

Charles Doherty, Linda Doran, and Mary Kelly (eds), *Glendalough: City of God*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, on behalf of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 2011, xxxii + 383 pp. 55 figures, 9 tables, 52 plates. €50. ISBN 978-1-84682-170-7

Despite the importance of Glendalough as an early medieval Irish ecclesiastical settlement — its burial ground already described c. AD 800 as the ‘cemetery of the western world’ — and its popularity as a much visited tourist destination in modern times, this lavishly illustrated volume is the first study devoted specifically to this iconic site. Its twenty essays, twelve of which result from a one-day seminar on Glendalough organized by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, may be divided into two broad categories, those focusing on the physical evidence at Glendalough, its architectural and sculptural remains, but also the function and organization of its space, and those discussing written sources, of which the hagiographical Lives of St Kevin, in both Latin and Irish, form an important dossier.

Glendalough’s status as a holy place was based in part on ideals of space and function derived from biblical sources that were creatively exploited by Irish clergy. The symbolic topography of Glendalough as an Irish City of God, a heavenly Jerusalem, an Old Testament Levitical city of refuge, a new Rome, is explored by Melanie Maddox through biblical analogues, the writings of the Church Fathers, and of Irish and Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastics, including the hagiographical Lives of Glendalough’s founder, St Kevin, where the saint is depicted bringing soil from Rome to Glendalough, thereby enabling a pilgrimage to Glendalough to be interpreted as equivalent with one to Rome. Colmán Etchingham applies arguments on church organization that he has elaborated elsewhere to the specific location of Glendalough, propounding that it was a multi-functional ecclesiastical settlement that had a monastic component but that to categorize it narrowly as a monastery fails to reflect its

complexities and downplays an important element of clerical, episcopal jurisdiction that contributed to its status; at the same time he argues vigorously against the views of those scholars who have endorsed the concept of a ‘monastic town’ with subsidiary commercial connotations. Jean-Michel Picard explores the *platea*, a broadly circular public space within an ecclesiastical enclosure focusing less on its physical attributes than its purpose as a place ‘where exchanges between men could take place in the knowledge that the sanctity of the person would normally be respected’.

A persuasive interpretation of the double-vaulted structure commonly called St Kevin’s house (Cró Cóemgen) as a shrine-chapel that housed keepers of relics but in which corpses may also have rested prior to burial is offered by Tomás Ó Carragáin. The inter-vault chamber may have provided accommodation for recluses while the bell tower incorporated into the fabric of the church could have played a role in funerary liturgies where the tolling of bells was intended to summon the archangels, especially St Michael, to conduct the deceased to heaven. Ragnall Ó Floinn discusses the stone cross known incorrectly as the ‘Market Cross’, a name so entrenched in the literature that it has been retained here. The front of the cross bears the figure of the crucified Christ in suffering pose with his head inclined to the left. The cross’s proportions of width to height differ from other Irish high crosses and are much closer to a form of altar cross that originated in the Rhineland in the late tenth century and remained current across northern Europe for around two hundred years; Ó Floinn argues that the latter provided the model for the Glendalough cross possibly via an imported altar or rood cross. He further suggests that the famous Speaking Crucifix, the principal relic of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin — itself most likely either a Continental import or based on an Ottonian exemplar — may have provided a model for the ‘Market Cross, though this may be to posit

too precise an example since the loss of twelfth-century Irish church furnishings is likely to have been substantial. By contrast with the unusual shape of the 'Market Cross', its decoration is in the mature Irish Urnes style and is most closely paralleled by the Tuam Market Cross. The use of a decorative style that has close links with Tuam may have been deliberately intended to link the Glendalough cross with the patronage of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, king of Connacht and aspirant to the high-kingship, who may have patronized Glendalough following its endorsement as the location of an episcopal see at the synod of Ráith Bressail, 1111, in the expectation that Glendalough would eventually absorb the Hiberno-Norse see of Dublin. The Glendalough collection of eleven high crosses, other plainer crosses, and 120 cross-slabs, dated primarily to between the tenth and twelfth centuries, is explored by Lorcan Harney. While their commemorative function as burial sites is evident, a number may also have defined and organized pilgrim ways.

The architectural sculpture at Glendalough is the subject of a contribution by Rachel Moss who highlights significant creativity in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as a concomitant to the changing religious and political climate. While stylistically the sculpture may be dated relatively closely, an undoubted difficulty is that much of it is not necessarily to be found at its original location. Unusual features of Romanesque chevron ornament at Glendalough that are found also at Killeleshin, Jerpoint, and Baltinglass — locations that enjoyed the patronage of Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster — are paralleled not, as might be expected in the British isles, but further afield in Jutland in Denmark, intriguingly suggesting the involvement of Scandinavian stone masons at Glendalough. The installation of the first Anglo-Norman bishop at Glendalough, William Piro c. 1192, appears to have resulted in the importation of stone from the Dundry quarry near Bristol, carved in a more typically English style, possibly indicating that

craftsmen arrived with the stone. Peter Harbison presents a series of little known drawings of Glendalough dating from c. 1777–1850 that resulted from burgeoning antiquarian interests, and which, along with Killarney and the Giants’ Causeway, ensured that Glendalough was one of the most painted places in Ireland during that period. The growth of visitors to the site during the nineteenth century and the social, aesthetic, and political dimensions of this tourism is elegantly explored by Máirín Ní Cheallaigh: landscape aesthetics, historical consciousness, and archaeological interest combined to swell the numbers of visitors.

Turning to written evidence, Pádraig Ó Riain offers a historiographical survey of existing hagiographical and textual scholarship on the dating of the Latin and Irish Lives of Kevin, while Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel provides an edition and translation of the oldest surviving manuscript version of a Latin Life of St Kevin which is drawn from the Great Austrian legendary (*Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*), a huge collection of saints’ lives encompassing some 580 texts that circulated in Austria and southern Germany in the twelfth century and contained a number of Lives of Irish saints. The Life of Kevin most likely made its way into the Legendary via the community of the Irish Benedictine monastery or *Schottenkloster* that had been founded at Regensburg in Bavaria in 1112. There is no scholarly consensus on when the first Latin Life of Kevin was written. Although a date as early as c. AD 750–850 has been posited by Richard Sharpe (endorsed also by Ailbhe MacShamhráin’s contribution in this volume), Ó Riain, reviewing their arguments, nonetheless holds to the conclusion that a date in the twelfth century is more likely, highlighting substantial evidence for the role of reformist Augustinian canons in the production in the twelfth century of martyrologies and hagiographical texts relating to Ireland’s native saints. He posits that a request was sent from Regensburg to Glendalough for a Life of Kevin that would be suitable for inclusion in the Great Austrian

Legendary, then in preparation, that a text was assembled in response to that request, and that it is a synoptic redaction which is now preserved in the Legendary, while the original longer version survives in the early thirteenth-century so-called Dublin collection that was compiled by or for Albinus (Ailbe Ua Máel Muaid), bishop of Ferns (d. 1223). Albinus was a former Cistercian abbot of Baltinglass which serves to highlight that it was not only Augustinian canons who were involved in producing Irish hagiographical materials. Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel's contribution also provides a very valuable discussion of the manuscript traditions of the Great Austrian Legendary that illustrates the extent to which the *Schottenklöster*, albeit they drew their recruits from Ireland, were nonetheless well integrated into the local ecclesiastical landscape and participated in the hagiographical enterprises and the exchange of materials that circulated in southern Germany and Austria. Ailbhe MacShamhráin explores the association of the Uí Máil dynasty with Glendalough, as reflected in hagiographical texts. He offers compelling evidence that it better fits with political structures and priorities of the eighth than the twelfth century, thereby supporting the production of a Latin Life of Kevin by no later than the ninth century.

As Pádraig Ó Riain points out, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive examination of the full hagiographical dossier of St Kevin that would also have to include the three vernacular Lives. In the meantime, Brian Lacey considers an anecdote in three of the Lives (*Vita S. Coemgeni* from the Dublin Collection, *Betha Caoimhgin 1* and *II*) relating to a monster in the lakes at Glendalough. Lacey suggests that distinctive differences between the location of the monster in the three versions sheds light on the expansion of the monastic settlement from what is considered to be its original location close to the Upper Lake down to the more elaborate complex near the Lower Lake. The three narratives offering alternative locations and movements of the monster

between the Upper and Lower Lake may be explained by the circumstance that they were written at different times and reflect varying emphases on the physical location of the monastery. The jury must remain out until such time as a full analysis of Kevin's hagiographical dossier is undertaken, but Lacey's exploration of one particular motif suggests the potential dating criteria that detailed analyses of hagiographical texts may yield.

Diarmuid Ó Riain explores a unique annal entry in the Annals of the Four Masters under the year 1085 (where it is found alongside entries that have been misplaced, on the testimony of parallel entries in other annal collections, from 1160–61) which appears to record that a bishop of Glendalough named Gilla na Náem Laignech resigned his see and subsequently became head of the Irish monastic community at Würzburg which, however, was only founded in 1138. Ó Riain considers the possibility that Gilla na Náem Laignech, who is attested as bishop of Glendalough at the time of the synod of Kells in 1152, may have resigned the see of Glendalough around 1157 and gone to Würzburg, where he died in 1160/61. The *Schottenkloster* necrology records the death of an Irish bishop Nemias, an attested Latinization of Gilla na Náem, on 7 April which is the same day of death as recorded for Gilla na Náem of the 1085 entry in the Annals of Four Masters. Another possible contender is Gilla na Náem Ua Muirchertaig, 'noble bishop of the south of Ireland' who died in 1149; this latter Gilla na Náem, however, did not resign his see, which was located at Cloyne, but is recorded to have died *in episcopatu*. A mid-seventeenth-century manuscript written at Würzburg that attributed the foundation of a Benedictine community at Rosscarbery in west Cork, which was a dependency of Würzburg, to Nehemias, bishop of Ross, introduces a third candidate. Ó Riain leaves open the possibility that the mid-twelfth century Bishop Gilla na Náem of Glendalough could indeed have retired to the monastery of Würzburg, a supposition that may be

supported by the fact that a Latin Life of St Kevin found its way into the Great Austrian Legendary, but the evidence is so fragmentary as to preclude a safe conclusion.

In a second contribution, Colmán Etchingham assesses the possible Viking impact on Glendalough for which raids are recorded in 834, 836, 890 and 983, making it one of the six most raided churches in the ninth century, along with Armagh (ten or eleven raids), Kildare (four), Clonard, Clonfert, and Lismore (three each). He concludes that the impact was neither as profound nor as ‘shattering’ (D. A. Binchy’s phrase) as earlier scholars assumed, that the 830 raids probably emanated from a local transitory base at Arklow operating purely for plunder and that following the establishment of a permanent Viking base at Dublin in 840 Glendalough would have been relatively inaccessible and outside the reach of Dublin Vikings. The raids recorded in 890 and 893 are more likely to be explained by political alignments on the part of the attackers with various Irish factions. A more subtle Viking influence on Glendalough in the spheres of trade and craftsmanship is suggested by the evidence of coin hoards of late tenth-century date and the presence of a possible Scandinavian stone carver at work in Glendalough in the mid-twelfth century, a proposition indirectly supported by a grave-slab discussed also by Ragnall Ó Floinn alongside the ‘Market cross’ to which it bears analogies and which commemorates ‘Gutrodar’, a name rendered in Irish sources as Gofraid and prevalent among the Hiberno-Scandinavian kings of Dublin.

Moving to scholastic texts, Daniel McCarthy surveys the study and use of numbers in early Irish monasteries by way of contextualizing a tract, *De abaco*, which is found in an early twelfth-century manuscript that, on the evidence of marginalia, was transcribed at Glendalough. While formerly attributed to Gerbert of Aurillac (d. 1003), it is considered by the most recent editor of Gerbert’s mathematical works to be a

contemporaneous commentary on Gerbert's rules for reckoning on an abacus. Musico-liturgical practices that may have been in use, or resembled those, at Glendalough are explored by Sara G. Casey who focuses on the Drummond missal now in the Pierpoint Morgan Library in New York. It contains the earliest known examples of music notation in an Irish manuscript and was for a time at Glendalough as marginalia indicate, although it may have originated at Armagh. She provides texts and translations (supplied by Senan Furlong OSB) of a hymn from a fifteenth-century breviary of Dublin provenance and a sequence in commemoration of Laurence O'Toole (Lorcán Ua Tuathail), archbishop of Dublin, formerly abbot of Glendalough, from a thirteenth-century gradual now in the Bibliothèque municipale in Rouen. The latter mostly likely derives from the abbey of St Mary at Eu in Normandy where Laurence died and was buried in November 1180, the community petitioning the papacy for his canonization which was granted in 1225. Charles Doherty pursues a suggestion first made by Michael Lapidge that the noted Welsh scholar, Sulien (d. 1091), who is recorded to have spent ten years in study in Ireland, may have done so at Glendalough. He identifies allusions to a series of Irish saints in the *Life of St David* written by Sulien's son, Rhigyfarch, who was taught by his father, most of whom can indeed be associated with the *familia* of St Kevin. Both the writings of Rhigyfarch and of his younger brother, Ieuan, demonstrate knowledge of an impressive range of classical authors, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Juvencus, Prudentius, Martianus Capella, Caelius Sedulius, Boethius, Aldhelm, and possibly Statius and Juvenal. The decoration of manuscripts written by Sulien's sons resembles that in contemporary Irish manuscripts, the Irish influence extending to the system of construe marks they deployed. Doherty suggests that Rhigyfarch's text of Macrobius may have been acquired via Ireland and considers a possible range of scholarly continental texts that could have been at Glendalough

from the ninth century. He posits that the Irish scholar, Dúngal (died c. 834), who was appointed master of the imperial school at Pavia, may have come from Glendalough, in which case Glendalough would have been in a position to receive material from the continent at the height of the Carolingian renaissance in the ninth century. An early twelfth-century manuscript now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which contains a Latin translation of Plato's *Timaeus* and an epitome and long extract from the *Periphyseon* of Eriugena almost certainly emanated from Glendalough, testifying to an interest in philosophy there during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Doherty even raises the possibility that Eriugena himself might have had associations with Glendalough. While Doherty acknowledges that his arguments are built on the basis of 'speculation, allusions and coincidences', nonetheless, a convincing case is presented that in Ireland Sulien 'moved within the area of the *paruchia* of Glendalough' and that it was a centre of study of philosophy and related subjects and had important texts acquired from direct continental contacts. While Glendalough may be viewed, as argued by Etchingham, as a multi-functional ecclesiastical settlement, its scholarship reflects a monastic milieu.

The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland under whose auspices this volume is published has had a long association with Glendalough, as detailed in Aideen Ireland's contribution. Its founding mission in 1849 was to preserve, examine, and illustrate Ireland's antiquities and in the 1870s it spearheaded attempts to have repairs carried out and to secure the fragments of stone carvings scattered around the site from theft and destruction. This engaging collection of essays, to which it is not possible to do full justice within the confines of this review, places readers in the continuing debt of the Society. The editors are to be congratulated for bringing such a significant and handsome production to print; the superb photographs by Martina Pozdechova, who worked for a number of

years as a guide at Glendalough, add materially to the attractiveness of this volume, reasonably priced given the quality and lavishness of the illustrations. It sheds invaluable light not only on Glendalough but also more generally, and equally significantly, on the early Irish church. For all those interested in the early Irish church, it is essential reading.

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