity, 112-113.

¹⁰¹ Loveluck and O'Sullivan, *An Archaeological Perspective*, 21-23.

convert, it is crucial to neither underestimate, nor overstate his missionary activity and assess it on the basis of the contemporary sources that exist.

4.1.1 Themes of *peregrinatio* within the *Confessio*

Patrick's reasons for writing the *Confessio* are quite easily discernible by studying the text carefully. The document is obviously of an apologetic nature and he ultimately wrote it with the purpose of defending as well as legitimizing himself as a bishop in Ireland by confessing his sins and highlighting his personal penance and missionary success. The addressees of it, most likely the British episcopacy, were probably not fond of Patrick and his self-proclaimed status and overly successful mission as a bishop to the Irish. They tried to defy him by accusing him of serving his own economic interests with his mission to Ireland and sought to dismiss him from his clerical office by discrediting his reputation.¹⁰² According to Patrick, his accusers mentioned a sin that he committed in his youth. A sin that happened during a single hour on a single day¹⁰³ that would discredit him as a bishop. The nature of this sin is not addressed explicitly, but it was obviously considered rather severe. The severity of the sin endangered him of losing his reputation and his title and brought him close to aborting his mission in Ireland. In defence of his reputation and in order to legitimize his activities in Ireland, Patrick responded to these accusations with the *Confessio*, which is just one of only two written documents that survived from fifth century Ireland. The *Confessio* and the *Epistola* are the only traceable accounts on Patrick that are contemporary and written by himself in his own perspective. They give an authentic glance at the circumstances on the British Isles in the fifth century. As this thesis regards Patrick as a prototype of the later *peregrini*, the analysis of these historical documents is essential for the understanding of the thesis statement.

Already in the first chapter of the *Confessio*, there are observable hints pointing towards the essence of the core understanding of *peregrinatio*. The realisation that there is something unique in the way one perceives the world and oneself through the perspective of remoteness.

¹⁰² Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 217-219.

¹⁰³ Patrick. 'Confessio'. In: Patrick McCarthy (ed. & transl.), *My Name is Patrick. St Patrick's Confessio* (Dublin 2012). Online: >https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio_english#> (12/04/19), 27.

*The Lord brought his strong anger upon us, and scattered us among many nations even to the ends of the earth. It was among foreigners that it was seen how little I was.*¹⁰⁴

Patrick wrote these lines in the first chapter of his *Confessio*, with which he revealed his identity and ancestry and began his work by referring to his father, grandfather and their clerical and civic professions as well as his great sin of not knowing the one true God in his youth. He deliberately accepts his fate and perceives his punishment as just and ordained by God. When he writes he *scattered us among many nations and even to the ends of the earth*¹⁰⁵, he is referring to himself and his juvenile companions, who were captured and enslaved by Irish raiders and abducted to the ‘barbarian island’ – the ends of the earth within a late Antique Roman perspective of the world.

In the next chapter, Patrick reflects on his path back to God and the rediscovery of his Christian faith that he was taught from his early years on, but he failed to live up to. He confessed that he only had recognised his misdeeds through his abduction and captivity in Ireland and claims that God had protected him as well as forgiven him his sins.¹⁰⁶ Patrick feels blessed, indeed even chosen by God for the mission to Ireland and expresses this on numerous occasions throughout the text. One instance occurs in chapter three, in which he says that the gift of finding his way back to God was bestowed over the land of his captivity, which is Ireland, and indicates that he must not be silent but rather shall speak of his obligation *to praise and bear witness to his great wonders before every nation under heaven*.¹⁰⁷ This notion is strongly tied to his mission in Ireland, which he perceives as ordained by God. According to his understanding, he is chosen to preach Christianity at the ends of the world, especially there where no one has done it before, so that all people shall receive word of the Christian message.

In the following chapters, Patrick makes a clear confession to God and to the concept of the trinity within Christian doctrine and further on focusses on himself as being ‘imperfect’, ‘the lowest of all believers’, ‘a simple countryperson’ and so on and humbles himself frequently. Humility is a main motive of the *Confessio* induced by Patrick. He describes himself as a humble servant of Christ and the one true God and thereby conveys a certain amount of pity. He wants to be perceived as pitiful and not as a great missionary on the one hand, but tries to leave proof of

¹⁰⁴ *Confessio*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Confessio*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Confessio*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Confessio*, 3.

his legacy behind, on the other hand. In Chapter 14, he emphasizes on his achievements and the legacy he would leave behind after his death.

*It is right to spread abroad the name of God faithfully and without fear, so that even after my death I may leave something of value to the many thousands of my brothers and sisters – the children whom I baptised in the Lord.*¹⁰⁸

Additionally, he mentions in this short chapter that it is right to spread the name of God abroad, so his missionary activity on the remote island of Ireland should be acknowledged as rightful and sanctioned by God. His deeds in Ireland should however be remembered and commemorated, by the many thousands of his followers, whom he converted through baptism. Thereby, he reveals his true aim in his doings, namely being remembered as a missionary and a faithful and lawful servant of God. At the same time, through his statement that he baptized thousands of men and women, he even leaves some clues that draw attention to the questionable degree of success of his mission in Ireland. If one contrasts the sparsely populated island in the fifth century to Patrick's claim, his missionary activity was indeed quite fruitful.

Patrick's focus on humility continues in his reference to his captivity in Ireland in chapter 16, in which he states that he was a shepherd during his time as a slave in Ireland. Together with the constant themes of loneliness, isolation, distance, purity, penance and repentance, poverty and slavery he features all the constantly re-occurring motifs of *peregrinatio*.

*After I arrived in Ireland, I tended sheep every day, and I prayed frequently during the day. More and more the love of God increased, and my sense of awe before God. Faith grew, and my spirit was moved, so that in one day I would pray up to one hundred times, and at night perhaps the same. I even remained in the woods and on the mountain, and I would rise to pray before dawn in snow and ice and rain. I never felt the worse for it, and I never felt lazy – as I realise now, the spirit was burning in me at that time.*¹⁰⁹

This aspect of living in constant isolation a cloistered life in exile became a central motive for the Irish *peregrini* for their own activities and their decision to leave their home behind. Moreover, the theme of being far away from one's homeland in a rural area became a defining feature of what constituted green martyrdom afterwards, which is one of the main objectives of the Irish *peregrini* in the sixth and seventh century. In Patrick's own understanding, the exile made him a more pious as well as pure person and repented him from his previous sins. This

¹⁰⁸ Confessio, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Confessio, 16

chapter is crucial for understanding Patrick's way of thinking and hence the mind of a Christian in the fifth century. He is convinced that he received purification through his exile. His six years in exile formed him and let him re-evaluate his role and his assignment ordained by God, which was the mission to Ireland. As there already existed a small Christian community in Ireland, the analogy with the sheep is quite suitable. Patrick served as a shepherd in Ireland beforehand and only after his return, which was a voluntary decision, he became bishop in Ireland, a symbolic shepherd for 'the Irish believing in Christ'.¹¹⁰

Patrick understands his mission as the fulfilment of the prophecy of the New Testament. The Book of Revelation is known to him and he obviously is convinced of the idea that he was living in a time in which the end of the world is near. The last judgement as proclaimed by John in the Book of Revelation will end the earthly time and introduce the heavenly era of Christ's return. This belief is widespread in the late Antique Roman Christian world and happens to be virally popular in a time of political decay due to the military defeat of the Roman Empire. Patrick expresses this feeling of living at the end of time in chapter 36 of the *Confessio* in the following way:

*However ignorant I am, he has heard me, so that in these late days I can dare to undertake such a holy and wonderful work. In this way I can imitate somewhat those whom the Lord foretold would announce his gospel in witness to all nations before the end of the world. This is what we see has been fulfilled. Look at us: we are witnesses that the gospel has been preached right out to where there is nobody else there!*¹¹¹

Patrick believes that he is living in the late days of a teleological timespan and is undertaking a heavenly mission to preach the word of God in the most peripheral regions of the world. Thereby, he works as a mediator for the messengers of the Lord to proclaim the gospels to people who have not heard the Christian revelation. Patrick is convinced that when Christianity is preached in every corner of the world, even in ones as remote as Ireland, his mission would be accomplished, and the prophecy fulfilled.¹¹² Only then, when all the peoples around the globe have received the holy message, earthly time would come to an end and the era of Christ would begin. This way of thinking is directly reflected in his reference to the gospel of Matthew (24:14),

¹¹⁰ Prosper of Aquitaine, Chronicle, 472.

¹¹¹ Confessio, 34.

¹¹² Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 233.

*This gospel of the kingdom will be announced all over the world, as testimony to all the nations; and then will come the end.*¹¹³

This passage is immensely important in order to understand Patrick's and his contemporaries' attitudes towards mission. They believed it to be necessary in order to redeem unbaptized pagan people and in order to fulfil the spiritual prophecy so that the apocalypse can be initiated through the return of Christ. The last judgement would end the old earthly time and introduce a new heavenly time, with a new heaven and a new earth.¹¹⁴

Frequently within the *Confessio*, Patrick reflects on his missionary work in Ireland and proclaims that despite the hardship and the frequent fear for his life the *great and life-giving gift, to know and love God*, outweighs *the cost of leaving homeland and parents*.¹¹⁵ In that sense, he acknowledges the act of leaving behind home, his family and all that was dear to him as a great burden, but he is convinced that it is worthwhile to prefer this challenge before the easier one of staying at home. Thus, it becomes clear that it was his own decision to go on this journey, to go back to Ireland after his captivity and his escape back to his ancestral home. This time when he set foot on Ireland, it was his free choice to do so and to become a missionary as well as a bishop of the Irish. In a way, this overly idealizes him as a person that is overcoming his fears and doubts and confronts the challenge set out by God. Patrick also makes it clear that his exile in Ireland is permanent as he formulates it in the following way,

*If I be worthy, I am ready even to give up my life most willingly here and now for his name. It is there that I wish to spend my life until I die, if the Lord should grant it to me.*¹¹⁶

In these lines, Patrick clearly states that he is willing to give his life for the name of God and that he is ready to spend the rest of his life in Ireland, far away from his parental home in Britain. This ideal of leaving home and leaving behind all that is familiar and cherished and depart for a journey to the unknown and living an ascetic life in permanent exile is the central motive of the *peregrinatio* of the Irish in the following centuries.

The next chapter is somehow even more revealing in terms of his geographical understanding of Ireland. He previously had referred to Ireland as the ends of the earth, but within this passage Patrick describes Ireland and the Irish as *this people who have lately come to*

¹¹³ Confessio, 40.

¹¹⁴ Revelation (21:1). All further bible quotations refer to this version on the Bible server: 'King James Bible'. The Bible Server. Online: < <https://www.bibleserver.com/start> > (12/04/19/).

¹¹⁵ Confessio, 36.

¹¹⁶ Confessio, 37.

believe, and who the Lord has taken from the ends of the earth and refers to his conversion of the Irish as follows,

*This is just what he promised in the past through his prophet: "The nations will come to you from the ends of the earth, and they will say: How false are the idols our fathers got for themselves, and they are of no use whatever." (Jeremiah 16:19) And again: "I have put you as a light to the nations, that you may be their salvation to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:6).*¹¹⁷

The 'end of the earth' is a re-occurring theme in Patrick's writing and is of geographical as well as temporal significance. As he believes that he is working and preaching the word of God at the end of time and literally at the spatial end of the earth.¹¹⁸ Through this it can be inferred that he has an overall geographical understanding of the world shaped by a thorough Roman education. Furthermore, his frequent references to both the Old and the New Testament also implies that he knows the Bible to a great extent and has access to extensive parts of the holy script.

His well understanding and knowledge of the bible is displayed all over the text and so also in chapter forty, when Patrick again uses direct quotes from the New Testament to justify his missionary assignment, which he believes is ordered by God through the holy script.

*Go therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28: 19-20).*¹¹⁹

This again is a strong indication that Patrick believed that he was living at the end of time and thereby, was severely influenced by this common late Antique Christian theme. The Roman Empire was withdrawing militarily on all its frontiers and simultaneously the great migration period swept over Europe. This had a great influence on the intellectuals of the time, and they conveyed this particular way of perceiving the state of the world also to the Isles throughout the fifth century.

The main objective Patrick and the Christian religious dogma is pursuing is the conversion of the whole world. This can be deduced from Patrick's statement that he wrote down in chapter 38, *[w]e believe that believing people will come from all over the world,*¹²⁰ which he stated after quoting Matthew (8:11) again, *[t]hey will come from the east and from the west, and*

¹¹⁷ Confessio, 38.

¹¹⁸ O'Loughlin, Saint Patrick: The man and his works, 42-43.

¹¹⁹ Confessio, 40.

¹²⁰ Confessio, 39.

*they will lie down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.*¹²¹ This directly recites the Christian ideology of converting all people to what they believed was the one and only true and rightful faith. This strong missionary purpose present in Patrick's writing must have had a great impact on the Christian elite in Ireland throughout the sixth and seventh centuries, to exactly those people who copied and studied these texts within early Christian Irish society. Finally, the missionary task is elaborated further and made concrete when Patrick quotes Mark (16:15-16), *Go out therefore to the whole world and announce the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.*¹²² Thereby, Patrick and the Christian dogma do not leave any room for negotiation, either one believes or is condemned for all eternity.

Throughout the *Confessio*, themes of conversion, the end of the earth and the last judgement are omnipresent. These re-occurring motifs directly reflect the contemporary attitude of other writers in late Antiquity and identify Patrick as an intellectual scholar of the fifth century with a distinct Roman education. Patrick conveys a strong awareness that he lived in the late days of the world and that the apocalypse was close. He was also aware of the fact that he was living and preaching at the geographical end of the earth, in the periphery, far away from the Mediterranean core of the Roman world. This exile of his among foreigners was chosen by himself voluntarily, as he was convinced that his mission was ordained by God and he believed that the divine prophecy can only be fulfilled when Christianity is preached in the remotest parts of the earth. This was his mission and he was dedicated to it, even at the expense of his own life.

4.1.2 Themes of *peregrinatio* within the *Epistola*

The other document that is recorded by Patrick, the *Epistola* or the *Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus* shares some of the thematic features of the *Confessio*. It is a letter with a strong religious focus, as it includes a large number of references to the Bible. Yet, also in style it is of considerable similarity to the first document, as it is divided into twenty-one short chapters and thus makes up a third in length of the *Confessio*. The *Epistola* also shows some biblical references which are close or in some cases even identical to the ones in the *Confessio*. The

¹²¹ *Confessio*, 39.

¹²² *Confessio*, 40.

previously mentioned quote from the gospel of Mark (16:15-16)¹²³ can be found with slight adaptations in both documents authored by Patrick, just as the one mentioned before, Matthew (8:11),¹²⁴ which is also featured in the *Epistola*. Nevertheless, the purpose of the two documents is rather different, as the *Confessio* is in its purpose rather defensive, while the *Epistola* is openly offensive towards the addressee. The aim of *the letter to the soldiers of Coroticus* is the defamation of these warriors and their identified leader. The character of Coroticus is until this day unknown. Apart from the reference by Patrick in his epistle, there is no other source on him. It is most likely that he was a British war lord in the fifth century, who took Christians as slaves and sold them to pagans, as this is the crime which he is accused of by Patrick in his letter.

Two passages from the *Epistola* should be viewed in more depth with regard to the aspect of *peregrinatio*. The first one is the first chapter of the letter written by Patrick, which contains valuable insight into his own understanding of his role as a bishop and his mission in Ireland. Its English translation by McCarthy phrases it like this,

*I declare that I, Patrick, – an unlearned sinner indeed – have been established a bishop in Ireland. I hold quite certainly that what I am, I have accepted from God. I live as an alien among non-Roman peoples, an exile on account of the love of God – he is my witness that this is so. It is not that I would choose to let anything so blunt and harsh come from my mouth, but I am driven by the zeal for God. And the truth of Christ stimulates me, for love of neighbours and children: for these, I have given up my homeland and my parents, and my very life to death, if I am worthy of that. I live for my God, to teach these peoples, even if I am despised by some.*¹²⁵

This passage is essential for understanding Patrick's self-awareness and identity. He declares that he is an unlearned sinner, which he has declared before in the *Confessio*. Next, he declares that he is a bishop in Ireland, which he most likely is in his own right. Because of the lack of the existence of any official church document mentioning him or any other external source, it is most certainly that he is a self-proclaimed bishop in Ireland. What follows is a crucial indication for his identity as a pilgrim in exile. He states that he lives as *an alien among non-Roman peoples*, and as *an exile on account of the love of God* in Ireland. This is an essential part of the self-understanding of the Irish *peregrini* in the following two centuries and makes it feasible not only to discuss Patrick as a proto-*peregrinus* but to actually acknowledge him as one.

¹²³ Patrick. 'Epistola'. In: Patrick McCarthy (transl.), Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus. Online: <https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/epistola_english#> (12/04/19), 20; Confessio, 40.

¹²⁴ Epistola, 18; Confessio, 39.

¹²⁵ Epistola, 1.

The next passage is similarly important for the identification of Patrick as a *peregrinus*. When Patrick states that *for love of neighbours and children [...] I have given up my homeland and my parents, and my very life to death, if I am worthy of that*, he clearly refers to the idea of leaving behind one's home in order to live a life in permanent exile in service to God, which is indeed a distinct, if not defining motive of the *peregrini*. This strongly relates to an idea which is manifested in the concept of green martyrdom in the following centuries, an alternative to the two prominent forms of martyrdom of the time, red and white. In addition to them, one could also choose to leave one's home and go abroad in order to contribute to spreading the holy message all over the globe. This pursuit of a life in permanent exile was key to the idea of *peregrinatio* and formed the third and latest form of martyrdom, which Irish *peregrini* chose freely in order to please God with their servitude and dedication to him and his mission.

Another indication for the presence of a strong *peregrinatio* motive within the *Epistola* is mentioned in chapter six, in which Patrick states that, *I have a part with those whom God called and destined to preach the gospel, even in persecutions which are no small matter, to the very ends of the earth*.¹²⁶ Once again, the theme of the 'ends of the earth' is occurring, a common feature in both of Patrick's documents. However, this sentence tells something else. He speaks of God calling and destine individuals to preach the holy script, even under the hardship of eventual persecution. So thereby, Patrick even promotes the challenge of facing persecution and even presumably death in service to God as something desirable. A few passages later, Patrick explains the call for his own enterprise to Ireland and, further on, gives credit to the same motives the early *peregrini* had only a century later.

*Surely it was not without God, or simply out of human motives, that I came to Ireland!*¹²⁷ *Who was it who drove me to it? I am so bound by the Spirit that I no longer see my own kindred. Is it just from myself that comes the holy mercy in how I act towards that people who at one time took me captive and slaughtered the men and women servants in my father's home? In my human nature I was born free, in that I was born of a decurion father.*¹²⁸ *But I sold out my noble state for the sake of others – and I am not ashamed of that, nor do I repent of it. Now, in Christ, I am a slave of a foreign people, for the sake of the indescribable glory of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*¹²⁹

¹²⁶ *Epistola*, 6.

¹²⁷ See Corinthians (1:17).

¹²⁸ *Confessio*, 1.

¹²⁹ *Epistola*, 10, see Romans (6:23).

He once again declares that he undertook his mission to Ireland inspired by God and not driven by ‘human motives’. Instead, he insisted that he was driven by a divine force, which helped him to overcome his own doubt and which convinced him to give up his home and his family. Moreover, he questions where his changed attitude towards the Irish came from, his opinion towards the people who had raided his ancestral home and murdered many of his own people. There is a considerable amount of Patrick’s personal transformation present within this paragraph, as he reflects on his change in character through the process of discovering his own spirituality in Ireland. According to himself, he was transformed from a free man of noble heritage to a slave of a foreign people in service to Christ, for his strong belief in the ‘glory of eternal life.’ This statement reinforces his strong missionary ideals and should of course also promote his pious personality as well as his strong religious motives for his undertakings in Ireland. Patrick portrays himself as the exact opposite of the ‘evil-minded’ Coroticus,¹³⁰ whom he seeks to undermine with this letter.

Another main point to consider in the following chapter of the *Epistola* is the passage in which Patrick quotes two evangelists, stating that there would be no honour or glory for prophets in their own country. This quote is also of biblical origin, referring to the gospels of Matthew (13:57) and John (4:44). Patrick writes [i]f my own people do not recognise me, still no prophet is honoured in his own country.¹³¹ By this, he is most likely referring to the rejection he received from the British episcopacy, which induced him to compose the *Confessio*. The *Confessio* is directed towards an educated readership and should defend Patrick’s status as a bishop that was most likely challenged by British church officials during his activities in Ireland. What he explicitly says within these verses is that while his own British people, or at least some of them, have failed to see and acknowledge him as a devoted and righteous man of God. Therefore, he had no other choice but to go to the Irish, who acknowledged his blessing and accepted him as their truthful bishop.

Especially the *Epistola* gives a good insight into the socio-economic and political instability of fifth century Britain and Ireland. It displays a picture of the omni-presence of slavery on both of the isles and the lack of the Roman Empire’s political and military power to protect Christians or other unguarded Roman citizens to fall into the hands of slave traders. The considerable wealth and the presence of luxury goods in Roman Britain made it quite profitable

¹³⁰ Epistola 12.

¹³¹ Epistola 11.

for tribal war clans to raid the Roman province regularly. These raiding activities increased with the lack of military protection by the Roman legions in the fifth century. Henceforth, the economic relationship between Roman Britain and its northern and western neighbours beyond the Roman frontier is coined by both trade and raid activities throughout Roman and post-Roman times along the coast of the Irish sea.

4.2 Themes of *peregrinatio* within hagiographical accounts of the seventh century

On the seventeenth of March in an unknown year, most likely in the second half of the fifth century Patrick died in old age. Immediately after this day, which is nowadays celebrated worldwide, the legend-building around his personality started. Oral accounts of the miracles he is said to have performed spread all over Ireland. On the basis of these oral accounts, literate Irish individuals started to write down these stories about Patrick decades after his death. This transition from an oral tradition to a written one was the beginning of a strong hagiographical discourse about Patrick and an extensive myth-creating process that has lasted until this day. Through this massive legend-building around the character of Patrick, the authentic historical Patrick became lost and was replaced by Saint Patrick. This legendary saint performed numerous miracles and was spiritually above any ordinary human being. Important sources for this construction of a legendary Patrick are two Irish authors from the seventh century, Muirchú and Tírechán. The two Irish writers composed hagiographical accounts on Patrick that have been transferred to the present. However, these accounts cannot be viewed as truthful and unbiased sources on the historical Patrick but should be viewed as examples to reflect on the hagiographical discourse about Patrick in the seventh century, which was obviously quite productive. They furtherly convey an impression of the success of Patrick's mission. Only two centuries after him, an overall majority of the Irish had been converted and an Irish Church had been installed as a major institution.¹³²

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the hagiographical accounts on Patrick. Through a close analysis of Muirchú's *Vita Sancti Patricii*, this chapter is targeting a reconstruction of the image of Patrick in the seventh century. The goal of this analysis is to explain how certain pictures and ideas of Patrick may have had hegemonial influence within early Christian Irish society of the time. While the hagiographical accounts by Tírechán and Muirchú cannot be

¹³² Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 241-242.

regarded as reliable in terms of investigating Patrick and his times, they can be assessed towards their contemporary context in the seventh century. They can be taken as evidence for a thriving literary discourse around the personality of Patrick and they illustrate that Patrick is strongly present in the minds of seventh century Irishmen and Irishwomen. These omnipresent ideas about Patrick might have had a great influence on young Irish Christians and might have inspired some of them to go on this dangerous journey to foreign lands in service to God. Thereby, it is essential to point out that not only the character of the historical Patrick, but also the legendary Patrick had an influence on the *peregrini* through his omnipresence within early Christian Irish identity.

For the Irish in the seventh century, there existed no difference between the two personalities. For some people today as well as for most people in the seventh century, the historical Patrick and the legendary Patrick are identical. Only through a careful distinction of them through a close reading and a historical interpretation of the two different kinds of sources, the contemporary fifth century accounts by Patrick himself and the hagiographical ones from the seventh century, this legendary image of Patrick can be deconstructed and thus the two Patricks can be viewed separately. Moreover, the legend-building hagiographical accounts by Tírechán and Muirchú additionally reveal a certain propagandist purpose, as each of them were composed with a clear aim in mind, the support of their church federation of Armagh. The texts mention a special connection of Patrick to Armagh, one which did not exist before them. This suggests that they tried to write Patrick into the history of their church federation to outperform others in their struggle for supremacy over Ireland.

4.2.1 Themes of *peregrinatio* in Muirchú's *Vita Sancti Patricii*

The *Vita Sancti Patricii* or the Life of Saint Patrick was authored by Muirchú moccu Machtheni, an Irish monk and hagiographer of Patrick. There is not much known about his life and his work is only transferred in fragments, which are found within the Book of Armagh and three other manuscripts, two of them located in the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (Ser. Nov 3642). The *Vita* is one of the earliest hagiographical accounts in Ireland and features both historical as well as legendary elements in its content. The *Vita*'s prologue begins with a mention of the sponsor, Aedh, the Bishop of Sletty and the author's conviction that no one before him ever tried to write

down the story of Patrick, except his spiritual father Cogitosus.¹³³ He begins the *Vita* by referring to the *Confessio* and recites it with great detail until the point where Patrick escaped from his captivity in Ireland and went back to Britain. From this point onwards, Muirchú diverges from the original narrative of the *Confessio* and states that Patrick had actually planned a pilgrimage to Rome but stayed with Germanus in Auxerre, who taught him and served as his mentor.¹³⁴ This is the beginning of a narration of Patrick's performed miracles and stories of conversion that span over the next couple of chapters.

There are a few passages in the *Vita* that are of remarkable interest for this thesis, as they include explicit reference to the concept of *peregrinatio*. Eventually, the comparison of the sea with the desert is of notable importance and a constantly re-occurring theme. Once again, this metaphor of the 'desert in the sea' is used as a strong indication for martyrdom and the asceticism undertaken by Christian hermits in the south-eastern regions of the Empire, in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine or Syria. As there is no immediate desert near Ireland, the *peregrini* understood the sea as being an equally hostile environment to life as the desert.¹³⁵ Thereby, Irish asceticism turned towards the sea and Irish *peregrini* started their voyage with a boat. The role models for this movement towards seclusion are of biblical origin, with stories of Moses and Jesus in the desert, as well as of a more recent development towards hermitage by prominent Church authorities, like Jerome and Anthony. Muirchú displays this essential theme in his work:

*Having been at sea with (these) wicked people for three days and as many nights, [...] he afterwards tramped for twenty-eight days through desert, as did Moses, although in a different sense.*¹³⁶

The motive of the sea as a desert was particularly important for the *peregrini* who turned towards the North Atlantic. Their presence on the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland can, however, only be assumed through the legendary tales of the *Navigatio Brendani*. This well-known medieval travel tale is centred around the idea of *peregrinatio*. The relatively accurate description of the islands in the North Atlantic suggests that there had been Irish *peregrini* in the periphery of the North-West sea region.¹³⁷ However, historians cannot tell much about these

¹³³ Muirchú. 'Vita Sancti Patricii'. In: Ludwig Bieler (ed. & transl.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin 1979), 62–123. Online: < https://www.confessio.ie/more/muirchu_english# > (12/04/19), Prologue, 2.

¹³⁴ Muirchú, *Vita Sancti Patricii*, I.6, 1.

¹³⁵ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 38–40.

¹³⁶ Muirchú, *Vita Sancti Patricii*, I.2, 1.

¹³⁷ Harbinson, Peter. 'Early Irish Pilgrim Archaeology in the Dingle Peninsula'. In: *World Archaeology. Archaeology of Pilgrimage* 26(1) (1994), 90–103. See 100.

hermits of the north, as there is a complete lack of authentic textual sources on them. Yet, their motivation is deeply rooted within the idea of *peregrinatio*, as their voyage also served the purpose of bringing Christianity to the ends of the earth as well as living an ascetic life in exile.

Another crucial passage in the *Vita Sancti Patricii* that displays the essence of *peregrinatio* in a narrative way is the one in which Muirchú recites the tale of the conversion of Macc Cuill moccu Greccae, a pagan Irish tribal leader. It is a miraculous story in which this pagan petty king tried to set a trap for Patrick in order to expose him as a fraud and later on kill him. Macc Cuill ordered one of his men to simulate being sick and close to death and, thereafter, they would address Patrick and ask for his help by performing a miracle. Thereby, they tried to test Patrick's abilities with the intention of uncovering him as an imposter. Muirchú tells his audience that Patrick immediately recognizes the trap and is prepared accordingly. After their bid, Patrick orders Macc Cuill's men to look after their companion, who found him dead. The pagan men were shocked and frightened by this mysterious deed and Macc Cuill immediately subjugated himself to Patrick and the Christian God. He promised to do anything Patrick would ask of him and Patrick demanded that he should confess his sins and be baptized. In addition to that, Patrick spoke through God and commanded Macc Cuill to do the following,

*now go down to the seashore unarmed, and leave this part of Ireland without delay, taking none of your property with you except one paltry short garment which just barely covers your body, neither eating nor drinking anything that grows in this island, with this emblem of your sin on your head, and when you have come to the sea, fetter your feet with an iron chain, throw its key into the sea, board a small boat made of a single hide, without rudder or oar, and be ready to go wherever the wind and the sea shall carry you; and on whatever shore divine Providence may land you, dwell there and practise the divine commandments.*¹³⁸

Ultimately, Patrick told Macc Cuill to go into exile, by climbing in a boat without oars and shackle himself and stay wherever the wind and the sea would take him. This form of exile was a form of punishment in early Irish society. It constituted one of the highest forms of punishment next to enslavement, as capital punishment was not common within early Irish law.¹³⁹ Martyrdom as a form of self-induced punishment is another way of looking on the social aspect of the *peregrinatio*. By confronting the challenge to go onto a boat and set sail towards the

¹³⁸ Muirchú, *Vita Sancti Patricii*, I.23, 13-15.

¹³⁹ Kelly, Fergus. *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), 126.

unknown, one could wash away one's sins in the eyes of God and compensate for one's offenses against society in a juridical sense.

After his command to Macc Cuill, Patrick performed the miracle of reviving the dead companion of his and Muirchú writes that

*Macc Cuill left without saying a word and went to the sea south of Mag Inis, with the confidence of unshaken faith. At the shore he fettered himself and threw the key into the sea as he had been told to do, and put to sea in a small boat, and the north wind blew in his rear and took him southward and landed him at an island called Euonia. There he found two admirable men, shining lights in faith and doctrine, who had been the first to preach the word of God and baptism in Euonia, and by their teaching the inhabitants of that island had been converted to the catholic faith.*¹⁴⁰

Through his dangerous voyage on the Irish sea, Macc Cuill had been absolved from his sins and came ashore on the Isle of Man. Further on in the text, Muirchú mentions that he befriended two clerics there and together they converted the island. Additionally, he states that Macc Cuill spent the rest of his life there and was ordained Bishop of the Isle. This legend by Muirchú is still present today, as Macc Cuill is the patron saint of the Isle of Man.

*When they saw the man in his single garment they were surprised and took pity on him; they lifted him from the sea and received him hospitably. Having found spiritual fathers in the place given him by God, he trained his body and soul according to their rule, and spent all the (remaining) time of his life there with those two holy bishops until he became their successor in the episcopate. This is Macc Cuill, bishop of Mane and prelate of Arde Huimnonn.*¹⁴¹

The essence of *peregrinatio* is strongly present within the legend of Macc Cuill, as it directly describes an incident of green martyrdom. Macc Cuill, who was a great sinner, is converted to Christianity and subjugates to God. Yet, he sinned greatly and has to perform an act of true devotion in order to be forgiven and to please God. Therefore, he undertakes this dangerous voyage on the Irish sea and is repented of his sins. He continues to live in exile until the end of his days in order to serve God and preach his word to foreign people. This idea of exile as penalty and contrastingly exile as martyrdom is a convincing argument to identify Macc Cuill as a *peregrinus* and his tale as an example of *peregrinatio*. This movement was about

¹⁴⁰ Muirchú, Vita Sancti Patricii, I.23, 17-19.

¹⁴¹ Muirchú, Vita Sancti Patricii, I.23, 20-21.

devotion and repenting one's sins and offenses once and for all, not only in the spiritual sphere but also in the legal sphere, by starting a new life in unknown and distant lands across the sea.

5 The political context of *peregrinatio* to the continent

This second part of the thesis discusses further aims and underlying motivations for the *peregrinatio*. This movement in which numerous Irish individuals participated by leaving their home in order to live a life of asceticism in permanent or temporary exile had many at first covert themes and is thus investigated from more than just the religious angle. The additional purpose of this text is to elaborate on the significance of the *peregrini* for continental Europe in terms of the foundation and continuation of a distinct monastic tradition. Thereby, this chapter focuses on the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus. His life and voyage are evaluated and should thereby serve as a case study of one distinct *peregrinatio* on the continent in the late sixth and early seventh century. Columbanus is not only one of the best documented *peregrini*, but he is also one of the most influential ones, as he and the legendary narrative of his created by the hagiographic account on his life by Jonas laid the foundation of a myth which institutionalized the Irish and their foundations as influential players throughout the early middle ages. Columbanus is thought to have left a monastic rule for his community as well as a number of letters to the papacy and two other ones to the Frankish episcopacy and his followers in Luxeuil. The *Vita Columbani* by Jonas constitutes an alternative valuable source on Columbanus as a legendary founder of a monastic community and on the political circumstances of the mid-seventh century, as this work is shaped by the political affairs of the time. It was written in the 630s and 640s and serves thereby as a valuable source for the time of its genesis. The *Vita* is thus a crucial source for Columbanus' lasting legacy and his *peregrinatio* activity in Merovingian Gaul and Lombard Italy. In the end, Columbanus was a man with a clear purpose in mind seeking not only religious patronage from the papacy in Rome, but also political patronage from the Merovingian aristocracy and from the Lombard king. Upon closer consideration, it becomes clear that while Columbanus was a devoted *peregrinus*, he frequently tried to intervene in the political and religious affairs of his time and several passages in his letters as well as the *Vita* clearly exemplify this.

Within this part of the thesis, I would like to accelerate further into other contexts and themes of the *peregrinatio* than the already discussed spiritual ones. Especially political motives

of Columbanus' actions are going to be assessed. Again, the area of interest is a post-Roman Western Europe that consolidates itself after the breakdown of the Western Roman Empire. Now, the area of interest has switched from Ireland towards the continent. Former Roman provinces like Gaul or the Roman heartland of Italy are still culturally and economically centred around the Mediterranean. While cultural as well as political power shifted towards the Eastern Mediterranean since the reign of Constantine the Great, the West is defining as well as inventing itself apart from the Greek-dominated East. While the Roman legions withdrew from Britain in 410 and from Gaul towards the middle of the fifth century, Roman culture still continued there in the fifth century and Latin was still the major *lingua franca*. The political stability was gone with the standing army that retreated to the likewise troubled heartland, but the cultural and later on spiritual supremacy of Rome was still present in Britain and also expanded to Ireland in a time of political and military decline. Constant political troubles created by Roman military leaders, often of barbarian origin, that proclaimed themselves Emperor in the fifth century weakened the military strength of the Empire and led to the ultimate decline of the Western Empire towards the end of the fifth century. It is during this time that the military presence of Rome faded, while the cultural and spiritual presence of Rome thrived.

This continuing spiritual presence of Christianity arrived in Ireland during the fifth century via Britain, which had undergone sustainable change on the political landscape. By the end of the fifth century, there were large-scale Saxon settlements in the East of the island and Irish settlements in the West and especially the Northwest in Scotland. Already in the fourth century, Roman Britain had been the victim of barbarian raids from the Irish, the Picts and the Saxons. Gradually, the Roman political elite was overthrown and replaced by 'Barbarian' tribal leaders. In Gaul, on the other hand, a Roman aristocracy kept its influence and central position to a great extent throughout the fifth century.¹⁴² The 'Transformation of the Roman World',¹⁴³ as Pohl calls it, happened differently in each part of the late Antique West. One has to differentiate between as well as closely observe patterns of transformation and continuity in order to be able to trace a proper image of what happened from the fifth to the seventh century in the former Western part of the Empire.

¹⁴² Pohl, Walter. 'Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West: Introduction'. In: Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds.), *Post-Roman Transitions. Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout 2013), 1-46. See 2-3.

¹⁴³ Pohl, Christian and Barbarian identities in the early medieval West, 3.

As a direct result of the arrival of Christianity in Ireland in the fifth century, the sixth and seventh century witnessed the consolidation of a Christian tradition of Irish individuals who left their native island in order to devote their life in service to God. This tradition originates from a religious as well as social context which is rooted deeply in early Irish society and inspired various characters to emigrate from the island to Britain, the continent or the inhospitable islands of the North Atlantic. As defined in the first part of this thesis, the *peregrinatio pro Christo* was a way of finding martyrdom in a society in which a verbal confession to the Christian faith ceased to constitute an act of true devotion. New ways of finding martyrdom had to be invented, as the most authentic sign of absolute devotion, the death as a martyr, was no longer an option due to the changed status of Christianity within the religious landscape of Ireland during the fifth and sixth century. During this process of the consolidation of Christianity as the single dominant religion, asceticism came about as an alternative form of martyrdom, which was modelled after the Egyptian monastic tradition of finding salvation as a hermit inspired by the story of Jesus' forty days in the desert and other biblical narratives.¹⁴⁴ This new trend of ascetic monasticism established in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean spread in the form of popularized narratives of the desert fathers from Egypt and the Gallic monastic role model of Martin of Tours in the work of Sulpicius Severus over to Ireland.¹⁴⁵ A significant number of Irishmen followed this urge for devotion and asceticism in the form of emigration to unknown shores with a variety of ideas and aims in mind. Some urged to display or test their perseverance in faith and tried to find redemption, while others tried to bring the word of God to the ends of the world. While each *peregrinus* may have had a different destiny and significance in the world, all of them unites the idea of leaving their homeland and family to serve the cause of Christ in the early days of this movement during the sixth and seventh century.

The concept of the Irish form of *peregrinatio* is a complex one and was shaped by different themes and cultural ideas originating from Judeo-Christian script of the Old and the New Testament as well as from social concepts of mobility and exile in early Irish society. One major explanation for the outstanding reception of this movement particularly in Ireland might have to do with the social understanding of exile within early Irish society. However, the motivations for this cultural movement might be even more diverse and dependent on the geographical and political destination area of the individual case. Taking all the different destinations of the *peregrini* throughout the sixth and seventh century into account, one can

¹⁴⁴ Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 38.

¹⁴⁵ Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum*, 454-455.

clearly observe that some rather moved towards the centre of the late Antique world, while others moved away from it in the completely opposite direction, which is the periphery of the North Atlantic.¹⁴⁶ Subsequently, the aims of the Irishmen going for one destination might have differed from the ones going for the other and, hence, there can be a variety of motivations and aims identified. While the ones who chose the uninhabited islands of the North Atlantic for their *peregrinatio* instead of Britain or the continent, the underlying idea of pure asceticism and the theme of finding ‘the desert in the ocean’¹⁴⁷ must have played a more crucial role, than to *peregrini* like Columbanus who were heading towards the centre in order to bring forward the conversion of people and to boost the foundation of new monasteries as their main objective. However, as the reasons for emigration might seem straightforward, such as living an ascetic life abroad in service to God, they also might be highly complex. Yet, they are to a certain degree always connected to the destination of the *peregrinatio*, as emigrants targeting Britain or continental Europe might have had completely different aims in mind as their fellow spiritual brothers heading towards the periphery of distant islands in the North Atlantic.

In terms of settlement, infrastructure and cultural development, the Irish *peregrinus* Columbanus, who set out for the continent, found a completely different landscape than his countrymen who turned towards the North Atlantic. He encountered a post-Roman world in the late sixth century and relatively stable ‘Barbarian’ kingdoms, which succeeded the former Empire in Gaul, central Europe and Italy. Nevertheless, it is a world in constant turmoil, as the Merovingian dynasty fought amongst each other for the hegemony over all the Frankish territories, and in Italy, the Lombards had just established themselves as the local power on the northern peninsula.¹⁴⁸ Unlike Ireland, those areas had been part of the Roman Empire for centuries and were comparatively well-developed. Gaul and Italy even constituted the heartland of the Roman Empire and were not like Britain a peripheral outpost of the Empire. The local population was to a high degree romanized and to a gradual extent Christian, even though the new Frankish ruling class had only been converted a few generations ago.¹⁴⁹ The Irish *peregrini* knew about this destination very well and went there for several purposes among which only one might have been the idea of living an ascetic life among strangers, as mentioned in the first part of this thesis. However, it is still the early phase of Irish *peregrinatio* to the continent and only over the succeeding centuries, the pull factors for alleged Irish monks to the continent gradually

¹⁴⁶ Johnston, *Exiles from the Edge*, 40-41.

¹⁴⁷ Adomnan, *Vita Columbae*, 1.6; 2.42; 3.17 cited in Johnston, *Exiles from the edge*, 38.

¹⁴⁸ Richter, *Ireland and Her Neighbours in the Seventh Century*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Richter, *Ireland and Her Neighbours in the Seventh Century*, 17.

changed with an evolving status of Irish churchmen in Europe. This change of status was to a great extent put forward by the hagiographic work of Jonas on the personality of Columbanus. With this literate representation of the ideal Irish monastic founder and saint, attitudes towards Irish hermits and immigrants changed sustainably and produced a myth of the Irish as being particularly saintly and scholarly,¹⁵⁰ which gave rise to continental patronage of Irish scholars and clerics across the early medieval courts of Europe.

The religious aspect of the *peregrinatio* is by far the most influential element for its participants in the sixth and seventh century to begin their journey. These underlying motives and push factors for *peregrinatio* have been discussed previously in this thesis. Inspired by the holy script, the *peregrini* saw a legitimization for their voyage in God's plan. As in Genesis, God instructs Abraham, 'leave your country, your family and your father's house' in order to launch a new nation of men.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the New Testament also justifies leaving one's family behind, as in Matthew, Jesus demands fealty of his followers and tells them that all who prefer their family over him are not worthy of his.¹⁵² Within this context, Columbanus among many other *peregrini* started his journey, according to Jonas, with twelve followers in the fashion of Jesus and his twelve apostles.¹⁵³ Leaving one's property and one's family behind was back then seen as a genuine form of martyrdom.¹⁵⁴ The *Cambrai Homily* distinguishes between three forms of martyrdom.¹⁵⁵ According to Stancliffe's interpretation of the *Cambrai Homily*, one form of martyrdom could be achieved by going on *peregrinatio*, as many *peregrini* died during their voyage or during missionary activities beyond foreign shores, it could be the gateway to heaven in the purest form of martyrdom. The other two forms of martyrdom demanded a clear separation from all earthly matters. A bloodless martyr should work hard and fast for the sake of Christ.¹⁵⁶ The third form of martyrdom is ascetic exile, which demands despite the fasting and labouring also a clear separation from all desires and a life in ascetic fashion in order to receive absolution.¹⁵⁷ This concept of separation from all desires was interpreted in a literal sense, as leaving one's homeland and kindred was perceived as paying the ultimate price.

¹⁵⁰ Flechner, Meeder, Introduction: Saints and Scholars, 1.

¹⁵¹ Genesis (12:1-3).

¹⁵² Matthew (10:37).

¹⁵³ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 34-35.

¹⁵⁵ The *Cambrai Homily*, 246-247.

¹⁵⁶ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 40.

¹⁵⁷ Stancliffe, Red, white and blue martyrdom, 40.

Before living in exile evolved to a form of martyrdom within a religious framework, it used to be a form of punishment in early Irish law. The origin of the idea of suffering in exile in order to receive martyrdom in early Irish Christianity can thus be linked to the concept of punishment within the codified early Irish legal system. In early Irish law, exile by being setting adrift was considered the highest penalty for the severest offenses against one's own kindred. By setting a person adrift, judgement on them is left to God and wherever they land, they would have to live a life of servitude in exile.¹⁵⁸ This form of punishment was discussed previously as being documented narratively in the *Vita Sancti Patricii* by Muirchú, the hagiographical account on Patrick from the seventh century. Muirchú describes how Patrick had discovered that Mac Cuill, a pagan tribal leader, had tried to trick and kill him, he performs a miracle and thereafter Mac Cuill converted and was baptized. In order to atone for his sin, Patrick prescribes on Mac Cuill that he should chain his feet and get into a boat without oars and stay wherever the wind took him ashore. Thereby, he would receive redemption by God.¹⁵⁹ This narrative transmitted by Muirchú is considered to be one of the founding myths of Irish *peregrinatio*.

Despite the association of mobility as a severe form of punishment, there is also a clear notion of high social status attached to it. In early Irish society, people who were able to move around freely were identified as being part of the elite, as only free people as well as people considered *nemed* (holy or privileged) would be granted to leave territory of their *tuath*.¹⁶⁰ Early Irish society was strictly hierarchical and not egalitarian at all. This inequality is reflected within the early Irish law tracts, which determined the legal status of a person as being directly linked to the person's rank in society, which was dependent on their kindred. The *doer* (unfree) being the lowest class in early Irish society were not permitted to leave the land of their overlord under any circumstance.¹⁶¹ Hence, mobility was regarded as being a privilege of the free with a certain amount of prestige attached to it. Apart from that, it was mostly people considered *nemed*, who would travel on a regular basis.¹⁶² Henceforth, the socio-cultural background of the *peregrinatio* can be traced within this dichotomy of exile as a means of punishment and mobility as a means of displaying one's status. This detail manifested within early Irish legality and social practices is a strong indication for the fact that the majority of the *peregrini* come from the elite of early Irish

¹⁵⁸ Kelly, A Guide to Early Irish Law, 220-221.

¹⁵⁹ Muirchú, *Vita Sancti Patricii*, I.23, 13-15.

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, A Guide to Early Irish Law, 5.

¹⁶¹ Kelly, A Guide to Early Irish Law, 11.

¹⁶² Johnston, *Exiles from the Edge*, 43.

society. They were granted free movement, had access to education and learning and are thereby disguised as belonging to the upper-class of early medieval Ireland.

Although the *peregrinatio pro Christo* can be defined as a primarily religious enterprise, the political significance of it should not be underestimated. Moreover, it should be clearly stated that the boundary between religious and political matters is generally blurred in the early middle ages, as monastic networks gradually evolved towards a general cultural as well as spiritual authority and the church as an institution strived towards ultimate hegemony in society. Still, the majority of the early *peregrini* set out their journey as a voyage in service to God and the pilgrims themselves and their chroniclers were explicit in elaborating on this on multiple occasions. However, one has to consider that in the *peregrinatio* to the continent, the aim was not to find a ‘desert in the ocean’ or paradise itself and neither was it about discovering new places to extend the geographical knowledge of the world, but it was rather about establishing a network of monasteries among a developed area with the result of a thriving monastic tradition. This distinct part of the motivation to go on *peregrinatio* is especially important for the continental destination. As this third and final defined aspect is about seizing religious and hence political power by expanding the Irish monastic network towards the centre of early medieval Europe.

In the context of the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus, it is genuinely observable how a *peregrinus* used his religious authority to intervene in political affairs. Columbanus established a link with the bishop of Rome in order to gain legitimization for himself and his congregation as a religious authority by acknowledging his supremacy. In exchange for his recognition of the papacy as the sole authority over Christianity, he demanded a great deal of influence on theological matters, such as the dating of Easter, leading to a long canonical debate, the so-called Easter controversy. In retrospect, Columbanus pushed the agenda of the Irish and their monastic networks on the continent as being remarkably saintly and scholarly and thereby contributed to the creation of a myth, which is still prevalent today.

5.1 Columbanus – the ideal *peregrinus*

In this chapter, the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus is evaluated towards its religious and political significance on the continent. Throughout this chapter, mainly two primary sources are discussed in further depth: the letters of Columbanus as a valuable as well as contemporary source for the

religious matters on the continent at the beginning of the seventh century and the hagiographical account by the monk Jonas on the political affairs a generation after the protagonist's lifetime. While the letters by Columbanus provide a direct insight into his mind and into his personality, beliefs and convictions, the *Vita* presents us with a legendary image of Columbanus. The *Life* itself was authored by Jonas, an Italian monk of Columbanus' congregation, who came to Bobbio in 616, one year after Columbanus had died. This temporal closeness gives the *Vita* a great deal of authenticity and credibility, as Jonas obviously knew and spoke to first-hand witnesses as well as talked to people who knew Columbanus personally. Still, the fact that it is a hagiographic account with the clear purpose of picturing the life of Columbanus as the life of a saint and its commission by Columbanus' successor as abbot obliges its analysis to be of special focus towards covert aims and purposes. Hagiography is by no means biography and should be assessed differently, as Corning states it correctly. While biographers try to take all the personal traits of a person into account - both positive and negative ones - hagiography clearly focusses on the traits that designate a person to be a saint. Miracles and superhuman deeds are incorporated and argue for the recognition of the person as saintly. Hence, hagiographic accounts portray the life of saints, while biographic accounts aim at portraying humans.¹⁶³ Similar to Patrick's hagiographic accounts, the account of Jonas will be dealt with accordingly in the manner of academic distance with a clear focus on the time the *Vita* was compiled in. After all, the character of Columbanus in the *Vita* is a literary construction¹⁶⁴ by Jonas and should therefore be critically evaluated as well as deconstructed as such.

Apart from their textual differences, the two types of sources analysed in the next two chapters also deal with different phases of Columbanus' life and draw attention to different aspects of his agenda. The *Vita* begins with his time in Ireland and features his motives and reasons to leave his home and family. It continues with his time at the monastery in Bangor and his oversea *peregrinatio*. It is also focussing on his political controversy with the Merovingian aristocracy of the late sixth century and tells a story of their downfall due to their mistreatment of Columbanus and his monastic community. A rather interesting aspect of the *Life* is that it does not mention Columbanus' extensive involvement in the Easter controversy of the beginning seventh century. The aim of this strategy is very straightforward. Columbanus should be institutionalized as a saint and should thus be presented as infallible. The fact that he lost this

¹⁶³ Corning, Caitlin. *The Celtic and Roman Traditions. Conflict and Consensus in the early medieval Church* (Basingstoke 2006), 20.

¹⁶⁴ Diem, Albrecht. 'Monks, Kings, and the Transformation of Sanctity: Jonas of Bobbio and the End of the Holy Man'. In: *Speculum* 82(3) (Paris 2007), 521-559. See 524.

major debate only a generation later with his successors complying to the Catholic dating of Easter would not present him neither as scholarly nor as particularly saintly and was thus omitted.¹⁶⁵ This evasion of facts by the hagiographer serves as a strong argument in favour of the inclusion of his letters as authentic sources for the religious and political conflicts of Columbanus during his lifetime.

The *peregrinatio* of Columbanus is the best documented one from the early phase of this peculiar ascetic movement towards exile. He came to the continent in 590 coming ashore in Brittany after he had left Ireland with twelve followers. For the next twenty-five years he will initiate as well as intervene in many religious and political matters. Columbanus authored six letters, three of which are addressed to popes.¹⁶⁶ He became a strong advocate of the new monastic lifestyle, which he already had followed before his oversea *peregrinatio* during his time in the monastery of Bangor. Columbanus was a renowned scholar of his time and his Latin as well as his way of using it are proof that he was subjected to an elaborate education in rhetoric as well as exegesis. Many references to classical authors in his work as well as an awareness of the work of Christian authors such as Gregory the Great and Sulpicius Severus makes it feasible to assume that his education in Bangor was quite extensive and the monastery a major site of learning within Ireland.¹⁶⁷ Various other accounts are ascribed to Columbanus, but none of them is secured to be of his authorship. One of these are his *Instructiones*, which are interpreted as a *regula* for his monastic community and are addressed to his monks.¹⁶⁸ While it is not known whether there ever existed a written document of the *regula Columbani*, it is also not clear what this phrase encompasses by all means.¹⁶⁹ It is supposed that Columbanus' rule was similar to other rules of the fifth and sixth century like the ones by Augustine and Benedict and that these were incorporated in a mixed tradition. However, a general rule of Columbanus for his congregation and his understanding of monasticism is only applicable indirectly through his letters and through the *Vita Columbani*.¹⁷⁰

A reconstruction of Columbanus' *peregrinatio* is depicted in illustration 5,¹⁷¹ which is a map showing the itinerary of Columbanus from his departure in Bangor to his last destination of Bobbio. From Brittany he made his way towards the Merovingian heartland and founded his

¹⁶⁵ Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 39-40.

¹⁶⁶ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 111.

¹⁶⁷ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 114-115.

¹⁶⁸ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours*, 116.

¹⁶⁹ Wood, *Columbanian Monasticism*, 91.

¹⁷⁰ Wood, *Columbanian Monasticism*, 93-94.

¹⁷¹ O'Hara, Alexander (ed.). *Columbanus and the Peoples of Post-Roman Europe* (Oxford 2018), xxii.

monasteries in rather peripheral areas of the Merovingian sphere of influence. After the failed attempt to expel him from Francia back to his homeland, he fled via the Alemannic territories in the Alps to Italy, where he travelled from Milan to Bobbio, the destination of his last monastic foundation, where he died in 615. It was further on also the location where his Vita was written by his hagiographer Jonas, who came to Bobbio the year after Columbanus' death.



Illustration 5: Map of Columbanus' peregrination

5.1.1 The Easter controversy – Columbanus' letters to the papacy

One of the most important sources for the understanding of *peregrinatio* are the letters authored by Columbanus. He wrote letters to popes in 600, 604/607 and in 613. In 603, he sent a letter to the Frankish episcopacy at the Council of Chalon and after his expulsion from Merovingian Francia he wrote a letter to his disciples who were forced to remain at Luxeuil.¹⁷² These letters serve as evidence for Columbanus' interaction with the church on the continent, especially with the papacy and the Frankish episcopacy. A main theme of these letters, in which he frequently calls himself a foreigner or stranger living far away from his native island, is the Easter controversy that evolved through a liturgical disagreement between the Irish and Frankish church in the dating of Easter.

Throughout his twenty-five years on the continent, Columbanus consciously established a strong confidence in his Irish identity, as it often happens to individuals or whole peoples living in diaspora.¹⁷³ With his cultural heritage in mind, Columbanus also tried to uphold his particularly Irish customs and among them were the celebration of Easter on a different date than the majority of Latin Christendom. This disagreement on the exact dating of Easter led to a huge canonical debate between Columbanus and the Frankish episcopacy. In the course of this discrepancy, Columbanus wrote at least three letters to the papacy on the matter of the Easter controversy. These letters are the most important contemporary source for the historical personality of Columbanus, as they were authored by himself and directly reflect his thinking on a series of theological debates of the time.

The issue of the orthodox calculation of Easter is no new one at the turn of the sixth to the seventh century. The church held many councils which among other issues discussed and determined the dating of Easter. In Gaul, the council of Arles in 314 united the Roman with the Gallic tradition in calculating Easter. Whereas, the council of Nicaea in 325 decided on a different method of computation, the one which was used in Alexandria and the east. Furthermore, the council refuted the practice of sharing the same date with Jewish Passover and prolonged the discussion over it even further.¹⁷⁴ In general by the time of the sixth century, the liturgical practices differed to a great extent from one area to another and Christianity had developed into a religion with a great deal of diversity stretching over a huge area on the three

¹⁷² Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 21.

¹⁷³ Johnston, *Exiles from the Edge*, 47.

¹⁷⁴ Hughes, Kathleen. *The Church in early Irish society* (Ithaca, NY 1966), 103.

continents enclosing the Mediterranean Sea. In order to exemplify the divergence in the calculation of Easter, Hughes mentioned for instance the dating of Easter for the year 577 as being observed in the Victorian-Latin calculation on April 18th, in the Dionysian-Alexandrine table calculated on April 25th and the Spanish church determined it to occur on March 21st.¹⁷⁵

Until the end of the sixth century and beyond, there was no standard procedure for the dating of Easter within Western Christianity. While Frankish bishops followed Victorius' cycle, Pope Gregory was in favour of the Dionysian one. The Celtic cycle differed from both of these systems, but prior to the direct contact with Irish Christians on the continent, no side seemed to have been bothered. This attitude towards the diversity of religious practice seems to have changed at the turn of the sixth to the seventh century. The intensified contact between Celtic and Continental church practices seems to have created a clerical faction, which regarded a non-conforming dating of Easter not as a question of discipline, but as a direct matter of faith and declared it a sin.¹⁷⁶ In the beginning, the papacy did not share this attitude and stayed neutral or even silent in the dispute between Columbanus and the Frankish episcopacy. Only the popes after Gregory the Great, Honorius I and John IV intervened with letters after Columbanus' death on the diverging Irish practice of celebrating Easter.¹⁷⁷ But in the course of the seventh century, the papacy adapted their attitude on unity within the church, as they grew in their self-consciousness as a primate of all Christians. The Papal party made conformity with Rome a matter of belief and regarded divergent practices as heresy. With the rising authority of the papacy, to which Irish *peregrini* such as Columbanus contributed, the need for conforming to the general practice became an urgent one. The churches of southern Ireland gave in during the 630s, while the northern church federations, such as Iona, did not conform to Rome until 716.¹⁷⁸

The reason for the huge debate on Easter partly developed over a misconception about the equinox of spring, which was believed by the Irish as occurring on the twenty-fifth of March rather than on the twenty-first of March.¹⁷⁹ On the basis of this premise, Easter was calculated as occurring on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring. In accordance to this, two different circles on the calculation of Easter had been developed. While Ireland followed the so-called *Lateranus*, or Celtic-84 table, a majority of Western Christendom, among them the Franks,

¹⁷⁵ Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, 103-104.

¹⁷⁶ Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, 104.

¹⁷⁷ Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, 104-105.

¹⁷⁸ Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society*, 107.

¹⁷⁹ Corning, Caitlin. 'Columbanus and the Easter Controversy: Theological, Social and Political Contexts'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe. Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 101-115. See 102.

followed the so-called *Victorian* table.¹⁸⁰ This divergence in convention urged Columbanus to write to Pope Gregory and later on to Pope Boniface, as he was convinced of the Irish convention on Easter to be the sole correct and therefore the superior one. The evidence supplied by the letters of Columbanus to the papacy and to the Frankish episcopacy reveal that the Easter controversy was a critical issue to both factions. Additionally, it also shows that Columbanus respected the papacy and accepted Rome's authority on controversial canonical matters. On the contrary, he also did not lack the consciousness to criticize individual popes if they were wrong according to his understanding.¹⁸¹

Columbanus' relationship to the papacy is documented within his letters to them. His way of addressing the pope as well as his argumentation in favour of papal authority on pending religious issues makes his positive attitude towards the supremacy of the papacy in Latin Christendom discernible. In a time, in which the papacy was far from holding authority over the Church in the Latin West, this attitude towards the pope is not self-evident.¹⁸² The previously mentioned diversity within the religious practice even in the former Western part of the Roman Empire, makes it obvious that the papacy neither sought to achieve, nor could achieve a standard orthodox religious practice before the sixth century. The Easter controversy is a good example for the changing status of a rising papacy with a gaining authority in its Latin Western dominion. One of its proponents was Columbanus, who addressed the pope as '*Holy Lord and Father in Christ, the fairest Ornament of the Roman Church*'. Many rhetorical appraisals by Columbanus are used in order to flatter the pope and praise his wisdom and rightful authority over the Church.

In the letter to Pope Boniface, Columbanus describes the close ties to Rome, which originated from the first Papal mission to Ireland in the fifth century. Columbanus is well aware of this mission, which happened during the first half of the fifth century, which means that he had access to the chronicle of Prosper¹⁸³ or other early Gallican church records.

For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world's edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who, by the Holy Spirit, wrote the divine scripture, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching; not one has been a heretic, not one a Judaiser, not one a

¹⁸⁰ Corning, *Columbanus and the Easter Controversy*, 103.

¹⁸¹ Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 19.

¹⁸² Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 32-33.

¹⁸³ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 183.

*schismatic, but the Catholic Faith as it was given to us first by you, that is the successors of the holy apostles is preserved intact.*¹⁸⁴

This passage shows to a great degree Columbanus' understanding of the papacy as the successor of the holy apostles Peter and Paul. He acknowledges Rome as being the burial place of the holy apostles and admits that they are superior to all other churches. It also exposes Columbanus' argumentation in favour of his own kin, the Irish. He argues that they have never been wrong in their orthodoxy, as they were directly converted through Rome and never deserted the Catholic faith. This strategy implies that Columbanus has great interest in portraying himself on the basis of his Irish heritage as pure in faith and as superior as the people from the centre of the Roman sphere of influence, as the Irish who live at the world's edge have never been corrupted as the people in the centre.

Columbanus' correspondence with Rome was, however, not always as humble and appreciative as in the previous examples. His letters also show a great deal of confrontation and argument, especially towards former popes. He also tries to lecture the pope and tries to convince him of his wisdom. In his first letter addressed to Pope Gregory the Great in the year 600, Columbanus addressed the Easter controversy immediately, when he states that the Easter on the twenty-first or twenty-second *luna* is no real Easter, as it would constitute an Easter in which darkness ruled over light, as the moon would only rise hours after the sun has set.¹⁸⁵ By the same token, the term dark Easter originates from Columbanus' conviction that the equinox occurs on the twenty-fifth of March and thereby, Easter before that date is still celebrated in darkness, as prior to the equinox there are more hours of darkness than of light.¹⁸⁶ He tries to justify his claim by mentioning the fact that the tradition of Easter represents the victory of Christ over death and, therefore, it should under no circumstances be celebrated in darkness.¹⁸⁷ Columbanus accuses Victorius on his faulty cycle and blames him for introducing error to Gaul. The celebration of Easter before the equinox would in Columbanus' understanding be equivalent to celebrating the resurrection of Christ before his passion.¹⁸⁸ In his letter, Columbanus gives himself surprised over the fact that the Pope had not corrected this mistake himself, as he praises the wisdom of him. However, Columbanus acknowledges that this has to do with Pope Gregory's respect for

¹⁸⁴ Columbanus, Letter V, In: G.S.M. Walker (ed. & transl.), *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin 1957). Online: <<https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201054.html>> (12/04/19), 38.

¹⁸⁵ Columbanus, Letter I, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Corning, *Columbanus and the Easter Controversy*, 105-6.

¹⁸⁷ Columbanus, Letter I, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Columbanus, Letter I, 5.

his predecessors, yet he insults him for his inactivity on that matter. Columbanus equates the two successors of Peter with animals, as he states that

*‘in this riddle a living dog is better than a dead Lion, for a living saint can right what by another and greater one has not been righted.’*¹⁸⁹

With that phrasing, Columbanus strongly contradicts his prior ovation for the Pope and uses sarcasm and ridicule in order to convey the urgency of this matter. However, the stance by Columbanus changes throughout the correspondence with the papacy over the years. In his second letter, Columbanus seceded from his unconditional view on a universal date for Easter towards a more moderate stance. Apparently due to his awareness of the political reality, Columbanus merely asked in his second letter to have his own dating of Easter acknowledged in coexistence with Victorius’ table.¹⁹⁰ Columbanus might have realized that his strong views on the dating of Easter were leading towards frequent opposition by the local Frankish bishops and this motivated him to act accordingly. Furthermore, other political factors might have also led to Columbanus’ change of attitude, like his loss of support by the Frankish ruling class after 609. This might have brought about his drawback of his absolute and uncompromising stance on Easter, as with less support from the secular elite, the Frankish episcopacy could have become a serious threat to Columbanus and his monastic network.

5.1.2 The *Vita Columbani* by Jonas

As mentioned previously, the *Vita Columbani* was written by Jonas between 639 and 643 in Bobbio, the latest of the Columbanian monasteries founded during Columbanus’ lifetime. The *Vita* constitutes according to Diem “the textual basis for a new and formative concept of a holy monastic institution”.¹⁹¹ Diem is convinced that Columbanus and his hagiographer Jonas are the last actors in the formation of a new understanding of sanctity. As Columbanus is represented in the course of a tradition of holy men going back to Anthony and Martin, whose myths popularized and institutionalized the new monastic concept, its lifestyle and order. Jonas continues a hagiographic tradition built by Athanasius, Jerome and Sulpicius Severus and creates with his *Vita* an image of the last of the late Antique ascetic saints that can be taken as an

¹⁸⁹ Columbanus, Letter I, 6-7.

¹⁹⁰ Corning, *Columbanus and the Easter Controversy*, 108.

¹⁹¹ Diem, *Monks, Kings and the Transformation of Sanctity*, 522.

example for the completion of a transformation of the concept of sanctity. These late Antique role models would shape and influence the beginning of a new monastic period, the early middle ages, which would reach its peak in the time of the Carolingian reforms.¹⁹²

In the beginning of the *Vita Columbani*, the political agenda of this text becomes evident, as ‘*the race of the Scots*’ (referring to the Irish) is presented as specifically saintly and scholarly. Jonas writes that ‘*although they lack the laws of the other nations, [they] flourish in the doctrine of Christian strength and exceed in faith all the neighbouring tribes.*’¹⁹³ This theme of the Irish as being particularly saintly also comes up frequently in Columbanus’ own writings. The underlying argument applied by Columbanus is that the Irish living at the edge of the world had not been corrupted like the people living in the centre and were therefore ideal Christians.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, there can be a parallel drawn to the ongoing conflict of the papacy with Arian Christians. Throughout the sixth century, Arianism was the main religion in many parts of Western Europe. The exception were the Frankish Merovingian kingdoms and the Irish who upheld their connection with Rome.¹⁹⁵ In this sense, the Irish were in the perspective of Rome righteous Christians who did not worship this dissident religion.

After the characterization of the Irish as being remarkably strong in the Christian faith, the chronicler continues with a depiction of Columbanus as a chosen individual. In the *Vita*, it is stated that his mother had a vision which was interpreted that she will give birth to ‘*a man of remarkable genius*’.¹⁹⁶ By transmitting these legends about the Irish and the character of Columbanus, Jonas establishes a myth around the congregation and its founder which legitimizes both as being of outstanding spiritual significance. The creation of myth around important founding figures is a very common feature in early Christian literature and indeed common in hagiographic accounts of saints and kings. For instance, the *Vita Sancti Patricii* by Muirchú is full of miracles and, further on, various accounts on Christian kings, such as Oswald of Northumbria, are inspired by the founding myth of the miraculous conversion and victory of Constantine by Eusebius. Hence, these miraculous accounts had been created and used as a means of pushing the congregation’s religious as well as political agenda and thereby served the immediate objective of legitimizing their authority in order to establish spiritual hegemony.

¹⁹² Diem, Monks, Kings and the Transformation of Sanctity, 522-523.

¹⁹³ Jonas. ‘The Life of Saint Columban’. In: Dana C. Munro (ed.), *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history* 2(7) (Philadelphia 1897/1907). Online: <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/columban.asp>> (12/04/19), 6.

¹⁹⁴ Johnston, *Exiles from the Edge*, 38.

¹⁹⁵ Richter, *Ireland and Her Neighbours in the Seventh Century*, 16.

¹⁹⁶ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 6.

Apart from the vision of Columbanus' mother, there is another encounter of an epiphanic nature by Columbanus with a woman in his youth mentioned by Jonas. This encounter urged him to leave his ancestral home permanently. The woman who inspired Columbanus to go on the *peregrinatio* complained to him that if the circumstance of her being of female sex would not detain her, she herself 'would have crossed the sea and chosen a better place among strangers as [her] home.'¹⁹⁷ This first appeal for a *peregrinatio*, documented by Jonas, is of great interest, as it also mentions an obvious gender division in this movement. While nearly exclusively men go on *peregrinatio*, women are portrayed as mostly being restricted due to 'the weakness of their sex'. The woman in the *Vita Columbani* was undergoing the weaker form of *peregrinatio* which means that she stayed in Ireland. In a sense, this short passage illustrates the longing of a woman to undergo *peregrinatio* and points towards the existence of female *peregrini*. At the same time, the use of the term *stranger* to refer to the concept of *peregrinatio* is of interest. As mentioned previously, the term 'stranger' constituted the original meaning for *peregrinus* in a classical Latin sense. From its initial meaning of *stranger* or *foreigner*, the meaning shifted gradually towards *pilgrim* throughout the early middle ages. However, in the early medieval Irish context, the meaning of *peregrinatio* is still strongly shaped by the concept of exile, which could be either voluntarily or enforced.¹⁹⁸

Columbanus regularly met opposition by the clerical as well as the secular elite during his time in the Frankish territory. One discrepancy with the Merovingian dynasty nearly forced him to return to his ancestral home. Jonas documented this encounter with the Merovingian queen Brunhilda in his *Vita Columbani* and illustrates remarkably how Columbanus not only intervened in theological matters, but also in political ones. According to Jonas, Columbanus tried to convince Theuderich II, the King of Burgundy, to refrain from having a concubine to have a lawful queen instead. This was met by Brunhilda's fury, as Jonas states that she did not want any true Queen besides herself.¹⁹⁹ Brunhilda was the grandmother of the King and ruled over a long period of time for her two grandchildren who were then too young to succeed their late father in the two Frankish kingdoms. The conflict with Brunhilda and subsequently also Theuderich went as far as that Theuderich expelled Columbanus from his monastery and forced him into going back to his native island. However, the transfer of Columbanus back to Ireland

¹⁹⁷ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 8.

¹⁹⁸ Richter, *Ireland and her neighbours in the seventh century*, 41.

¹⁹⁹ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 31.

failed due to stormy conditions on the sea.²⁰⁰ In the aftermath, Columbanus got back to his monastery in Luxeuil, where he had to flee from the persecution of Theuderich and Brunhilda. His refuge took him to the area of nowadays Austria and Switzerland, where his follower Gall and his successors established the monastery of Sankt Gallen. The final step of his *peregrinatio* led him to the Kingdom of the Lombards in northern Italy, where he founded the monastery of Bobbio. According to Jonas, Columbanus became an advisor to the Lombard King Agilulf, whom he allegedly assisted in the elimination of heretic Arian practices in his kingdom.²⁰¹ While the actual factuality of each of those occurrences can be questioned due to the fact that the *Vita* was written one generation after the death of its protagonist, a distinct tendency of Columbanus to intervene in the political affairs of the time can be traced within this hagiographical account.

At the end of the *Vita*, Jonas addresses the destruction of Columbanus' enemies, Theuderich and Brunhilda, by mentioning their gruesome deaths. Theuderich was killed by the hand of God and Brunhilda was tortured to death by her enemies.²⁰² This final chapters should convey the notion that God was with Columbanus and that he was victorious in the end, as his enemies who had persecuted him had met their rightful punishment. Thereby, Jonas intends to present the founder of his congregation as a chosen figure and reveals the primary purpose of this hagiographic text, which was the idealization of the person of Columbanus as a saint. Finally, the *Vita* closes with an appeal by Columbanus to the secular elite to protect his monastic network and his congregation and he once again promotes the idea of the *peregrinatio* as living an ascetic life in the wilderness as the ultimate service to God. This last account by Jonas should depict a religious as well as political legacy of Columbanus and legitimize the congregation and its founder as a religious authority.

With this *Vita*, a new understanding of sanctity was completed within early medieval Europe. The charisma of one holy man should be transferred to his community and thus, the Columbanian monastic network should be legitimized as the direct heir of its founder.²⁰³ The dissemination of the work as well as its impact has been investigated by O'Hara, who claims that it had a greater impact than previously imagined. He states that it would be a misinterpretation to assume that the readership of the *Vita* was just of a monastic background, as it was actually perceived as a historical work in the time of its earliest distribution. The *Vita* is present within

²⁰⁰ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 47.

²⁰¹ Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 59.

²⁰² Jonas, *Vita Columbani*, 58.

²⁰³ Diem, *Monks, Kings and the Transformation of Sanctity*, 521-559.

other historical texts of the seventh century, such as the Chronicle of Fredegar and was frequently read by the political elite of the Merovingian kingdoms.²⁰⁴ This new monastic trend appealed to the aristocratic elite of the Frankish kingdoms and so many of them chose to renounce their secular positions and become Columbanian monks instead. This development secured sustainable aristocratic support and thus political power and growth for the monastic network.²⁰⁵ The frequent inter-relation of monastic and aristocratic actors was an element of Columbanian monasticism and secured the continuous patronage of influential dynasties, first by the victorious branch of the Merovingians in the seventh century and later also the continuing patronage of the newly ascending dynasty of the Pippinides.

6 Discussion

In this last chapter of the thesis, the results of the analysis within the three preceding chapters are going to be discussed in retrospect. The origins of the *peregrinatio pro Christo* have traditionally been dated to the sixth and seventh centuries, in which the earliest recorded representatives of this movement can be located. However, the close consideration of the Patrician texts from the fifth century revealed that frequent themes and motives of *peregrinatio* can already be identified as early as the fifth century and Patrick can be considered inspirational for the Irish *peregrini*. This strong presence of *peregrinatio* aspects within his authentic texts in combination within the productive legend-building around his personality, makes it feasible to place his personality in the continuous development of a popularization of exile and asceticism as something desirable and worthwhile. By this, he and his hagiographers constructed an image of a saint and made his life a model to live up to. Thereby, his legacy is interpreted as being partly responsible for triggering the beginning of this phenomenon of Irish individuals setting themselves adrift and starting a journey towards the unknown.

With the coming of Christianity to Ireland and the development of a genuinely new ‘Christian’ way of thinking. New Christian ideas entered Ireland, first and foremost through Patrick. Patrick’s writings constitute the first longer pieces of Latin writing in Ireland and are thus an invaluable source for the Irish Sea area in the fifth century. Through a close reading and analysis of these two sources, it has been exemplified how omnipresent the various themes and

²⁰⁴ O’Hara, Alexander. ‘The Vita Columbani in Merovingian Gaul’. In: Early Medieval Europe 17(2) (2009), 126-153. See 127-128.

²⁰⁵ O’Hara, The Vita Columbani in Merovingian Gaul, 134.

motives of *peregrinatio* had already been within Patrick's work. Further on, it has been illustrated how these motives also occur further in the hagiography of Patrick. Ultimately, the character of Patrick was of central importance to early Irish Christians and his work as well as the legend-building hagiographical accounts on him, among other factors, triggered the *peregrinatio* by motivating Irishmen to follow his example and turn towards the remote.

Central in this portrayal of the two historical characters throughout the thesis was the differentiation between hagiography and their own transmitted documents. While the value of their contemporary work cannot be overstated, the fame and the legends were constructed through the hagiographical accounts on them. Thereby, the manner of transmission was quite selective in what was handed down and what did get lost in time. Thus, this work could only put together the pieces there are and build an accurate image of an insular identity of *peregrinatio* that was brought to Ireland by Patrick and executed by Columbanus and others a century later. Throughout the source analysis, frequent digressions into early medieval Irish society were made in order to investigate further underlying motivations for *peregrinatio*. It has been argued that mobility was part of early Irish consciousness in a dichotomy between prestige and punishment and exile as a severe legal measure that evolved from a juridical penalty to a spiritual one. All of this occurred during an era of a popularization of monastic ideals and new understandings of sanctity through ascetic martyrdom. These religious ideas merged together with a social understanding of punishment creating a peculiar early Christian insular identity. Within this context, a common idea of *peregrinatio* evolved within the sixth century and this peculiar Irish way of thinking inspired early Christians there to seek for the divine in the distance.

A very well documented case is the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus. He was an Irish exile who particularly emphasized on his foreign identity. Columbanus was not only aware of his peculiar Irish identity, he also tried to use it in order to receive clerical and political patronage. This could be especially well observed in his letters to the papacy and also in his Vita by Jonas. In his letters, he deliberately uses his 'foreign' identity to justify his religious orthodoxy. He argued that as an alien pilgrim from the periphery, he had not been corrupted by the centre. Therefore, he saw in his monastic asceticism and in his peripheral insular identity a feasible argument to speak for the superiority of his religious customs. This confidence that stems from his identity might have been the reason why he got frequently expelled and in arguments with powerful rulers but was at the same time admired and promoted by them. The interesting case of the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus is that he only lived approximately one and a half centuries after

Patrick and already moved from Ireland towards the area of the former Empire, to Gaul and subsequently Italy. It is remarkable how a society that had a century earlier been scarcely Christianized and literate could produce such an intellectual and confident Christian individual.

Comparisons between Patrick and Columbanus are quite easily drawn, their representation in the sources makes it understandable to observe certain similarities between them. While they most likely lived a century apart from each other, the objective of both men was to spread the word of Christ. They only worked in two opposite directions. Patrick as a Roman citizen from the Empire to the barbarian island. Columbanus on the other hand, from the periphery to the area of the former Empire. The Irish relationship with Rome changed throughout this era of conversion from Ireland being the receiver of Christian ideas, to being a productive exporter of them only a few decades later, with a number of Irish peculiarities added along the process. Columbanus and further *peregrini* at the end of the sixth century seemingly thought that the Christianization process was sufficiently advanced in their homeland so that they would not have to stay but rather leave Ireland in order to spread the word of God to places which were not as Christianized as Ireland. With Columba of Iona acting in the second half of the sixth century, the conversion of large parts of Ireland was by this time apparently already achieved. His mission was directed towards Scotland, not Ireland, and it seems that the further rise of Christianity was already determined back then.²⁰⁶

7 Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that there was not one but rather a diverse set of themes present within the *peregrinatio pro Christo* of the Irish in the sixth and seventh century. However, the investigation of these traditional mental and devotional aspects enables a better understanding of a common early medieval mindset, which was present within a collective identity of early Irish Christians. This makes it possible to cast more light on what is considered to be a rather poorly recorded period in history and gives insight into a core cultural aspect of early medieval Ireland and Europe. Apart from that, the exploration of *peregrinatio* also displays a cross-cultural development throughout trans-European networks that were continued along this founding period and beyond for most of the middle ages. In short, it can be stated that the motivations for the *peregrinatio* were as diverse as its followers. While the Christian spiritual component in this

²⁰⁶ Chalres-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 240.

movement seemed to be mainly prevalent at first, further motivations and underlying aims could be identified after a closer look on early Irish society and law. Further on, the *peregrinatio* of Columbanus depicts a particularly interesting case study for Irish ascetic exile to the continent and illustrates how a *peregrinus* promoted as well as used his Irishness in order intervene in religious as well as political affairs. The promotion of Irish learning and scholarship by themselves and the creation of an idealized myth of it by their successors laid the foundation of a tradition of Irish monastic networks on the continent with a lasting cultural significance in Europe.

Different forms of martyrdom and the establishment of a new monastic lifestyle of asceticism were discussed. These influences originated in the east, were popularized on the continent and came to Ireland, from where they were brought back to the continent and popularized even further. Irish monasticism constructed itself through cultural oddities, which a prominent representative of it tried to defend under all costs but in vain. Columbanus was not successful in implementing his Irish customs on the continent. However, he still was part of a quite larger movement that transformed concepts of sanctity and martyrdom. While the traditional and most radical form of martyrdom, the death for one's faith ceased to exist within early Christian Europe. The implementation of ascetic monastic ideals as the pillars of the faith revolutionized the Late antique collective mind and gradually formed a new early medieval Christian society.

Finally, this early medieval mind should be researched within a spectrum between transformation and continuity. The *peregrinatio* as being one element of it should be thought of in a broader sense, but of course always according to the sources. General late antique traditions, which in some cases adapt but at the same time remain intact, should be investigated and contrasted to new developments in early medieval times. The emergence of Latin Christianity as a replacement for the Imperial Roman authority and other early medieval case studies are interesting case studies for further investigations. The rise of monasticism in the Latin West is an incident of a transformation in the world view, affecting many areas spanning from the spiritual, over the social to the political. The move towards periphery and asceticism brings an end to Antique forms of urbanity, as monastic foundations turned into economic and cultural centres. The local and regional significance of these foundations rises and symbolizes a formative shift from Antiquity to medieval times.

8 References

8.1 Primary sources

Columbanus. 'The letters of Columbanus'. In: G.S.M. Walker (ed. & transl.), *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin 1957). Online: <<https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201054.html>> (12/04/19).

Jonas. 'The Life of Saint Columban'. In: Dana C. Munro (ed.), *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European history* 2(7) (Philadelphia 1897/1907). Online: <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/columban.asp>> (12/04/19).

'King James Bible'. The Bible Server. Online: <<https://www.bibleserver.com/start>> (12/04/19).

Muirchú. 'Vita Sancti Patricii'. In: Ludwig Bieler (ed. & transl.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin 1979), 62–123. Online: <https://www.confessio.ie/more/muirchu_english#> (12/04/19).

Patrick. 'Confessio'. In: Patrick McCarthy (ed. & transl.), *My Name is Patrick. St Patrick's Confessio* (Dublin 2012). Online: <https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio_english#> (12/04/19).

Patrick. 'Epistola'. In: Patrick McCarthy (transl.), *Letter to the soldiers of Coroticus*. Online: <https://www.confessio.ie/etexts/epistola_english#> (12/04/19).

Prosper of Aquitaine. 'Chronicle, s.a. 431'. In: Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII.*, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 9.1 (Berlin, 1892), 341–485.

'The Cambrai Homily'. In: W. Stokes & J. Strachan (eds. & transl.), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse* 2 (Cambridge, 1903), 244–7.

8.2 Secondary literature

Bieler, Ludwig. *Ireland. Harbinger of the middle ages* (London 1963).

Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. *After Rome* (Oxford 2003).

Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000).

Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. 'The social background to Irish peregrinatio'. In: *Celtica* 11 (1976), 43-59.

Corning, Caitlin. 'Columbanus and the Easter Controversy: Theological, Social and Political Contexts'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe. Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 101-115.

Corning, Caitlin. *The Celtic and Roman Traditions. Conflict and Consensus in the early medieval Church* (Basingstoke 2006).

Coyle, Adrian. 'The Relationship between Adomnán of Iona's Life of St Columba and Celtic Christianity/Spirituality'. In: *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 2(1) (2012), 77-90.

- Davis, Wendy; Flechner, Roy. 'Conversion to Christianity and Economic Change: Consequence or Coincidence?'. In: Roy Flechner and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (eds.) *The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World. Converting the Isles I* (2016), 377-396.
- Diem, Albrecht. 'Monks, Kings, and the Transformation of Sanctity: Jonas of Bobbio and the End of the Holy Man'. In: *Speculum* 82(3) (Paris 2007), 521-559.
- Diem, Albrecht. 'The Rule of an "Iro-Egyptian" Monk in Gaul Jonas' Vita Iohannis and the Construction of a Monastic Identity'. In: *Revue Mabillon* 19 (2008), 5-50.
- Diem, Albrecht. 'Columbanian Monastic Rules: Dissent and Experiment'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 68-85.
- Duft, Johannes. 'Iromanie – Irophobie: Fragen um die frühmittelalterliche Irenmission exemplifiziert an Sankt Gallen und Alemannien'. In: *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte* 50, (1956), 241-262.
- Flechner, Roy. 'Patrick's reasons for leaving Britain'. In: Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (eds.), *Tome: Studies in Medieval History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards, Studies in Celtic History* 31 (Woodbridge 2011), 125–134.
- Flechner, Roy. 'Pope Gregory and the British: Mission as a canonical problem'. In: Hélène Bouget and Magali Coumert (eds.), *En Marge, Histoires des Bretagnes* 5 (Brest 2015), 47–65.
- Fox, Yaniv. 'The bishop and the monk: Desiderius of Vienne and the Columbanian movement'. In: *Early Medieval Europe* 20(2) (Oxford 2012), 176-194.
- Fox, Yaniv. 'The Political Context of Irish Monasticism in Seventh-Century Francia: Another Look at the Sources'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 53-67.
- Freeman, Philip. *Ireland and the Classical World* (Austin 2001).
- Freeman, Philip. *The World of Saint Patrick*. (Oxford 2014).
- Harbinson, Peter. 'Early Irish Pilgrim Archaeology in the Dingle Peninsula'. In: *World Archeology* 26(1) (1994), 90-103.
- Hughes, Kathleen. *The Church in early Irish society* (Ithaca, NY 1966).
- James, Edward. 'Ireland and Western Gaul in the Merovingian period'. In: Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in early medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1982), 362-387.
- Johnston, Elva. 'Exiles from the edge? The Irish contexts of Peregrinatio'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 38-52.
- Johnston, Elva. 'Ireland in late Antiquity. A forgotten frontier?'. In: *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1(2) (2017), 107-123.

- Johnston, Elva. 'Literacy and Conversion on Ireland's Roman Frontier'. In: Nancy Edwards, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Roy Flechner (eds.), *Transforming Landscapes of Belief in the Early Medieval Insular World and Beyond: Converting the Isles II* (Turnhout 2016), 35-51.
- Kelly, Fergus. *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin 1988).
- Kelly, David. 'Saint Patrick's Writings: Confessio and Epistola'. Online: https://www.confessio.ie/more/article_kelly# (12/04/19).
- Loveluck, Christopher; O'Sullivan, Aidan. 'Travel, transport and communication to and from Ireland, c. 400–1100'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe* (London 2016), 19–37.
- Marron, Emmett. *In His Silvis Silere: The Monastic Site of Annegray. Studies in a Columbanian Landscape* (Galway 2012). Doctoral thesis.
- Macalister, Robert Alexander Stewart. 'The "Druuides" Inscription at Killeen Cormac, County Kildare'. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, Vol. 32 (1914 - 1916), 227-38.
- McCone, Kim. *Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature* (Maynooth 1990).
- McManus, Damian. *A guide to ogam* (Maynooth, 1991).
- Meeder, Sven. 'The Irish foundations and the Carolingian world'. In: *Centro Italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, L'irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 16-21 aprile 2009) (2010), 467-493.
- O'Corrain, Donnchadh. 'Prehistoric and early Christian Ireland'. In: Robert F. Foster (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland* (Oxford 1989), 1-31.
- O'Hara, Alexander. 'Patria, Peregrinatio, and Paenitentia: Identities of alienation in the seventh century'. In: Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds.), *Post-Roman Transitions. Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout 2013), 89-124.
- O'Hara, Alexander. 'The Vita Columbani in Merovingian Gaul'. In: *Early Medieval Europe* 17(2) (2009), 126-153.
- O'Loughlin, Thomas. *Saint Patrick. The Man and His Works* (London 1999).
- Pohl, Walter. 'Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West: Introduction'. In: Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (eds.), *Post-Roman Transitions. Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout 2013), 1-46.
- Prinz, Friedrich. *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich. Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert)* (München 1988²).
- Richter, Michael. *Ireland and Her Neighbours in the Seventh Century* (Dublin 1999).
- Stancliffe, Clare. 'Red, white and blue martyrdom'. In: Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge 1982), 21-46.

Stansbury, Mark. 'Irish Biblical Exegesis'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe* (London 2016), 116-130.

Toner, Gregory. 'Identifying Ptolemy's Irish Places and Tribes'. In: David N. Parsons and Patrick Sims-Williams (eds.), *Ptolemy: towards a linguistic atlas of the earliest Celtic place-names of Europe* (Aberystwyth 2000), 73–82.

Wood, Ian. 'Columbanian Monasticism: A Contested Concept'. In: Roy Flechner and Sven Meeder (eds.), *The Irish in Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Identity, Culture and Religion* (Basingstoke 2016), 86-100.

8.3 List of illustrations

Illustration 1: Map from Ptolemy's *Geographica* published in Rome in 1490. Image accessed via the platform Ireland's History in Maps. Online:

<<http://sites.rootsweb.com/~irlkik/ihm/maps/ptolemy1490.gif>> (12/04/19).

Illustration 2: The British Library. The Catalogue of Illuminated manuscripts. Harleian MS 7182, ff 58–59. Online:

<<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=28894>> (12/04/19).

Illustration 3: 'Ogham in 3D'. Online:

<https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/resources/sites/Colbinstown/19._Colbinstown_I/19._Colbinstown_I.jpg> (26/04/19).

Illustration 4: Charles-Edwards, Thomas M. *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000), 174.

Illustration 5: O'Hara, Alexander (ed.). *Columbanus and the Peoples of Post-Roman Europe* (Oxford 2018), xxii.

9 Abstract

Diese Diplomarbeit untersucht das frühmittelalterliche irische Phänomen der *peregrinatio pro Christo* während seiner frühen Phase im sechsten und siebten Jahrhundert. Immanente Quellen für diese spirituelle Bewegung werden analysiert. Letztendlich soll diese Arbeit mehr über die tieferliegenden Motive und Aspekte der *peregrinatio* herausfinden. Das wesentliche Ziel ist es den Ursprung und die Entstehung der Identität und des Selbstverständnisses irischer Wandermönche in dieser frühen Phase auf den Grund zu gehen. Dabei handelt es sich um ein Phänomen, welches im nachrömischen Grenzgebiet zu identifizieren ist und dem laufenden kulturellen Austausch dieser Zeit zuzurechnen ist. Im Wesentlichen behauptet diese Arbeit, dass die *peregrinatio* durch das Zusammentreffen von christlichen Ideen mit lokalen irischen Traditionen entstand und, dass man dadurch nachhaltigen kulturellen Kontakt feststellen kann. Die Diplomarbeit betrachtet das fünfte Jahrhundert als die Zeit der Genese und Patrick als einen frühen spirituellen Vorgänger der *peregrini* in den folgenden Jahrhunderten. Die sich im siebten Jahrhundert parallel entwickelnde spätantike Form der Frömmigkeit durch hagiographische Legendenkonstruktionen um Patrick und Columban wird als beispielhaft für die Konstruktion einer besonderen Art von insularer Identität gesehen, die einen Anreiz für die Ausrichtung zum Exil hin bedeutet. Als Beispiel für diese Entwicklung werden die Aktivitäten des Columban am Kontinent betrachtet und in Beziehung zu allgemeinen politischen und religiösen Auseinandersetzungen am nachrömischen Kontinent behandelt.

This diploma thesis investigates the early medieval Irish phenomenon *peregrinatio pro Christo* during its early phase in the sixth and seventh century. Immanent sources for this spiritual movement are analysed. Ultimately, this text aims at finding out more about underlying motives by exploring various themes and aspects of *peregrinatio*. The major aim is to identify the roots as well as the emergence of a particular identity of these Irish monks. It is argued that this phenomenon happens within a post-Roman frontier environment and hence exposes an ongoing cultural exchange. In essence, this thesis claims that the *peregrinatio* evolved through the contact of Christian ideas with a local Irish culture and thus a cultural exchange of ideas and beliefs across the highway of the Irish sea is presented. Therefore, this thesis is viewing the fifth century as the time of the genesis and Patrick as an early spiritual forebearer of the *peregrinatio* in the following centuries. The emergence of a new late Antique form of sanctity in the seventh century through an on-going hagiographical legend-building around Patrick and Columbanus is viewed as a construction of a certain insular identity that created an urge for Irish Christians to turn towards exile. As an example of this development, the activities of Columbanus on the continent are illustrated and put in relation to the ongoing political and religious processes on the Post-Roman continent.