

The Life of St Cainnech of Aghaboe

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This document contains the text of *Vita Sancti Cainnechi*, ‘The Life of Saint Cainnech’, with a new translation and some comment and discussion. The Latin text appears in the *Codex Salmanticensis*, a fourteenth-century manuscript formerly in Salamanca (whence its name) and now in Brussels. The original Latin text below, in the left-hand column, is that published by W. W. Heist in his *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*.¹ I have not included his critical apparatus (footnotes). In the second column is my translation, which I have made as literal as possible while offering something approaching intelligible and colloquial English. I am grateful to Prof. Thomas Owen Clancy for his comments on an earlier draft of this document.

Dating the Text

Though the manuscript in which this Latin Life appears was made in the fourteenth century, some recent scholars have dated the text itself to somewhere between AD 750 and 850.² Prof. Máire Herbert, in a detailed study of the the Life and the way it refers to kingdoms, churches and kindreds, has made a powerful case for dating it more closely to the period AD 766-780. In particular she notices the way that the Life builds a relationship between Cainnech and Colmán Bec, the supposed ancestor of Clann Cholmáin Bhic whose descendant Follomon mac Con Congalt held power in Southern Uí Néill territory³ (where some of the Life’s action takes place) from 763 to 766. He was murdered in 766, quite probably with the connivance of Donnchad mac Domnaill of Clann Cholmáin Mhóir, who became overking of the Southern Uí Néill thereafter. Our Life’s concern to describe a relationship between Cainnech and Colmán Bec expresses a claim of certain rights for Cainnech’s churches in the Irish midlands, but also a strong disapproval of the murder which brought Donnchad to power.

Connected to this violent coup in Southern Uí Néill politics is the Life’s disapproval of Iona and of Columba, as found in many of the episodes. As we shall see, Columba is presented in this Life as a harsh, even cruel, abbot. His holiness is repeatedly shown to be less than that of Cainnech. Such jostling for position is not uncommon in saints’ Lives, and such stories are often expressions of the ways that churches founded by the saints involved were themselves jostling for position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy or competing for royal support. But the criticism of Columba in the Life of Cainnech is sharper than what we usually find in such Lives. Herbert attributes this to the fact that Columba’s monastery of Iona and his *familia* of monasteries showed a lack of moral judgement over the murder of Follomon and the accession of Donnchad to power. All this took place at a time when Iona’s traditional supporters – the northern Uí Néill kindred of Cenél Conaill⁴ – had been politically eclipsed by the Cenél nÉogain who were great supporters of Armagh and the cult of St Patrick, so Iona had built strong links with the Southern Uí Néill Clann Cholmáin Móir, of which Donnchad was

¹ Heist 1965, 182-98.

² This date-range is that applied to a number of Lives in the *Codex Salmanticensis*, all of which were incorporated into the collection by O’Donohue, and are therefore conventionally referred to as ‘the O’Donohue Lives’.

³ In the eastern Midlands of Ireland.

⁴ In the far north-west of Ireland.

the chief representative.⁵ Did Iona's need for political support prevent her from taking a proper moral and Christian position on Donnchad's rule and the murder of Follomon?

I will highlight elements of the Life of Cainnech in the footnotes which may be thought to reflect this political and moral critique of Iona.

It must be added that not all scholars accept the dating of the Life to 750 x 850, however. Pádraig Ó Riain has argued for a twelfth-century date.⁶ He notes that some features (Cainnech's supposed journeys to Wales and to Rome, for example) are more typical of later hagiography. Furthermore, a significant number of the churches mentioned in the text became Augustinian in the twelfth century, and that might suggest that the Life was written in an Augustinian milieu with a view to building a common narrative for Augustinian churches. As the Augustinians did not arrive in Ireland until the twelfth century, this would point to a twelfth-century date for the composition of the Life. Of course, even if Herbert is right and the Life comes from an eighth-century original, it is quite possible that there was some re-working of the text in the twelfth century to adapt it to new circumstances and new needs.⁷

Sanctity in Space

The Life of Cainnech creates a landscape of divine power. By placing the saint in different places it helps to shape a sense of space in which the saint's miracles and words are seen to express a range of meanings 'on the ground'. Cainnech is born in the north of Ireland among the Ciannachta near Dungiven in what is now Co. Derry,⁸ but travels in what is now Wales and Rome, in Dál Riata and Pictland. He performs numerous miracles in many places in Ireland, founding churches, leaving relics behind in other churches, forming friendships and making enemies, all in particular places as he goes on his life-long journey.⁹ The result is that the places associated with him are no longer merely points on a map or places identifiable by a grid reference (though of course they are that as well); they are now elements in a carefully ordered landscape in which the sanctity of the saint is demonstrated and his intentions (i.e. the intentions of his community in the eighth century) powerfully articulated. As he moves through Ireland he makes parts of it his own; he creates relationships between his community and the members of other communities, between his church and various political dynasties and the territories they rule over. The undifferentiated space of a 'big island' becomes a map of relationships and meanings. Some of the places mentioned will have become focuses of pilgrimage and commemoration of the saint, their particularity celebrated in movement and song. Map 1 at the end of this document shows most of the places mentioned in our text, and will help the reader form a picture of what kind of meaningful space is being created here. It seems worthwhile here to discuss a few in particular – others will be discussed in footnotes throughout the document.

Aghaboe (*Achad Bó* 'field of the cow') is the principal church associated with Cainnech in the text, and is presumably the church he founded and probably the place where he died and was

⁵ For the special relationship between Iona and Clann Cholmáin see Márkus 2017b, 244-7; Herbert 2001. It may also be relevant that Cainnech's kindred lived among the Cenél nÉogain, whose rise to power among the Northern Uí Néill at the expense of Colmumba's Cenél Conaill kindred, and whose devotion to Saint Patrick and Armagh had left the Iona community high and dry, and had perhaps helped to push them into the arms of Clann Cholmáin in the first place. There is evidence of devotion to Patrick in *Vita Cainnechi* (see §48).

⁶ Ó Riain 2011, 138-9.

⁷ One significant argument against Ó Riain's view is the fact that Kilkenny is not mentioned in the Life. See my discussion of Kilkenny below. If this Life were a twelfth-century work it would surely have mentioned a church which had become probably the most important house in Cainnech's *familia* by then.

⁸ They give their name to the Derry barony of Keenaght.

⁹ For a fine study of the creation of 'sacred geography' of this sort, see Overbey 2012.

buried.¹⁰ It became the mother-church of the family of churches and monasteries associated with him. It is located at the north end of the kingdom of Osraige, which appears, together with its king, several times in the text. It seems it was not originally the principal church of the kingdom, which was Domnach Mór Roigne, further south in the kingdom.¹¹ The Life of Cainnech §47 tells a story in which the ‘fat ruler’ of Domnach Mór is defeated by Cainnech and God for failing to support the king of Osraige. The king is saved by Cainnech and brought far from his fort (and from Domnach Mór), and told that he will shortly re-establish himself in his kingdom with 300 followers. Are we meant to suppose that ‘far from the fort’ means far to the north, yet still within the kingdom, and therefore in the vicinity of Aghaboe? This miracle-story is therefore the assertion of Aghaboe as the important royal church of Osraige, the one which *can* protect kings, and the one which has displaced the older Domnach Mór.¹² It is significant however that Aghaboe, though it remained an important monastery in Osraige, does not seem to have become the seat of the bishop of that kingdom.¹³

Kilkenny, Gaelic, ‘the church (*cill*) of Cainnech’ was founded as a daughter-house of Aghaboe and evidently had not been founded when the Life of Cainnech was written, for otherwise it would surely have had a story or two in the Life to explain its presence and significance. Though it was only a daughter-house of Aghaboe it became more important than its mother-church, perhaps because it was closer to the main population centre of the kingdom. By the twelfth century it had become the see of the bishop of the kingdom of Osraige (which survives today as the diocese of Ossory), and its cathedral is dedicated to Saint Cainnech.

In addition to becoming the episcopal see, Kilkenny also became an Augustinian community in the early thirteenth century.¹⁴

St Andrews. The twelfth-century (?) marginal notes to the *Félire Óengussu*, a late eighth-century celebration in verse of the saints commemorated on each day of the year, record Cainnech as having a hermitage at St Andrews in Fife: *ata reicles dó a Cill Rigmonaig ind Albain* – ‘he has a church at Cill Rigmonaid (the old name for St Andrews) in Scotland’. St Andrews had already an Augustinian priory when this note was written.¹⁵

Reading Hagiography

Whatever its date, this Life is not the earliest writing we have about Cainnech. He appears in the *Vita Columbae* ‘Life of Columba’ written by Adomnán of Iona, probably shortly before AD 700. We know that the stories in the Life of Columba pre-date the Life of Cainnech because stories told by Adomnán involving Cainnech are recycled – often with critical differences – by the Life of Cainnech.¹⁶ What we need to remember in all medieval hagiography is that it is story-telling for a purpose. It should not be treated as a reliable historical record of the saints involved. It should be read as the product of its time, whether it was written in the eighth century or the twelfth. We should remember that for the most part it gives us access not to the details of a saint’s life, far less access to his or her personality or psychology, but rather to the intentions of the writer of the text and the

¹⁰ Adomnán’s Life of Columba refers to Cainnech’s church ‘which in Latin is called “little field of the cow” and in Gaelic *Ached bou*’ (*quod latine campulus bouis dicitur, scotice uero Ached bou*). (VC ii, 13).

¹¹ This is likely to be the church associated with St Patrick by his seventh-century ‘biographer’ Tírechán, who wrote that Patrick ‘founded a church in Roigne of the “martyrhouse” (*Martorthige*)...’ (PTA, 162-3). The fact that it is claimed as a Patrician foundation points to its authority and antiquity (two features that often go together).

¹² See Charles-Edwards 2000, 262ff.

¹³ No bishop of Aghaboe is ever referred to in the annals.

¹⁴ Carville 1982, 117.

¹⁵ Assuming that its ascription to the second half of the twelfth century is correct. FO, 222

¹⁶ See Herbert 2001 for discussion of some of these features and their significance.

community or institutional interests served by the writer.¹⁷ There is no use in wondering whether the Life of Columba or the Life of Cainnech give us better access to Columba's personality, or to Cainnech's personal history. They are not that kind of story. What these texts do is to invite us to enter the fascinating world of their *authors*: what did they want? What kind of decisions did they have to make? What did they see as a threat to their interest? How did they see the world? How did their devotion to their saints reflect and reinforce those views?

Vita S. Cainnechi abbatis de Achad Bó Chainnich	The Life of St Cainnech, abbot of Aghaboe¹⁸
<p>1: Incipit vita sancti Kennechi. Sanctus Kannechus de genere Corco Dalann ab aquilonali parte huius insule ortus fuit. Cuius pater erat poeta venerabilis, et nomen ipsius dicebatur Laidech Lecerd. Mater vero eius erat de Nepotibus Macguais, et nomen eius vocabitur Meld.</p> <p>Hii ergo parentes sancti Kainnechi pauperes erant, ut fuerunt parentes Christi, non habentes vaccam de cuius lacte natum infantem nutrent. Ideo Dominus hoc miraculum fecit. Nam in nocte nativitatis sancti Kainnechi, de longinquis locis, scilicet ab insula Imlige, ubi est origo gentis eius, vacca sine vitulo a stagno aque <venit>, nemine ducente nisi Deo, quousque stetit ante ianuam domus in qua sanctus Kainnechus natus est infans. Crastino autem die post matrem suam vitulus venit, et illic manserunt.</p>	<p>Here begins the Life of Saint Cainnech. Saint Cainnech was born into the kindred of Corcu Dalann in the northern part of this island. His father was a venerable poet, whose name was Laidech Lecerd.¹⁹ His mother was from the Uí Maccu Uais,²⁰ and her name was Mell.²¹</p> <p>Now the parents of Saint Cainnech were poor folk, as were the parents of Christ, and they had no cow to give them milk to nourish the infant.²² So the Lord did this miracle. On the night of the birth of Saint Cainnech, there came a cow without a calf from a faraway place, that is from the island of <i>Imlige</i>,²³ where the origin of his people lies, with no-one leading her except God, and she came and stood before the door of the house in which the infant Saint Cainnech was born. The next day the calf came after its mother, and they both remained there.</p>
<p>2: In illo tempore, in regione Kinnachte sacerdos non inventus qui infantem baptizaret.</p>	<p>At that time in the region of the Ciannachta there was no priest found to baptize the infant.</p>

¹⁷ Of course, some details of 'biographical fact' may be inferred from these texts, at least as a working hypothesis. The foundation of Aghaboe by Cháinnich for example is probably an accurate observation, as is the date of his death recorded in AU 599: *Quies Cainnigh Acaidh Bó*. Even further from any kind of historical writing, it should be added, is the material in the Aberdeen Breviary for the feast of St Cainnech. Note that this was published in 1510, and is dependent on texts like our Life of Cainnech. It certainly should not be regarded as a reliable record of Cainnech's adventures in what is now Scotland. See Macquarrie 2012, 242-4.

¹⁸ Literally 'of Cainnech's Aghaboe'.

¹⁹ The first name represents *laidech* 'celebrated in poetry', while Lecerd represents Gaelic *lethcerd* or *leiccerd*, a word which refers to a kind of poet.

²⁰ This people occupied territory in the southern part of Cenél nEógain territory among the northern Uí Néill, south of Dungiven. See Paul Walsh, 'Uí Maccu Uais', *Ériu* 9 (1921-23), 55-60.

²¹ Old Gaelic *meld*, later *mell* 'pleasant, delightful'. There is a chapel dedicated to her in Kilkenny, recorded as *Teampall Shan Mall* or *Capella Sanctae Maulae*.

²² This may be part of the anti-Iona rhetoric of our Life. Columba, the founder and patron of Iona, was from a powerful royal segment of the Cenél Conaill; Cainnech was from poor parents – like Christ.

²³ Perhaps Imlick in the barony of Raphoe North in Co. Donegal. Or one of the many other places in Ireland called Imleach (in English Emlagh, Emly etc.). This name contains OG *imlech* 'land bordering on a lake or marsh' – not an uncommon situation.

<p>Ideo Dominus quemdam episcopum, nomine Lurech, ad baptizandum eum de longe perduxit, hac ex causa. Nam, alio die, ipsius sancti episcopi vaccas fere agitaverunt, de quibus .xii. defuerunt. Qui, sollicite secutus vestigia earum, invenit illas iuxta domum Laidech et, postquam ille baptizavit infantem, cum suis vaccis rediit.</p>	<p>Therefore the Lord brought from far off a certain bishop, Luirech by name, to baptize him.²⁴ And this is how it came about. On another day [...²⁵] had entirely disturbed the cows of this holy bishop, and twelve of them were missing. He carefully followed their tracks, and he found them beside Laidech's house, and after he had baptised the infant he he went home with his cows.</p>
<p>3: Sanctus igitur Kannechus in sua propria gente, scilicet in Valle Pellis, natus est, sed in regione Nepotum Macguas, in loco qui dicitur Kenn Buge, nutritus est.</p> <p>In illo autem loco sanctus puer Kannechus peccora pascebat, et alius puer secum simul iunctus, nomine Albus Mendax, qui erat filius regis. Sed horum puerorum dissimilis erat natura. Nam Kennechus, quando ludum faciebat, ecclesias parvas construebat. Albus vero Mendax scuta faciebat et hastas. Item Albus Mendax inter poma licita poma furtiva commiscebat et sancto puero ignoranti dabat, sed sanctus puer, illicita poma non agnoscens, comedens statim ex utero vomebat. Tandem, revelante sibi Domino, illicita poma agnoscens repellebat et licita tantum comedebat.</p>	<p>So Saint Cainnech was born amongst his own kindred, that is in Valle Pellis,²⁶ but he was raised in the region of Uí Maccu Uais, in a place called <i>Kenn Buge</i>.</p> <p>Now in that place the holy boy Cainnech was grazing the cattle, and there was another hboy with him at the same time called Albus Mendax, who was the son of the king.²⁷ But the nature of these two boys was quite dissimilar. For when Cainnech was playing a game, he would build small churches. Albus Mendax, however, would make shields and spears. And Albus Mendax would mix up stolen fruit and lawful fruit and would give them to the holy boy (who did not know), but the holy boy not recognising the illicit fruit would eat it and immediately vomit it out of his stomach. At length, however, God revealed it to him and he recognised and rejected the illicit fruit, and he ate the licit fruit.</p>
<p>4: Cum sanctus Kannechus crevisset et perfectus esset sensibus, voluit sapientiam legere et religionem discere. Perrexit trans mare in Britanniam ad virum sapientem ac religiosum Docc, legitque apud illum sedit et</p>	<p>When Saint Cainnech had grown and had acquired his full senses, he wanted to read wisdom and to learn religion. He went across the sea to Britain to a wise and religious man called Docc,²⁸ and he studied keenly with him and</p>

²⁴ St Luirech of Maghera (*Ráith Lúirigh*), barony of Loughinsholin, Co. Derry, assigned to the same kindred as Cainnech's mother, Uí Maccu Uais. A hypocoristic form of his name, Lúránm, underlies the Tyrone church of Derryloran (Doire Lúráin). See Ó Riain 2011, 411.

²⁵ The subject of this sentence is lacking. We should perhaps read *lupi* 'wolves', or maybe brigands, or some such cow-frightening things.

²⁶ Unidentified.

²⁷ Not a promising name: Albus Mendax means 'white liar'.

²⁸ AU 473 records 'The repose of the holy bishop Doccus abbot of the Britons' (*Quies Doccii episcopi sancti Britonum abbatis*). This may be Cadog of Llancarfan. The date of 473 is hardly likely to be accurate – it must be a retrospective entry in the annals – and of course it would not fit with a mid-sixth-century date for Cainnech's visit. Ó Riain notes that this story might point towards a twelfth-century date of composition for the Life, as a story about Cainnech having studied in Wales might have interested the 'Cambro-Norman adventurers' who had recently arrived in Ireland and were increasingly dominating both secular and ecclesiastical affairs (2011, 139). In particular the fact that he was supposedly ordained to the priesthood in Britain (together with his trip to Rome) might suggest to Cambro-Normans in Ireland that he was more orthodox than some of their Irish clerics. However, Thomas Clancy has pointed out to me that the Life may be envisaging a place further north for Cainnech's sojourn with Docc. In Stirlingshire, Kilmadock, 'the church of St Mo-Docc' (a hypocoristic form of Docc's name) may refer to the same saint, and nearby is a church which is recorded in the sixteenth century as *Agglische-chynnauche*, apparently containing **eccles* 'church' and the name of Saint Cainnech. See McNiven 2014 for discussion. The proximity of these two dedications to each other may indicate a medieval connection between the two saints.

<p>mores bonos didiscit, et erat valde humilis et obediens. Quadam autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus sedens scriberet, audivit sonum tintinabuli invitantis fratres ad opera et, pre festinatione obedientie implende, dimidiam partem .o. litere scribens, alteram partem semiplenam imperfectamque reliquit. Amabatque magister discipulum pium et obedientem.</p>	<p>learned a good way of life, and was most humble and obedient. One day, however, when Saint Cainech was sitting writing, he heard the sound of a bell calling the brethren to prayer.²⁹ And through his haste to fulfill the duty of obedience, having written part of the letter <i>O</i>, he left the other part half-finished and imperfect. The master loved his pious and obedient disciple.</p>
<p>5: Videns autem equonimus quod abbas valde diligebat puerum, instinctu diabuli ipse odivit puerum Kannechum et persecutus est eum. Quadam autem die, ipse immisericors et iracundus venit ad Kennechum sedentem et legentem, increpans eum et dicens, “Tota familia cum bobus et plaustris trans fretum perrexit ad ducendas aliquas materias necessarias. Tu quoque post eos perge.”</p> <p>Tunc sanctus Kennechus obediens surrexit. Deditque ei equonimus duos boves indomitos et feros, sed subiugati et mites effecti sunt. Cumque venisset ad fretum, invenit eum impletum cum magna inundatione maris, undis tumescentibus. Siccus enim erat quando fratres per eum transierunt. Tunc Dominus divisit fretum in duas partes, et sanctus Kannechus siccis pedibus per ipsum transivit cum vacuo plastro et iterum cum onusto rediit. Quod sanctus abbas videns, valde timuit et obedientem discipulum honoratus est et equonimum eius increpavit.</p>	<p>The steward however, seeing how much the abbot loved the boy, at the urging of the devil he began to hate the boy Cainech and to persecute him. One day he came, merciless and angry, to Cainech who was sitting reading; he rebuked him and saying, ‘All your community³⁰ with their cattle and carts have gone across the channel³¹ to get some necessary materials. You hurry after them too.’</p> <p>So Saint Cainech obediently arose, and the steward gave him two oxen, both untamed and wild, but when they were yoked they became mild. And when he had come to the channel he found it filled with a great flood of seawater, with swelling waves. It had been dry when his brethren had crossed over. Then the Lord divided [the waters of] the channel in two parts, and Saint Cainech crossed over with dry feet with his empty wagon, and came back again with it laden. Seeing this, the holy abbot was much afraid, and he honoured the obedient disciple and he rebuked his steward.</p>
<p>6: Post hec, cum sanctus Kannechus apud ipsum magistrum utrumque canonem legisset et ecclesiasticas regulas didicisset, voluit prius ire Romam et post hec ad Hyberniam reverti, ut suam plebem a gentilitate ad Dominum converteret, et hoc consilium magistro placuit. Tunc sanctus Kannechus, accipiens sacerdotalem gradum, in Italiam pergere perrexit, ubi multas virtutes fecit.</p>	<p>After these things, when Saint Cainech had read both canons³² with that master and had learned the ecclesiastical rules, he wanted to go first to Rome, and after that to return to Ireland in order to convert his people to the Lord from paganism, and this plan pleased his master. Then Saint Cainech, receiving priestly orders, made haste to go to Italy where he did many miracles.</p>
<p>7: Quadam autem die, cum ibi sanctus</p>	<p>One day when Saint Cainech was travelling</p>

²⁹ Literally ‘to work’, but the *opus Dei* or ‘work of God’ in a church or monastery is prayer. This is normally what a bell was used for. It is possible, however, that the bell was calling the brothers to a more ordinary work – milking cows or sweeping floors.

³⁰ *familia* here refers to the community of monks or clergy, not to his kin.

³¹ The Bristol Channel? This seems like a long way to take your cattle and carts, and thus might argue against Llancarvan as the place envisaged by the author. If he had Kilmadock in mind, the ‘channel’ might have been the River Forth – a much more modest expedition. But *fretum* can mean ‘estuary’ as well as ‘channel’, and the fact that some have already crossed over when it was dry suggests a tidal zone. Perhaps we should not press the details of this story too closely to find the ‘original’ place where it happened. It is a miracle story, and its precise location may have been of little interest to the author.

³² Ó Riain sees the expression ‘both canons’ as suggestive of a later date of composition (2011, 139).

<p>Kannechus iter ageret, incidit in manus .xii. latronum, qui eum occidere voluerunt. Sanctus vero vir predicabat eis verbum Dei. Illi vero, non audientes, elevaverunt manus ad interficiendum eum. Statim quasi duodecim lapides siccati sunt, non valentes se movere. Tunc illi penitentiam agentes crediderunt, et soluti sunt.</p>	<p>there, he fell into the hands of twelve robbers who wanted to kill him. The holy man began to preach the word of God to them, but they did not listen and raised their hands to kill him. Immediately they were immobilised,³³ like twelve stones, unable to move. Then they repented, believed, and were released.</p>
<p>8. Alio quoque die, sanctus Kannechus, iter agens in Italia, invenit ibi in deserto armentarium cuiusdam regis, et ipse letatus est in adventu eius et invenit gratiam in oculis illius. Tunc sanctus Kannechus dedit ei aliud munusculum auri, quod secum habuit. Audiens autem rex ille crudelis et immitis ab aliis nunciantibus sibi quod sanctus Kannechus aurum dedisset servo et rustico, iratus est valde, et displicuit ei donum regi congruum servo dari, et dixit, “Reus est mortis qui hoc opus insolitum ausus est facere.” Tunc rex ille iussit rogam magnum incendi et sanctum Kannechum in illum mitti. Quod iuxta preceptum factum est, sed statim ignis ille a Deo extinctus est, non audens tangere sanctum Dei.</p> <p>Quod videns, rex iussit sanctum iterum puniri et in picem calidum mitti. Sed cum hoc ministri fecerunt, de licore ferventi sanctus sanus evasit.</p> <p>Tunc lapidem magnum ligaverunt colle eius et miserunt eum in profundum maris. Sed Dominus elevavit servum suum super mare et ad portum placitum perduxit eum illesum.</p> <p>Tunc omnes uno ore clamaverunt, “Mirabilis vir est, quem ignis non urit, mare non mergit.” Tunc omnes cum rege genua flexerunt et crediderunt. Obtulitque rex Deo et Kannecho magnas oblationes, quantum potest acies oculorum in die sereno videre, cum sua civitate, ibique nomen Kannechi usque in hodiernum diem, ut periti dicunt, celebre habetur.</p>	<p>On another day Saint Cainnech, journeying through Italy, came upon the herdsman of a certain king, and he was delighted at his arrival and he found favour in his sight. Saint Cainnech then gave him a tiny gift, something made of gold which he had with him. However, the cruel and savage king, hearing from some other messengers that Saint Cainnech had give gold to his rustic slave, was furious, enraged that a gift fit for a king had been given to a slave. And he said, “He is worthy of death, he who dared to do this unaccustomed deed.” Then the king commanded a great fire to be lit and Saint Cainnech to be thrown into it. But when his order had been obeyed, the fire was straight away put out by God; it did not dare to touch God’s saint.</p> <p>Seeing this, the king again commanded the saint to be punished, and to be cast into boiling tar. But when his servants did it, the saint escaped unharmed from the boiling liquid.</p> <p>Then they tied a great stone around his neck and cast him into the depths of the sea. But the Lord raised his servant above the sea and brought him unharmed to a calm harbour.</p> <p>Then all cried with one voice, “This man is amazing: fire does not burn him, sea does not drown him.” Then all of them, with the king, knelt down and believed. And the king gave to God and Cainnech great offerings, as much as the gaze of his eyes could see on a clear day, together with his city. And the name of Cainnech is still held in honour there today, as well-informed people say.</p>
<p>9. Kannechus igitur suam sepulturam et suam resurrectionem in illa civitate oblata cum rege supradicto futuram esse promisit. Sed angelus Dei, sanctum frequenter visitans, illum increpavit propter incautam promissionem, qui resurrectionem in Hibernia predixit.</p> <p>Sanctus ergo Kannechus in dubitatione</p>	<p>And so Cainnech promised that his own burial and his resurrection³⁴ in the future would be in that city which he had offered, with the aforesaid king. But the angel of God, visiting the saint frequently, rebuked him for this rash promise and foretold that Cainnech’s resurrection would be in Ireland.</p> <p>Saint Cainnech was therefore troubled by</p>

³³ Literally ‘dried up’, but that doesn’t seem quite the right term in English.

³⁴ The place of burial (and therefore of resurrection) was an important feature of the cult of saints. The place in which a saint’s body lay was a holy place, and those buried alongside that holy body would, on the last day, benefit from their association with the saint by his or her prayers for them.

<p>anxiatus erat inter suam promisionem et verbum angeli, sed Dominus verus iudex adiuvavit illum. Nam draco igneus de celo descendit et extremum digitum pedis dextri sancti Kannichi circumcidit. Sanctus autem vir Kannechus, suam promisionem implens, digitum suum reliquit et, verbo angeli obediense, ad Hyberniam reversus est. Rex vero ille supradictus postea vir mirabilis et episcopus fuit.</p>	<p>doubt, torn between his own promise and the angel's word. But the Lord, the true judge, helped him. For a fiery dragon came down from the sky and bit off the little toe of the saint's right foot. Then the holy man Cainnech left his toe behind [with the king], fulfilling his promise, and obeying the word of the angel he returned to Ireland. The aforesaid king became thereafter a wonderful man and a bishop.</p>
<p>10. Veniens itaque sanctus Kannechus ad suam gentem, predicavit verbum Dei conlactaneo suo Albo Mendaci, suadabatque ei vir sanctus ut semetipsum suasque pecunias Deo offeret. Sed rex ille, nolens acquiescere, tandem dixit: "Si prodest tibi, extremum digitum meum manualementi tibi ac Deo ymolabo."</p> <p>Kannechus dixit: "Valde prodest et Deo gratum est." Ymolans ergo rex unum digitum suum parvulum Deo, statim digitus ille versus est in dolorem et in tumorem magnum, ac paulatim manum tenens dolor totum corpus invasit.</p> <p>Tunc rex, illud videns, ait: "Putabam quod michi melius esset si, licet parvam, partem Deo dedissem, sed video quod peius est michi."</p> <p>Kannechus dixit: "Mos est bonis heredibus quod si, licet parvam, hereditatem acceperint, bene crescit apud illos. Tu ergo modicam hereditatem unius digiti tui Deo dedisti, et ipse in unum digitum veniens dilatavit terminos suos, ut totum corpus teneat." Kainnecho autem orante et illum benedicente, ab omni dolore corporis et anime sanatus est.</p>	<p>And when Saint Cainnech came back to his own people, he preached the word of God to his foster-brother, Albus Mendax, and the holy man urged him to offer himself and his cattle to God. But the king did not wish to agree, but finally said, "If it will do you any good, I will offer to you and to God my little finger."</p> <p>Cainnech said, "It will be of great profit, and pleasing to God." The king therefore offered his one little finger to God, and immediately that finger was in pain, and swelled greatly, and soon the pain that gripped the hand went into the whole body.</p> <p>When the king saw this he said, "I reckoned that it would be better for me if I gave some part to God, even if it was small, but now I see that it is worse for me."</p> <p>Cainnech said, "It is customary among good heirs that if they accept their inheritance, even if it is small, it increases with them. So you have given the little inheritance of one of your fingers to God, and he, inheriting that one finger, has enlarged his boundaries so that he has the whole body." Then Cainnech prayed and blessed him, and he was freed from all pain of body and soul.</p>
<p>11. Kennachus ergo ab illo Mendace Albo recedens in curru, pauperem se rogantem in itinere inveniens, duos equos curruus sui tribuit ei et, in via sedens, ipse canebat psalmos. Albus autem Mendax, per eandem viam veniens, dixit sancto: "De grege meo in montanis locis habitans duo equi indomiti adducantur tibi." Venientes autem equi duo indomiti ac feri, statim mites ac domiti currum sancti vehebant.</p>	<p>So Cainnech, in a chariot, left Albus Mendax behind, and on his journey he came across a poor man asking for help. He gave him the two horses from his chariot and, sitting in the road, he began to sing psalms. Then Albus Mendax came along the road and said to the saint, "Two untamed horses shall be brought to you from my herd living in the hill country." When the two untamed and wild horses came, immediately they became mild and tame and drew the saint's chariot.</p>
<p>12. Alio autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus in regione Cennacte in via ambularet cum populo, antiquum caput hominis mortui conspiciunt. Quod videns, eius familia dixit: "Si nobis hoc caput veras fabulas narrasset, multa dixisset, quia, ut putamus, ab antiquis temporibus</p>	<p>Another day, when Saint Cainnech was walking along the road with his people in the region of the Ciannachta, they saw the ancient head of a dead man. Seeing it his community said, "If this head could tell us true stories, it would say many things, since we reckon it has been dead since</p>

<p>defunctum fuit.”</p> <p>Quod vir gratia plenus audiens, orans benedixit caput aridum antiquum; et statim eius caru, cutis, capilli deforis illud induentes, anima autem intus vivificans, revixit et sic locutum est: “Fochen, fochen, a Kainnich!” Et post hec genus suum et nomen et conversationem suam diligenter narravit eis, et locum sepulti corporis sui ostendit, et animam suam in inferno esse confessus est per annos .xxx., et alia multa revalavit eis. Et per sancti predicationem credidit, et baptismum accepit, et positum cum corpore suo sepulto in alio loco.</p>	<p>ancient times.”</p> <p>Hearing this, the grace-filled man prayed and blessed the ancient dry head; and immediately endowing it on the outside with flesh, skin and hair, and quickening it with a soul inside, it lived again and began to speak: “Alas, alas, O Cainnech.” And then it carefully told them of its kindred, its name and its way of life. It showed him the place where its body was buried, and it confessed that its soul had been in hell for thirty years, and it revealed many other things to them. And it belived by the preaching of the holy man, and it received baptism, and then it was placed with its body which was buried in another place.</p>
<p>13. Alio quoque die, cum sanctus Kannechus ambularet in via cum fratribus suis, subito non apparuit eis, et nesciebant quo iret. Et post paucas horas iterum ad eos rediens, interrogaverunt eum quo exivit. Quibus respondit: “Unus de monachis meis, nomina Senach Ron, qui michi corpus et animam suam et stirpem suosque agros obtulit, nunc iugulatus est in dextera parte Lagensium, et mortuus est. Et ego audivi vocem eius vocantem me in auxilium sibi, et ideo, a vobis prospere exiens, circa animam illius contra demones portantes eam ad infernum pugnavi atque ab illis violenter rapui. Carius enim mihi erat animam salvare quam corpus.</p>	<p>Another day, when Saint Cainnech was walking along the road with his brethren, suddenly they lost sight of him and they did not know where he had gone. After a few hours he came back to them, and they asked him where he had gone. He replied to them, “One of my monks, Senach Ron by name, who offered to me his body and soul and his descendants and his fields, has just now been slain in the southern part of Leinster, and he is dead. And I heard his voice calling me to help him, and so going away from you for a while, I fought against the demons over his soul as they were carrying it off to hell, and I violently seized it from them. For it seemed better to me to save his soul than his body.³⁵</p>
<p>14. Quodam autem die, sanctus Kannechus vidit congregationem plebis Kennacte in quodam loco circa quendam magum, qui coram eis signa faciebat fallaciter et a stultis ... , et divinum honorem dabant illi. Nam omni multitudini visum est quod magus hic per medium cuiusdam maxime arboris illic stantis transiret. Tunc sanctus Kannechus benedixit magum, et viderunt omnes magum illum secus latus arboris ambulare. Tunc omnes gloriam Deo dederunt et Kainnecho, et magus miser despectus est.</p>	<p>On another day Saint Cainnech saw the people of the Ciannachta in a particular place gathered round a wizard who was deceptively performing signs in front of them and by some stupid [...³⁶] and they were giving him divine honour. Now it seemed to the whole crowd that this wizard could go through the middle of a huge tree stood in that place. Then Saint Cainnech blessed the wizard, and they all saw the wizard walk round the side of the tree. Then everyone gave glory to God and to Cainnech, and the wretched wizard was scorned.</p>
<p>15. Alio autem die, in tempore .xl^{me}, ad alium locum sanctus Kainnechus ad hospicium venit magnamque leticiam apud familiam loci illius invenit. Sed ista familia, nichil aliud habens refectioi eius, lardam coctam dederunt ei.</p>	<p>On another day, in the time of Lent, Saint Cainnech came to find lodging in another place, and he found great delight in the community of that place. But that community had nothing else to feed him with, and gave him only cooked pig</p>

³⁵ The common understanding of death was that immediately after a person died their soul went into the air where angels and demons would contend over it, and the outcome of their struggle determined whether the soul went to heaven or hell. The outcome was largely determined by the faith and character of the person during his/her lifetime, but was also affected by the assistance given by angels and the intervention of saints.

³⁶ Part of the text is missing, presumably indicating that the ‘stupid’ people believed this wizard.

<p>Quod sanctus cum gratiarum actione suscepit et benedixit, et de larda optimum frumentum fecit. Nam crastino die fragmenta earum frumentum erant, nisi fragmenta unius laici respuentis comedere, que cruenta reperta sunt.</p>	<p>fat. The saint received it with a gesture of thanks and blessed it, and he made of the fat the very best wheat-cake. Now the next day the [left-over] fragments of it were still wheat-cake, except for the pieces left by a warrior³⁷ who had refused to eat, and they were found to be blood-stained.</p>
<p>16. Quadam autem die, sanctus Kannechus invenit hominem cum tabulari facie, sine oculis et naribus, et valde misertus est ei. Cumque non haberet aquam de prope, iussit comitibus suis ut in illo loco terram foderent. Cumque fodissent, statim fons prorupit, et de ista aqua benedicta egrotum aspergens, date sunt ei aures et nares et oculi.</p>	<p>One day Saint Cainnech found a man with a flat face, without eyes or nose, and it seemed most pitiable to him. And as he did not have any water of his own, he commanded his companions to dig the earth in that place. And when they had dug, at once a spring of water gushed forth, and he sprinkled the sick man with this blessed water, ears and nose and eyes were given to him.</p>
<p>17. Quodam autem tempore, cum sanctus Kannechus hospitaretur die dominico in quodam loco propinquo ad Tollum Ruaid, dixit ministris suis: “Ite nobis ad piscatores fluminis. Forsitan Deus instruet illos adiuvere nos de piscibus suis.” Illis autem negantibus dare donum de suis piscibus, Kannechus uni ex fratribus, Scellano, dixit: “Cum baculo meo ad tollum propinquum perge.” Ille autem, pergens, cum baculum sancti tinxit. Statim piscis mire magnitudinis super illud venit. Quem Scellanus ad terram trahens, iterum baculum in tollum misit et alium pisces cepit. Quod Spiritu Dei Kannechus, in domu sua manens, vidit et dixit, “O Scellane, avarum est. Sufficit nobis quod captum est.” Ille autem, audiens sancti sermonem, pisces in mare proiecit et cum pisce prius capto ad domum rediit.</p>	<p>At another time, when Saint Cainnech was a guest on a Sunday in a place near to <i>Tollus Ruaid</i>,³⁸ he said to his servants: “Go for us to the fishermen by the river. Perhaps God will instruct them to help us with some of their fish.” But they refused to make a gift of their fish. Cainnech said to one of the brothers, Scellanus, “Go to the nearby stream with my staff.” He went there and touched [the stream] with the saint’s staff. Immediately a fish of wonderful size came upon it. Scellanus brought it to earth and put the staff in the stream again and caught another fish. Cainnech, remaining in his house, saw by the Spirit of God and said, “O Scellanus, that’s greedy. What you have caught is enough for us.” And he, hearing the saint’s word, threw the fish back in the sea and came back to the house with the first fish he had caught.</p>
<p>18. Quodam autem tempore, sanctus Kannechus dominica die venit ad sanctum Comgallum ac, ab eo cum magna letitia receptus, Comgellus³⁹ dixit hospitibus: “Debitum opus est predicationis. Ideo Kannechus nobis hodie predicet.” Hoc preceptum Kannechus cum humilitate suscipiens, mirabilem valde predicationem predicavit, et omnis populus vehementer fleuit. Tunc Comgallus dixit: “Frequenter populus iste verbum Dei fleuit audiens, sed talem ac tantum</p>	<p>One time Saint Cainnech came on a Sunday to Saint Comgall and was welcomed by him with great joy. Comgall said to the guests, “The work of preaching is due. Therefore let Cainnech preach to us today.” Humbly accepting this command, Cainnech preached a most admirable sermon, and all the people wept loudly. Then Comgall said, “These people often weep on hearing the word of God, but so much and such loud weeping and so many tears they have never shed before today.”</p>

³⁷ *laicus* ‘warrior’ or ‘layman’.

³⁸ *tollus* ‘full stream, cataract’. This Latin place-name means ‘red cataract’. It may refer to Assaroe (*eas ruaid* ‘red cataract or waterfall’) on the River Erne in Donegal. There was a Cistercian monastery founded there in 1178. Traditional place-name lore told stories which gave the name a different meaning, relating it to a deity called Áed Ruad. One story tells that he drowned there while swimming in the rapid water and gazing at his own reflection, so the name was interpreted as ‘the cataract of Ruad’.

³⁹ *sic*. Comgallus and Comgellus are two quite different names in origin, but do get confused from time to time in medieval sources. It is likely that Comgallus is intended here throughout.

<p>fletum et multas lacrimas usque hodie non effudit.”</p> <p>Tunc sanctus Kannechus suum semper proverbium dixit: “Scit Filius Virginis, nemphe illius est si cor eorum mollificetur, quia hesternodie ab ore angeli Dei audivi.”</p>	<p>Then Saint Cainnech uttered the saying he always used: “The Virgin’s Son knows, of course it is due to him if their hearts are softened, for I heard [the sermon] yesterday from the mouth of an angel of God.”</p>
<p>19. Alio autem die, quedam mulier cum suo filio ad sanctum Kannechum venit, dicens: “O sancte Dei, quid faciam? Ecce iste filius meus impius est mihi et inobediens.”</p> <p>Tunc Kannechus increpavit filium et verbum Dei predicavit illi, ut sue matri pietatem exhiberet. Sed ipse puerulus, superbus et lascivus, verbum Dei despiciens, super equum ascendit, cicius recedens, et subito de equo cecidit et mortuus est. Tunc pia mater, flens atque lugens, rogavit sanctum ut suum filium sibi suscicaret. Et orante Kannecho, resurrexit et, penitentiam agens, genua flexit, matremque relinquens, secutus est Kainnechum.</p> <p>Duxitque eum Kainnechus secum in Britanniam et alligavit Kannechus pedes illius filii compede, ne vagus esset, et clavem illius compedis Kannechus proiecit in mare.</p> <p>Postquam autem iste filius .vii. annis in Britannia mansit, dixit ei Kannechus, “Vade iterum ad Hyberniam et, in quocumque loco inveneris clavem compedis tui, ibi mane.”</p> <p>Venit ergo ille filius ad Hyberniam. Cumque ad ampnem Liffi venisset, ibi piscatores invenit et, postulans ab eis piscem, accepit et in medio ipsius piscis clavem sui compedis invenit, in civitate que dicitur Letube Kainnich ibique mansit. Hic est autem Liber, filius Aradi, vir venerabilis in celo et in terra.</p>	<p>Another day a certain woman came to Saint Cainnech with her son saying, “O holy man of God, what shall I do? Look, this son of mine is undutiful and disobedient.”</p> <p>Then Cainnech reproved the son and preached the word of God to him, urging him to show some devotion to his mother. But that wee lad, proud and wanton, despising God’s word, mounted a horse and swiftly riding away he suddenly fell off the horse and was killed. Then his loving mother, weeping and mourning, asked the saint to raise up her son for her. And at the prayer of Cainnech [the boy] rose and knelt and did penance. He left his mother and followed Cainnech.</p> <p>And Cainnech took him with him to Britain, and Cainnech fastened the feet of the boy with shackles lest he should wander off, and Cainnech threw the key of the shackles into the sea.</p> <p>After the boy had remained for seven years in Britain, Cainnech said to him, “Go back to Ireland and wherever you find the key of your shackles, stay there.”</p> <p>So the boy came to Ireland. And when he had come to the River Liffey, he found some fishermen there and asked them for a fish; he took it and found the key of his shackles there in the middle of that fish. And he remained there in the city which is called <i>Letube Kainnich</i>.⁴⁰ And this man is Liber⁴¹ the son of Arad, a man who is venerable in heaven and on earth.</p>
<p>20. Quadam autem die, sanctus Columba Kille et Comgallus et Kannechus erant congregati in uno loco, et ros pluvie et nivis pluit super eos. Sed vestimenta duorum sanctorum Comgalli et</p>	<p>One day Saint Colum Cille and Comgallus and Cainnech were gathered in one place, and a sprinkling of rain and snow fell on them. The garments of saints Comgall and Columba were</p>

⁴⁰ I am not able to identify this place, but from its context here it is somewhere on or near the River Liffey. It may be the same place as the monastery referred to in AU 772, where ‘Dainél grandson of Foiléne, scribe of Letuba (*scriba Letubai*) died, and in AU 779, ‘Conall grandson of Oiséne, abbot of Letuba (*Letubai*)’ who died in that year. The Liffey rises in the Wicklow Hills south of Dublin, and then sweeps round in a tight arc, bringing Cainnech therefore into the northern part of Leinster, perhaps on the margins of Leinster and Southern Uí Néill territory.

⁴¹ It is possible that this Liber is the person of that name who died as abbot of Cainnech’s monastery of Achad Bó in AD 619 (*Annals of Ulster*). The Latin form of his means ‘free’. Is the name a pun on the fact that he was set free by Cainnech after seven years of ‘penance’? It may be worth noting that a diminutive Gaelic form of the same name, *Librán*, appears in the *Vita Columbae* (ii, 39), where the man Librán has to serve a seven-year penance on Tíree for his past sins. There is a saint called *Liber Lethdummi* in the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, whose feastday is kept on 30 March (*M.Tallaght*, 28). He appears in the *Martyrology of Gorman* on the same date as *Liber cóir comlan*, ‘Liber, just, complete’, and a gloss says he is from *Lethduma*.

<p>Columbe valde humida erant, Kannichi vero vestimentum erat aridum et intactum a nive. Tunc sancti interrogaverunt cur illorum vestimenta humida erant, illius vero vestimentum aridum fuerit. Kannechus respondit: “Vos dicite quid in hac hora cogitastis.”</p> <p>Columba dixit: “Cogitavi in illa hora de mea familia periclitante in marina navigatione.”</p> <p>Comgallus dixit: “Mens mea sollicita est de fratribus in messe laborantibus.”</p> <p>Kannechus vero dixit: “Scit Filius Virginis quod tunc mens mea inter angelos in celo fuerit et a die <quo> illam in celam <ieci>, ea<m> iterum in terram non reduxi.”</p>	<p>very wet, but Cainnech’s clothing was dry and free of snow. Then the saints asked him why their clothing was wet but his clothing was dry. Cainnech replied, “Tell me what you were thinking about at the time.”</p> <p>Columba said, “I was thinking at the time of my community being in danger on a sea-voyage.”</p> <p>Comgall said, “My mind was worrying about my brothers labouring in the harvest.”</p> <p>Cainnech said, “The Virgin’s Son knows that my mind was in heaven among the angels and from the day in which I cast it into heaven I have not brought it back down to earth again.”⁴²</p>
<p>21. Kainnechus sanctus quemdam locum tenuit iuxta radicem cuiusdam montis in Britannia, sed solem non sufficienter videbat propter montem interpositum. Tunc angelus Dei ad eum venit, dicens: “Si mons nocet tibi aut te offendit, de loco suo moveatur. Iuxta evvangeli<i>] verbum in alium locum transferetur.”</p> <p>Sanctus dixit: “Non mea causa Dei elymenta movebuntur.”</p> <p>Deus vero, volens placere Kannecho, in sequenti nocte montem temptavit iacere, donec sanctus prohibens dixit: “Exibo, exibo a loco isto. Montem autem nolo mutare usque ad diem iudicii.”</p> <p>Et sic factum est. Mons itaque, ut periti ferunt, hucusque habet scisuram et quasi fracturam in signum mutationis eius, nisi Kannechus prohiberet.</p>	<p>Saint Cainnech had a church⁴³ next to the bottom of a certain mountain in Britain, but he did not see the sun enough because of the mountain being in the way. Then an angel of God came to him saying, “If the mountain harms you or offends you, let it be moved away from its place. According to the word of the Gospel, it will be moved to another place.”⁴⁴</p> <p>The saint said, “The elements of God will not be moved on my account.”⁴⁵</p> <p>But God, wishing to please Cainnech, sought to cast away the mountain the following night, but the saint prevented him and said, “I will go away, I will go away from this place, but I do not want the mountain to move until the day of judgement.”</p> <p>And so it was done. And the mountain, as learned men say, has even now a fissure where it was about to break off, marking its movement, [which would have happened] had Cainnech not forbidden it.</p>
<p>22. Alio quoque die, sanctus Kannechus domum in qua fuerat deseruit ignemque in ea vivum et accensum dereliquit. Tunc ignis, suos terminos transiens, domum incendit et consumpsit, sed evangelium, apertum in eadem domo relictum, incorruptam atque ab igne intactum inventum est.</p>	<p>On another day Saint Cainnech went out of the house in which he was staying and he left the fire in it, live and burning. Then the fire, crossing over its limits, burned the house and consumed it. But the gospel book, which had been left open in that same house, was found unharmed and untouched by the fire.</p>

⁴² Another story illustrating the moral superiority of Cainnech over Columba, following the pattern observed by Máire Herbert. Given that the incident prior to this one, § 19, arose from Cainnech’s voyage with Liber to Britain, and that many of the subsequent episodes are also located in Britain – indeed, in what is now Scotland – the author of the Life may have imagined this episode also taking place in Scotland, especially since it involves the presence of Columba of Iona.

⁴³ *locus* ‘place’ was used in early medieval texts to mean ‘church’, and several place-names contain *locus* (> *loc*) in this sense.

⁴⁴ Matthew 17:20.

⁴⁵ The word *elementa* was commonly used in Hiberno-Latin to refer to the natural order as created by God.

<p>23. Alio quoque die, Kannechus, a domu suo exiens, apertam ianuam domus reliquit, et evangelium similiter apertum in ea iuxta ianuam deseruit. Tunc ventus et nix per apertam ianuam repleverunt domum, ita pene cooperirentur nive limina domus, sed, evangelium, non audens tangere, illud siccum inventum est.</p>	<p>On another day, Cainnech went out from his house and left the door of the house open, and he left the Gospel book open in the same way next to the door. Then wind and snow filled the house through the open door, so that the thresholds of the house were nearly covered with snow. But it did not dare to touch the gospel-book, which was found to be dry.</p>
<p>24. Quadam autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus trans dorsum Britannie ambularet, invenit ibi in medio solitudinis quandam mulierem in die nivis, fame et frigore semimortuam, et filiam eius parvulam apud eam mortuam invenit. Tunc sanctus Kannechus dixit comitibus: “Ignem accendite et mulierem valde frigidam adiuvate et cibo eam pascite.” Tunc illa mulier, igne califacta et cibo saciata, fortis facta est. Filiam quoque eius mortuam sanctus Kannechus resuscitavit. Et in illo loco usque hodie cruces magne conspiciuntur.</p>	<p>One day when Saint Cainnech was walking across Drumalban,⁴⁶ he found there in the midst of a wasteland a certain woman. It was a snowy day, and she was half dead with hunger and cold, and her little daughter with her he found to be dead. Then Saint Cainnech said to his companions, “Light a fire and help this completely frozen woman, and give her something to eat.” Then the woman, warmed by the fire and satisfied with food, was made strong again. And Saint Cainnech raised her dead daughter. And in that place there are great crosses to be seen down to this day.</p>
<p>25. Alio autem die, sanctus Kannechus intravit in insulam Ie. Cumque osculatus fuisset altare, caput suum contra cornu altaris incaute percussit, et de capite eius gutta sanguinis venit. Et illa gutta capitis Kannechi data est super filiam Bruiddi, regis Pictorum. Erat autem ceca et muta et surda, et vidit et audivit et locuta est et, sana facta, rediit.</p>	<p>On another day Saint Cainnech went to the island of Iona. When he kissed the altar,⁴⁷ he carelessly struck his head against the corner of the altar,⁴⁸ and a drop of blood came out of his head. And that drop from Cainnech’s head was applied to the daughter of Bruide, king of the Picts. She was blind and dumb and deaf, and she saw and heard and spoke. And having been made well, she went home.</p>
<p>26. Laicus quidam, Tulcanus nomine, Deo placere desiderans, de Hybernia in insulam Ie ad sanctum Collumbam Kyle peregre perrexit, ibique, baculum tenens, apud Columbam monachus mansit, secum habens parvulum filium, quem amabat valde. Alio autem die, Bithinus ad Columbam dixit: “Iste laicus plus amat puerum suum quam Deum. Ideo melius est illos separari, quam iungi simul” Dictum est igitur illi ut filiolum suum de</p>	<p>A certain layman, Tulchán by name, wishing to please God hastened on a journey from Ireland to the island of Iona to Saint Colum Cille, and there, having taken the staff,⁴⁹ remained as a monk with Columba. He had with him his little son whom he loved very much. One day Baithéne⁵⁰ said to Columba, “That layman loves his son more than he loves God. It would be better for them to be separated than to be joined together.” It was decided therefore that he should throw</p>

⁴⁶ Dorsum Britanniae, ‘the spine of Britain’, is in Gaelic Drumalban. It appears several times in Adomnán’s *Vita Columbae* and is there seen as the division between Dál Riata, the Gaelic west of Scotland, and Pictland in the east. In this story Cainnech is re-tracing Columba’s steps, and showing that he is as great, or greater, than Columba was. It is part of the anti-Columban agenda of *Vita Cainnechi*. In this and several of the following chapters, Cainnech is penetrating ‘Columba’s territory’ (including Tiree where Iona had a daughter-house, and even Iona itself) and outdoing him in holiness, miracles and morals.

⁴⁷ It is still the custom for the clergy to kiss the altar at the beginning of the eucharistic celebration.

⁴⁸ Medieval Christian altars do not have ‘horns’, so I have translated *cornu* as ‘corner’. But bear in mind that the altar of the Israelites did have horns, covered in gold, which were occasionally smeared with blood.

⁴⁹ To ‘take the staff’, i.e. the pilgrim’s staff, was to become a *peregrinus*, one who vowed to detach himself from his homeland, from the protection of land and kin, and to live as a stranger on the earth for the sake of Christ.

⁵⁰ Baithéne was a cousin of Columba, and succeeded him as the abbot of Iona.

<p>excelsa rupe in mare iacaret. Hoc autem durum preceptum monachus obediens implevit Deoque gratias egit et, licet cum magno dolore cordis, in maris profundum iecit parvulum. Ipse autem est Mundu, filius Tulcani.</p> <p>Quod sanctus Kannechus, Spiritu Dei providens, in regione Heth habitans atque ad Hyberniam navigare properans, declinavit prius ad sanctum Columbam, parvulumque filium super undas descendentem invenit. Quem secum Kannechus in navi deferens, ad sanctum Columbam cum irata valde mente venit, dicens: “Ex hoc nunc amici non erimus, quia tam crudele imperium precepisti et miserum peregrinum afflixisti.” Et vix potuit mens eius placari.</p>	<p>his little son into the sea from the top of a high rock. The obedient monk fulfilled this hard command and gave thanks to God, and though it was with great sorrow in his heart, he threw the little one into the depth of the sea. This was Munnu, the son of Tulchán.</p> <p>Now Saint Cainnech foresaw this by the Spirit of God, while he was staying in the region of Tíree⁵¹ and making haste to sail to Ireland. He turned aside first to Saint Columba and found the little boy on the waves, going down. Cainnech took him up into the ship and he came to Saint Columba in an extremely angry state of mind, saying, “From this time on we will not be friends, for you issued such a cruel command and you have afflicted a poor pilgrim.” And his mind could hardly be placated.⁵²</p>
<p>27. In insula Ie, cum, quadam die, hora nona appropinquasset, sacerdos ut mos est, ad interrogandum Columbam perrexit, sed Columbam in suo loco non invenit. Diligenter per insulam querebatur, nec inventus est. Tunc Bithinus iussit ut sacerdos (cum⁵³) cymbalum percuteret. Cumque fratres celebrare inceperent, subito Columba cum igneo vultu ac fulgurantibus oculis in ecclesiam venit ad eos. Quod ut vidit Bithinus, genua flexit et penitentiam agere promisit, sicut Columba iudicaret. Cui ille dixit: “Non te iudicabo. Ad Kannechum vade ut te iudicet.”</p> <p>Bithinus igitur, Kannechum querens per Hyberniam, post tres annos invenit. Cui Kannechus dixit: “Vade ad domum tuam, quia penitentiam implevisti per laborem circuitus trium annorum.” (Vel scintillam de igne inferni in manu sua portavit secum.)</p> <p>Bithinus dixit: “Forsitan Columba non me recipiat.”</p> <p>Kannechus respondit: “Porta illi tecum in signum graficum hoc, quod in aere ex pallio eius cadens reliquit quando ille et ego et</p>	<p>On the island of Iona one day the hour of None was approaching, and a priest went to question Columba, as the custom was, but he did not find Columba in his place. He was sought diligently throughout the island, but he could not be found. Then Baithéne ordered that the priest should ring his bell. And when the brothers had begun to celebrate, suddenly Columba came into the church to them with a fiery face and eyes flashing lightning. When Baithéne saw this, he knelt down and promised to do penance in whatever way that Columba should judge. But Columba said to him, “I shall not judge you. Go to Cainnech that he might judge you.”</p> <p>So Baithéne went seeking Cainnech throughout Ireland, and after three years he found him. Cainnech said to him, “Go to your house, for you have fulfilled your penance by your labour of going about for three years.” (Or he carried with him a spark of the fire of hell in his hand.)⁵⁴</p> <p>Baithéne said, “Perhaps Columba will not accept me.”</p> <p>Cainnech replied, “Bring him this, as a written sign,⁵⁵ which he left behind after it fell from his</p>

⁵¹ Tíree also appears in *Vita Columbae*, as *Ethica Terra*, or *Ethica Insula*.

⁵² This is the most dramatic of the sequence of events in which Cainnech’s holiness is contrasted with Columba’s moral failure. Adomnán’s *Life of Columba* includes a story about Munnu son of Tulchán seeking admission to Iona (as an adult), but arriving there after Columba’s death and being sent away by Baithéne, the new abbot, to found his own monastery at Taghmon in Leinster (VC i, 2).

⁵³ *cum* possibly in error for *suum*.

⁵⁴ Heist notes: ‘Sentence clearly incomplete and seems to be a variant of the same story.’ It would actually make more sense if the sentence in brackets were placed a little earlier in the paragraph, to describe how Baithéne made his tour through Ireland with a spark of fire from hell in his hand. In any case, the sentence is rather orphaned as it stands. But see the following note for possible clarification.

⁵⁵ Or given that we are not told what the ‘written sign’ actually says, perhaps translate this ‘as if it were a written sign’. In that case it might be that what fell out of Columba’s cloak was the ‘spark of the fire of hell’ mentioned earlier in the story. That would make sense in the context of a battle in the air with demons. The difficulty here

<p>Comgallus cito perreximus ad Eugenium episcopum Aird Sratha, nos vocantem in auxilium sibi, qui in aere contra demones pugnabat circa animam Aidui monachi sui. Agnitum enim erit apud illum hoc signum. Et dic ei quod nobiscum inoportunum erat quando vox cimbali vestri nos ammovit a nostro certamine.”</p>	<p>cloak into the air when he and I and Comgall were rushing to Éogan the bishop of Ardstraw,⁵⁶ he having called us to his aid as he was fighting in the air against demons over the soul of Aed, his monk. He will recognise this sign. And tell him that for us it was inopportune when the voice of your bell brought us away from our struggle.”⁵⁷</p>
<p>28. Alio die immense tempestatis et intolerabilis magnitudinis undarum, dixit Collumba Kyle fratribus: “Preparate cito hospicium et aquam ad lavandos pedes.”</p> <p>Cui unus ex fratribus ait: “Quis in hac die valde ventosa et periculosa navigare potest?”</p> <p>Columba dixit: “Ecce sanctus Kannechus, electus Dei, hodie ad nos veniet, cui Dominus donavit tranquillitatem in tempestate, et post aliquod intervallum navis Kannichi ad nos veniet.”</p> <p>Et portum tenuit. In cuius obviam Columba cum fratribus venit, et ab eo honorifice susceptus est. Tunc fratres interrogaverunt familiam Kainnechi, dicentes: “Quomodo potuistis hodie navigare?”</p> <p>Illi responderunt: “Nobis Dominus omnipotens tranquillam viam fecit et placidam per immensas undas. Nam in mari undique circa nos erat seva tempesta, et ad longitudinem virgule circa navem nostram ex omne parte erat mitis tranquillitas.”</p>	<p>On another day, a day of a huge storm and waves of an unbearable size, Colum Cille said to his brothers, “Prepare the guest-house quickly and some water for washing feet.”</p> <p>One of the brothers said to him, “Who could possibly be sailing in this day, so windy and dangerous?”</p> <p>Columba said, “Behold, Saint Cainnech, God’s chosen one, will come to us today. The Lord has granted him calm in the storm, and after a short time Cainnech’s ship will come to us.”</p> <p>And he came to harbour. Columba came with the brethren to meet him on the way, and he was honourably received by him. Then the brethren asked the community of Cainnech, “How were you able to sail today?”</p> <p>They replied, “The Lord Almighty made a calm and peaceful passage for us, through the immense waves. In the sea all around us there was a ferocious storm, but for the length of a yard-arm all around our ship on every side there was gentle calm.”⁵⁸</p>
<p>29. Sanctus Kannechus die dominica in Ibdone insula hospitatus est. Mures autem loci illius ficones eius laceraverunt, carpserunt. Quam offensionem vir sanctus videns, maledixit mures atque de illa insula eiecit in sempiternum. Nam omnes mures congregatione facta, cum verbo sancti in maris profundum se precipitaverunt, et in illa insula usque hodie mures non vixerunt.</p>	<p>One Sunday Saint Cainnech was a guest on <i>Ibdone insula</i>.⁵⁹ Now the mice of that place shredded his shoes, tore them up. When the holy man saw this offence, he cursed the mice and drove them out of the island for ever. Thus when all the mice had been gathered together, at the word of the saint they threw themselves into the depth of the sea, and in that island no mice have lived until today.</p>

is that in one paragraph Baithéne appears to be carrying the spark with him, while in the following paragraph the mysterious ‘sign’ is something that Cainnech has and gives to Baithéne. I can see no way of clearing up this muddle.

⁵⁶ Ardstraw, a church in Co. Tyrone, barony of Strabane Lower. The author asserts the dependence of this holy bishop on the even more effective holiness of Cainnech, no doubt with some expectation that Aghaboe will acquire honour thereby.

⁵⁷ It seems that the ringing of the bell by Baithéne at the beginning of this episode took place as Columba, Comgall and Cainnech were fighting demons, and summoned Columba to his prayers on Iona, explaining that saint’s anger and his flashing eyes.

⁵⁸ This story is a retelling of *Vita Columbae* i, 4.

⁵⁹ Hogan identifies this with *Insulam Ybdan* which appears in *Vita Sancti Albei* §40, and suggests that it is Inis Sibthen in Limerick (Hogan 1910, s.n. Ibdan). However, we should consider the possibility that the author intended to refer to a Hebridean island, as this chapter is set among a whole sequence set in the Hebrides. Thomas Clancy (personal communication) has suggested that the name may refer to Uist.

<p>30. Alio quoque tempore, die dominico hospitatus est in alia insula, que dicitur Avium Insula, que vulgariter dicitur En Inis, ubi aves garule et valde loquaces illum offenderunt. Ideo loquacitatem illarum ipse prohibens, sermoni illius obedierunt. Nam omnes simul aves congregatae sunt et, sua pectora contra terram demittentes, tacuerunt et usque ad matutinum secunde ferie sine moto, sine sonitu manserunt, donec eas vir sanctus suo verbo solvit.</p>	<p>At another time he was a guest on a Sunday in another island which is called The Island of Birds, which in the common tongue is called <i>En Inis</i>, where noisy chattering birds annoyed him.⁶⁰ Therefore he forbade their songfulness, and they obeyed his word. And all the birds gathered together at once and, pressing their breasts to the ground, they were silent and motionless until the morning of the second day. They remained without a sound until the saint released them by his word.</p>
<p>31. Quadam autem die, sanctus Kannechus exiit ad visitandam sororem suam, nomine et merito Columbam, que in alio loco habitabat, et apud eam magnam letitiam invenit, et quasi vero hospiti diligenter ministrabat ei. Cui ille dixit: “Ubi puerulus ille est, alumpnus tuus, qui nobis ministrabat et pedes nostros lavabat et in adventu nostro letus fiebat?”</p> <p>Illa autem per artificialia verba mortem pueri revelare nolebat. Cui sanctus ait: “Non prandebimus donec veniat puer noster ad nos ministrandos.” Tunc puerulus ille, Breanus nomine, per verbum sancti statim a morte surrexit et ministrabat eos.</p>	<p>One day, Saint Cainnech went off to visit his sister, Columba by name and by merit.⁶¹ She lived in another place, and he found great delight with her, and she diligently served him as a true guest. He said to her, “Where is that little boy, your fosterling, who served us and washed our feet and was so happy at our arrival?”</p> <p>But she used evasive words, being unwilling to disclose the death of the boy,⁶² to which the saint said: “We will not eat until the boy comes to serve us.” Then the boy, Breanus by name, immediately rose from the dead at the word of the saint and began to serve them.</p>
<p>32. Alio autem tempore, episcopus Aidus, filius Brice, exiit ad regem Neill, Colmanum Modicum, filium Dermicii, qui habitabat in stagno Rosso, eratque episcopus Aidus iuxta</p>	<p>Another time, Bishop Áed mac Brice⁶³ went to the king of the Uí Néill, Colmán Bec, son of Diarmait, who dwelt on <i>Stagnum Rossum</i>.⁶⁴ Bishop Áed was beside the loch, fasting against</p>

⁶⁰ I have not been able to identify this place, but it may be in Scotland, given that this chapter and the preceding one are at the tail-end of a series of stories taking place there.

⁶¹ That is to say, Columba was her name, and as the Latin word *columa* means “dove”, she was as innocent as a dove as well. In Matthew 10:16, Jesus instructs his disciples, “Be as cunning as serpents, and as innocent as doves.”

⁶² The literal meaning of the Latin is, “She was unwilling to disclose the death of the boy by artificial words,” but I suspect some corruption in the text here, and my translation makes more sense in the context of the story.

⁶³ Áed was regarded as a patron saint of the Uí Néill. His principal church is regarded as the one at Rahugh (*ráth Áedo*, Áed’s fort) in what is now Westmeath. He is also patron of Killare, also in Westmeath, and only twelve miles east of Kilkenny West, a dedication to Cainnech (though this church does not seem to be mentioned in the Life). His death in 589 is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*. Though his Life in the Codex Salmanticensis has been argued to be early (eighth- or ninth-century), Ó Riain has argued for a twelfth-century date or later, partly because both his principal churches, Rahugh and Killare are close to the Augustinian priories at Durrow and Ballymore (Ó Riain 2011, 67), though Ballymore was only founded circa 1250 – too late to explain an Augustinian connection with a supposedly twelfth-century Life. This Áed may also be the saint culted at two churches both called Kirkmabreck in Galloway, Scotland.

⁶⁴ As we have seen above, Colmán Bec was a Southern Uí Néill king. He died in 587, and his descendants ruled over the Southern Uí Néill in the 760s.

This loch cannot be identified with certainty, and Hogan gives several possibilities. But given its association with Colmán Bec, whose descendants *Clann Cholmáin* ruled over much of the Irish midlands, it should be sought in that area. Lough Roe (*Loch Ruad*) is a possibility, in Rahan parish, Co. Offaly. It no longer exists, the area having been drained. The ‘islands’ mentioned here and elsewhere in our text might be references to crannogs, artificial islands and platforms commonly used in Ireland and Scotland as secure dwelling-places.

<p>stagnum, ieiunans contra illum regem pro causa sororis sue religiose, que apud regem in rapina deducta est. Sanctus autem Kannechus, compatiens episcopo, perrexit in auxilium illius.</p> <p>Hoc audiens, rex iussit suis servis castella fortiter concludi et rates diligenter abscondi, ne Kannechus in insulam iret. Sed Dominus volens adiuuare sanctos suos, ianuas aperuit et ratem ex locis conclusis deduxit. Et in illa nocte Kannechus navigavit in insulam et illum regem superbum increpavit et predicavit ei ne episcopum Aidum offenderet. Rex autem ambos despexit, sed Deus honorificavit eos. Nam ille rex superbus sedens vidit currum igneum cum equis igneis et aurigam in eo terribilem, habentem in manu gladium fulgorem, ab orientali parte venientem per campum trans stagnum in insulam celeriter, et percussit regem ac pene in duas partes divisset eum, nisi Kannechu cum suo baculo prohibuisset, et statim rex mortuus est.</p> <p>Tunc Kannechus oravit Deum, et regem suscitavit. Rex autem Colmanus, a morte suscitatus, gratias egit et omne, quodcumque ei Kannechus diceret, facere promisit et sororem episcopi raptam reliquit, et sancto Kannecho locum obtulit, et in illo loco Kannechus habitavit.</p>	<p>that king on account of his religious sister who had been abducted by the king.⁶⁵ Now Saint Cainnech had pity on the bishop and went to his aid.</p> <p>Hearing this, the king commanded his servants to close up the fort strongly and to carefully hide their rafts lest Cainnech should get onto the island. But the Lord wished to help his saints, and opened the doors and brought out a raft from the hiding places, and that night Cainnech sailed to the island and rebuked the proud king and preached to him that he must not offend Bishop Áed. The king, however, despised them both, but God honoured them. Now as the proud king was sitting down he saw a chariot of fire with fiery horses and a terrifying charioteer in it who had in his hand a sword like lightning. It came from the east swiftly, over the plain and across the loch to the island, and he struck the king and would have split him in two had not Cainnech prevented it with his staff. Immediately the king died.</p> <p>Cainnech then prayed to God and he raised up the king. King Colmán, raised from the dead, gave thanks and promised to do whatever Cainnech should tell him, and he released the bishop's sister whom he had captured, and he gave the place to Cainnech, and Cainnech dwelt in that place.⁶⁶</p>
<p>33. Quadam autem die, sanctus Kannechus, in supradicto loco manens, exiit ad fontem aque. Res sibi necessarias et domum suam vacuum sine custode reliquit. Et venerunt duo latrones et incenderunt domum eius igni. Et dimedia pars domus combusta est; altera vero pars sana et integra permansit, quia ignis non ausus est partem urere in qua techa cum libris sancti viri fuerat.</p> <p>Sed duo illi latrones statim a Deo vindictam sunt consequuti: nam unius duo oculi in capite contra ignem confracti sunt, alter vero duobus pedibus claudus factus est, ita quod unus non potuit videre, nec alius ambulare. Tunc illi</p>	<p>One day, while he was living in the aforesaid place, Saint Cainnech went off to a spring of water. He left his own indispensable things and his house empty, without a guard. And two thieves came and set fire to his house. Half of the house was burned, but the other half remained fine and whole, for the fire did not dare to burn the part in which there was a chest containing the saint's books.</p> <p>But the two thieves immediately found themselves punished by God, for one of them had his two eyes destroyed in his head facing the fire, and the other was crippled in both his legs, so that one of them could not see and the other could not</p>

⁶⁵ It is not clear whether this 'religious sister' was a blood-relation of the bishop, or a sister in a more religious sense, a nun. Fasting against someone was a way of seeking justice in the old Gaelic legal tradition. In the practice known as *troscud*, the wronged person would 'fast against' a person of high status who had wronged him; the accused person would then lose his honour (and hence his legal status) if he did not submit to due legal process.

⁶⁶ If we were able to identify Stagnum Rossum, the loch where this happened, we might be able to identify the island and the church which Cainnech is said to have founded here (at least if we assume that he founded a church when he 'dwelt in that place'). The church would presumably have been a daughter-house of Aghaboe, Cainnech's principal church, and this story asserts the rights of Cainnech, and hence of Cainnech's successor, over it. Given that Bishop Aed features in this story, and that his principal church is at Killare, Westmeath, we might wonder if the story is meant to explain the existence of the church of Kilkenny West, a Cainnech dedication only twelve miles west of Killare, close to Loch Ree.

<p>miseri, penitentiam agentes, apud sanctum semper obedientes monachi manserunt.</p>	<p>walk. Then those two wretches, doing penance, remained as obedient monks with the saint.⁶⁷</p>
<p>34. Alio tempore, in terminis Midie, vir quidam dives habens uxorem⁶⁸ venit ad sanctum Kannechum ac, benedictionem ab eo postulans, sanctum secum ad suam domum perduxit. Cumque refectus esset cum illis, venit ad canem tenuem et valde macilentum. Dixit ad illos: “Quis ex vobis cocus est qui istum canem cibavit?”</p> <p>Mulier autem respondit: “Ego istum cibavi et agam penitentiam, et omnia quecumque dixeris michi faciam.”</p> <p>Sanctus autem, severe iudicans, dixit: “Usque ad finem anni tuum prandium cani detur, et tu prandium canis comede.”</p> <p>Quod durum mandatum mulier infirma implens, non post multum spacium, canino cibo contenta, mortua est. Sanctus autem Kannechus, iterum rediens, mortem mulieris audivit, Dominumque diligenter orans, illam resuscitavit in vitam.</p>	<p>At another time in the territory of Mide, a certain rich man who had a wife came to Saint Cainnech and sought his blessing, and he took the saint home to his house. When he was eating with them, he saw a dog which was thin and severely emaciated. He said to them, “Which of you is the cook who feeds that dog?”</p> <p>The woman replied, “I feed it, and I will do penance, and everything that you tell me I will do.”</p> <p>But the saint, judging severely, said, “Until the end of the year your food will be given to the dog, and you will eat the dog’s food.”</p> <p>The sick woman fulfilled this hard command, and not long afterwards, content with the dog’s food, she died. But Saint Cainnech going back there again, heard of the woman’s death, and devoutly praying to the Lord, he raised her to life again.</p>
<p>35. Alio tempore cum sanctus Kannechus habitaret in illo loco qui dicitur Cluoin Bronich, in confinio Nepotum Neill et Munnensium, haut longe o⁶⁹ Birraib, tunc familia ipsius non habuit artifices et operadores fortes qui possent facere canabam et spicas siccandas et trituras, sed super nudum pavimentum in campo tritabant. Ideo eius monachi ad se venerunt, querelam facientes quod in tempore valde pluviali non poterant spicas sine domo illos defendente tritare. Tunc sanctus perrexit cum illis et pavimentum benedixit. Quod, ab illo die quo benedixit illud vir sanctus, siccum aridumque et sine una gut<t>a super se fluente, ut periti ferunt, manet usque hodie et manebit ad diem iudicii.</p>	<p>Another time when Saint Cainnech was staying in that place which is called Cluain Brónaig, on the borders of Uí Néill and Munster, not far from Birr.⁷⁰ At that time his community did not have craftsmen and strong workers who could make hemp, or dry corn, or thresh it, but on the bare beaten earth in the field they would do the threshing. So his monks came to him, complaining that in a very rainy period they would not be able to thresh the corn without a house to shelter them. Then the saint went with them and blessed the threshing ground. And from that day when the holy man blessed it, it has remained bone dry and without a single raindrop flowing on it, as those who know say, and it remains so today, and will remain so till the day of judgement.</p>
<p>36. In loco supradicto sanctus Kannechus habitans ac nullam fetosam vaccam ad consulendos infirmos et senes habens, de silva propinqua circa horam nonam in unaquaque die</p>	<p>When he was dwelling in the aforesaid place, he had no productive cow to comfort the sick and the elderly, but each day around the ninth hour a deer came out of the neighbouring forest with its fawn</p>

⁶⁷ Unusually for this Life, there is no mention of the saint restoring them to health.

⁶⁸ Heist inserts *infirmam* here, supposing that this was why the rich man came to call on Cainnech, but there is nothing in the story which requires her to be sick, and it does not seem to the point of Cainnech’s visit to the rich man’s house. The point is simply that this rich man had a wife, and she will be the focus of the latter part of the story.

⁶⁹ Note that the scribe has inserted the Gaelic preposition *o* ‘from’, instead of the expected Latin *a*, which means the same.

⁷⁰ This seems to be Clonbroney (Irish Cluain Brónaigh) in Birr parish, Co. Offaly. Birr was an important church on the boundary between two major political territories in the early middle ages.

ad suam mulsiorem veniebat ad eum cum suo vitulo cerva, et iterum rediebat.	to his milking, and then it went away again.
<p>37. Item in supradicto loco Kennechus habitans ut moris erat ei sepe, ab hominibus recedens, terram oblviscens, celestia cogitans, evvangelium secum portans et diligenter scrutans, et orans in secreto loco, ad suam familiam dixit nec aliquis ad illum veniret usque ad horam nonam. Fuit in deserto loco sine cibo sine potuque, sine nocte et tenebris, sine fame et frigore, sine pluvia, usque ad horam tertii diei nonam. Familia autem eius interim hiis tribus diebus ieiunavit, et puerulus, qui apud illos erat, famem non sustinens, mortuus est. Sanctus autem, ad eos veniens, dixit: “Numquid adhuc hora pervenit nona?”</p> <p>At dixerunt: “Etiam terna nona venit.” Tunc fratres refecti sunt, et puerulus qui fame mortuus est, orante sancto, revixit.</p>	<p>Again when Cainnech was living in the aforesaid place, as was often his custom, withdrawing from people, forgetting [this] world, thinking of heavenly things, carrying with him the Gospel and carefully searching it, and praying in a secret place, he said to his community that no one should come to him until the ninth hour. He was in a desert place without food or drink, without night or darkness, without hunger or cold, without rain, until the ninth hour of the third day. His community meanwhile had fasted during these three days, and a little boy who was with them, unable to support the hunger, had died. But the saint said when he came to them, “Has the ninth hour arrived yet?”</p> <p>And they said: “The ninth hour has come <i>three times</i>.” Then the brethren ate, and the little boy who had died of hunger was revived by the saint’s prayer.</p>
<p>38. Alio quoque die, in tempore hyemis et nivis, sanctus Kannechus, in itinere ambulans in regionibus Neill,⁷¹ vidit crucem stantem in via, horamque nonam iuxta illam celebrans, interrogavit: “Que est ista crux?”</p> <p>Cui periti responderunt: “Rex istarum gentium Colmanus Modicus, filius Dermici, hic iugulatus est.”</p> <p>Sanctus autem, hec verba audiens, dixit: “Scit Filius Virginis quod alio die promisi orationem pro illo facere.” Tunc sanctus posuit faciem suam contra crucem nive tectam et tamdiu cum lacrimis oravit donec sub eius facie nix liquefacta fluit. Tunc sanctus dixit, per Spiritum Dei videns: “Nunc anima Colmani ex imis inferni iecta est per orationem Kannichi, quomodo massa ignea ac fervens exiecutur.” Tunc sanctus gratias egit Deo.</p>	<p>Another day, in a time of snowy winter, Saint Cainnech was walking in the territory of Uí Néill, and on the way he saw a cross standing. As he celebrated the hour of nones beside it, he asked, “What is this cross?”</p> <p>Those who knew replied, “The king of these people, Colmán Bec son of Diarmait, was slain here.”</p> <p>On hearing these things the saint said, “The Virgin’s Son knows that once I promised to pray for him.” Then the saint placed his face against the snow-covered cross, and he prayed for so long with tears that the melted snow flowed beneath this face. Then, seeing in the power of the Holy Spirit, the saint said, “Now the soul of Colmán has been released from the depths of hell by the prayer of Cainnech; like a fiery and burning mass he will be cast out.” Then the saint gave thanks to God.</p>
<p>39. Alio autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus venit ad cellam Achith Drummoto, in finibus Lagnensium, ad hospicium, invenit ibi magnam letitiam. Videns autem Kannechus vultum ministri hospitem tristem esse, interrogavit causam tristitie. Cui minister ait: “Vir mirabilis, Dei gratia plenus, qui nos docebat, nobis</p>	<p>Another day when Saint Cainnech came to the church of <i>Achith Drummoto</i>,⁷² on the border of Leinster. Coming to the guest-house, he found great delight there. However, seeing that the face of the guest-master was sad, he asked the cause of his unhappiness. The servant replied, “A wonderful man, full of God’s grace, who taught us</p>

⁷¹ The reference to Colmán Bec suggests that this story takes place in Southern Uí Néill territory, in Mide.

⁷² This seems to be Killeigh, which is Cill Achaidh ‘church of the field’, formerly Achadh Droma Fota ‘field of the long ridge’, in Co. Offaly. We could render the name more regularly as *Cill Achaid Dromma Fhota*. There was a community of Augustinian canons established here in the twelfth century, and also a community of Augustinian nuns nearby founded some time after 1195.

<p>predicabat, ut erat sapiens et magister doctus, hic subito mortuus est. Et ideo tota nostra familia, valde tristis, triduo et psalmos cantans, in ima domu circa cadaver eius consistunt.”</p> <p>Sanctus autem, hoc audiens, ait: “Non ita erit, sed ad populum ibo, psalmos cantabo, Dominum pro mortuo rogabo.” Sanctus autem, ingrediens in domum, oravit et possuit traviculam suam super mortuum, et statim ille surrexit vivus et sanus. Quod omnes videntes benedixerunt Dominum et sanctum Kainnechum. Et rogoerunt eum ut traviculam, de qua mortuum suscitavit, secum relinqueret. Et reliquit, et apud illos adhuc manet.</p>	<p>and preached to us, who was wise and a learned master, has suddenly died here. And therefore all our community is very sad, singing the psalms for three days standing around his body inside the house.</p> <p>Hearing this the saint said, “It shall not be so, but I will go to the people, I will sing psalms, and I will pray to the Lord for the dead man.” And going into the house the saint prayed and placed his staff⁷³ on top of the dead man, and at once he rose alive and well. When everyone saw this they blessed the Lord and Saint Cainnech. And they asked him to leave with them his staff, with which he had raised the dead man, and he left it, and it remains with them still.</p>
<p>40. Similem virtutem sanctus Kannechus fecit in monasterio sanctarum virginum quod dicitur Cluoin Siscnan. Quadam enim die, cum ipse venisset ad locum illum, nunciavit ei mulier que hospitibus ministrabat, dicens: “O sancte Kanechi, nos in hiis diebus magnam tristitiam habemus. Quidam enim puerulus nobiscum mortuus est, cuius genus nescimus, et ipse erat cecus et mutus et surdus, quem valde diligebamus. Hic autem ante tempus mortuus est, et nostra familia in ima domu ieiunans circa corpus consistit.”</p> <p>Tunc Kannechus intravit in domum illam et, orante eo, statim puer surrexit et ipse sanis oculis et auribus et lingua indicavit eis genus suum et nomen, dicens: “Genus meum de Nepotibus Duach, et nomen meum Emene vocatur. Parentes enim mei steriles erant, et oportuna erat apud <eos> quando natus sum: ideo me Emene vocaverunt. Sed postea, cum vidissent me turpiter cecum et mutum et surdum, spreverunt me et, nocte venientes ad locum istum, hic me reliquerunt.”</p>	<p>Saint Cainnech performed a similar miracle in the monastery of some holy nuns which is called <i>Cluain Siscnan</i>.⁷⁴ For one day when he had come to that place, the woman who served the guests said to him, “O Saint Cainnech, we have a great sorrow in these days. A certain little boy who was with us has died. We don’t know his kindred, and he was blind and dumb and deaf, and we loved him very much. But he has died before his time, and our community is gathered in the house fasting around his body.”</p> <p>Then Cainnech went into the house and when he prayed for him the boy rose at once, with healed eyes, ears and tongue. He told them his kindred and his name saying, “My kindred is the Uí Duach,⁷⁵ and my name is Emene. My parents had no children, and when I was born it seemed opportune to them.⁷⁶ But afterwards, when they saw that I was blind and dumb and deaf in such an ugly way, they rejected me and they came to this place by night and left me here.”</p>
<p>41. Alio autem die, cum sanctus Kennechus apud dexterales Laginenses venisset ad magnam curiam plebis circa regem suum Cormaccum,</p>	<p>Another day, when Saint Cainnech had come to southern Leinster to a great court⁷⁷ of the people around their king, Cormac mac Diarmata,⁷⁸ when</p>

⁷³ ? *travicola*. I am assuming this strange word is a version of Classical Latin *trabecula* ‘a small beam’, and that the small beam is a stick, i.e. the saint’s staff.

⁷⁴ This may be Clonsast, Co. Offaly. Hogan suggests, however, that it is in Roigne, in southern Osraige – but this may be for no better reason than that the boy’s family came from that area – see following note (Hogan 1910 s.n. Cluain Siscnam).

⁷⁵ The Uí Duach seem to have occupied territory in Roigne, in the southern part of Osraige (Hogan 1910, sn. Airgetros).

⁷⁶ This name is a play on words. Old Gaelic *éim* is an adjective meaning ‘timely, opportune’, and the boy’s name is here being treated as a diminutive of that word, *éiméne*.

⁷⁷ The court or *curia* should be thought of not as a building, but as one of the open-air gatherings at which royal, political and legal business was done in open assembly.

⁷⁸ King of the Uí Bairrche in southern Leinster, east of Cainnech’s Osraige.

<p>filium Dyarmici, tunc puer parvulus ductus est a plebibus ad mortem crudelem ac valde miseram, scilicet <i>gialcherd</i>. Videns autem Kannechus hoc opus horribile, postulavit a rege puerem liberari, nec impetravit sanctus causam. Deum rogans, exaudivit eum. Nam proiectus est puer super hastas in statu sursum positus, sed haste non potuerunt iugulare vel lacerare eum, nisi quod eius oculi semper obliqui erant, penas horribiles conspiciendo: hic est Dolue Lebderc, quem rex Kannecho obtulit, et fuit postea vir mirabilis, cuius civitas dicitur Kell Tolue.</p>	<p>a small boy was led forward by the people to die a cruel and most wretched death, that is <i>gialcherd</i>.⁷⁹ But Cainnech, seeing this horrible deed, asked the king that the boy might be freed, but the saint did not get what he asked for. So he asked God, and God heard him. Now the boy was thrown onto spears which were held pointing upwards, but the spears could not kill him or wound him, only his eyes were constantly turned to the side to see the dreadful pains. This was Da-Lua Lebderc, whom the king offered to Cainnech, and afterwards he was a wonderful man, and his city is called Cill Da-Lua.⁸⁰</p>
<p>42. Quodam autem tempore, sanctus Kannechus, semper desiderans ab hominibus separari et angelis iungi, secessit a familia et in aliqua silva occulte latebat. Tunc fratres, huc illuc querentes eum, non invenerunt. Quidam puer, qui apud Kannechem psalmos legebat, in nocte occulte exiebat ad eum, ut sibi Kannechus scriberet in ceram. Tunc fratres, illum puerum observantes, in nocte secuti sunt eum celative. Videruntque fratres lucernam valde lucidam, que antecedebat puerum usque ad locum ubi erat sanctus, et lux illa magna de elevatione manus sancti in occulto legentis fulgebat. Fratres igitur, puerum et lucernam sequentes, invenerunt abbatem, quem secum ad suum locum reduxerunt.</p>	<p>One time, Saint Cainnech, always wanting to withdraw from people and be joined to the angels, left his community and secretly hid himself in some forest. Then the brethren sought him here and there, but they could not find him. A certain boy who was reading the psalms with Cainnech secretly went out to him in the night, so that Cainnech might write for him in his wax tablet.⁸¹ Then the brethren, observing the boy, followed him secretly in the night. The brethren saw a very bright light which went before the boy as far as the place where the saint was, and that great light was shining from the saint's raised hand as he read in secret. The brethren therefore, following the boy and the light, found the abbot, and they took him back with them to his place.</p>
<p>43. Simili modo sanctus Kannechus, iterum a fratribus recedens, in vicina grunna haut longe a suo loco solus celative fuit, ibique ad eum cervus veniens librum sancti sedule legentis suis cornibus sustinebat. Alio autem die, timore illum cogente, sine abbatis sui consilio librum secum rapiens velociter perrexit, usquequo crastino die, post multos heremi circuitus, librum, licet apertum, sanum tamen et integrum, in suis cornibus reducens, quasi monachus fugitivus ad suum abbatem repente rediit.</p>	<p>In a similar way Saint Cainnech, leaving his brethren, was hiding alone in a neighbouring bog, not very far from his own place. There a stag came to him and held up the saint's book with its antlers while the saint read it diligently. And on another day, driven by fear, without the guidance of his abbot and taking the book away with him, [the stag] ran off swiftly until the following day when, after much wandering in desert places, he returned the book on his antlers, safe and sound although it was open, as if he were a fugitive monk suddenly returning to his abbot.</p>

⁷⁹ This word in the form *giallcherd* means 'hostageship', and is a feature of early Gaelic laws. It is not a way of putting someone to death. But another term, *gallcherd*, may have been used as to refer to a cruel slaughter practised by Norsemen (*gaill*, 'foreigners').

⁸⁰ His 'city' or *civitas* may be the church of Killaloe, *Cill Da-Lua*, 'the church of Saint Da-Lua', in Co. Kilkenny in Osraige, only about seven miles from Saint Cainnech's church at Kilkenny itself. But consider also the much more important church of Killaloe in Co. Clare, on the River Shannon, which became a cathedral in AD 1111. Do-Lua (also Mo-Lua) is a hypocoristic form of the name Lugaid, or sometimes Luigbe or Lugair.

⁸¹ The process of acquiring literacy in most of western Europe, for most of the Middle Ages, involved the student undergoing total immersion in the psalms, reading them aloud, learning them by heart. Here the boy appears to be at the first stage of his studies.

<p>44. Quadam autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus, a suo loco pergens, in solitudine ambularet, tres laici valde crudeles occurrerunt ei, volentes eum iugulare, et spoliaverunt eum suis vestimentis lineis, dicentes: “Hic est baculatus modicus, qui in hiis locis multos seducit.” Cumque illi in longum ire conarentur, spolia sancti secum portantes, non potuerunt, sed per circuitum in uno loco ambulabant. Laicus de illis, lucernam sancti circa se tenens celesti igne ardens pene consumptus est. Tunc laici illi, genua flectentes, penitentiam egerunt et monachi obedientes apud Kannechum erant.</p>	<p>One day, when Saint Cainnech went from his place and was walking in solitude, three cruel warriors⁸² attacked him, wishing to kill him, and robbed him of his linen clothing saying, “This is the little man with the staff who is leading many folk astray in these parts.” And when they tried to go far off carrying the things they had stolen from the saint, they could not, but walked round in a circle in one place. One of the warriors, who had the saint’s lamp, was nearly burned up by heavenly fire. Then those warriors knelt down and did penance and became obedient monks with Cainnech.</p>
<p>45. Alio quoque tempore, sanctus Kannechus in regionibus Munnensium ambulans iuxta stagnum Lein, occurrerunt ei .xii. laici votum malum promittentes, scilicet dibergich, et multa mala loqui sunt contra eum. Tunc Kannechus, illos increpans, docuit eos verbo Dei. Dux autem illorum cum immiti mente dixit ei: “O bac<u>late, noli ociosa verba loqui, que nec te liberabunt, quia hodie anima tua perebit, nisi per Dei tui potentiam facias ut <cigni>, que nunc super istud stagnum natant, unus ex illis in hac hora, celeri volatu veniens, super meam olam stet et alter super tuam olam.”</p> <p>Sanctus autem respondit: “Omnipotenti Deo omni possible sunt, licet apud homines difficilia.” Statimque in illa hora duo cigni velociter volantes unus super [olam] laici, alter super sancti olam stetit. Tunc laici illi .xii. obtulerunt se Domino et Kannecho et, clerici boni facti, apud Kannechum semper monachi</p>	<p>Another time, Saint Cainnech was walking beside Loch Léin⁸³ in the regions of Munster, and twelve warriors ran up to him making an evil vow, that is marauders,⁸⁴ and they spoke many evil things against him. Then Cainnech, rebuking them, taught them of the word of God. But their leader with a cruel mind said to him, “O man with a staff, don’t speak idle words, for they will not deliver you, for today your soul will perish unless by the power of your God you cause one of the swans which are now swimming on that loch to come in this hour in swift flight and land on my shoulder, and another one to land on your shoulder.”⁸⁵</p> <p>The saint replied, “All things are possible with God,⁸⁶ even if they are difficult for men.” And immediately in that hour two swans came flying fast, and one stood on the shoulder of the warrior, and the other stood on the shoulder of the saint. Then those twelve warriors offered themselves to</p>

⁸² *laicus*, originally ‘layman’, gave us the Old Gaelic *láech*, which originally meant ‘layman’, but gradually came to mean ‘warrior’ (sometimes having an additional note of paganism), because unlike the clergy and monks laymen could bear arms and shed blood.

⁸³ Loch Léin (English Lough Leane) near Killarney in Co. Kerry? The important early medieval monastery of Innisfallen stood on an island in this loch. The community there became Augustinian c. 1197 (Carville 1982, 112). Máire Herbert notes that Cainnech’s connection to Loch Léin may have been written into his Life because the Eoganacht of Loch Léin held the kingship of Munster during the period when she suggests the Life was written. The author was thus seeking to connect Aghaboe and the Cainnech *familia* with political power there (2001, 36).

⁸⁴ Old Gaelic *dibergach* ‘marauder, raider, pillager’.

⁸⁵ I am not at all certain what the author had in mind with the *ola* in this passage – a word he uses four times. I have translated it as ‘shoulder’, partly because this unusual word appears in Isidore’s *Etymologiae* (XI, 1, 62) defined as ‘the back part of the top of the humerus’ (*ola summi humeri pars posterior*). It is hard to imagine a swan landing on someone’s shoulder, however. Other possibilities include a variant of *olla* ‘pot’, a word which in late medieval Latin was used to refer to fish-traps – presumably they had some pot-like features. But it is rather unlikely that a group of *dibergaig* or bandits would have had a fish-trap on the loch. Latin *vola* or *uola* ‘the palm of the hand’ or ‘the soul of a foot’ is also plausible from a scribal point of view, but it is even harder to imagine a swan landing on a palm than it is on a shoulder. However, *vola* can also mean ‘footprint’ – the mark made by the sole of a foot. One can imagine a swan landing on a footprint slightly more easily than on a shoulder. Perhaps in a miracle story, however, it is not sensible to ask for too much practicality.

⁸⁶ Matthew 19:26.

<p>fuerunt.</p>	<p>God and Cainnech, and they became good clergy and were monks with Cainnech.</p>
<p>46. Colmanus, filius Feradichi, rex Ossirgi, sancto Kannecho amicus erat, qui ipse rex magnum [...] de seculo propter celum Kannecho in commercium dedit. Alio igitur tempore, audiens sanctus regem istum in suo castello undique conclusum ab inimicis suis regnum tenere volentibus, scilicet Malgarb et Mael Odur, a Campulo Bovis, nec currum nec equum habens, ad eum liberandum velociter perrexit. Deus autem, lasso sancto misertus, quedam mulier habitans in Achuth Mebri, videns Kannechum lassum in itinere, voluit adiuvare eum suo curru et equis. Sed diabolus hoc noluit, nam ille caliginem magnam induxit et equos cum curru celavit. Tunc Kannechus manum suam levavit, et luce manus eius totus campus illuminatus est, et auriga invenit equos.</p> <p>In illa autem hora, aliud valde miraculum Dominus fecit. Nam Kannechus, corpore modicus, non potuit currum ascendere. Tunc Dominus terram sub pedibus eius elevavit, et tumulus iste sub pedibus sancti elavatus a Deo usque hodie manet in signum virtutis in illo loco.</p>	<p>Colmán son of Feradach, the king of Osraige,⁸⁷ was a friend to Saint Cainnech. This king gave much from this world to Cainnech in exchange for heaven.⁸⁸ At another time, when the saint heard that the king was being besieged in his fort by his enemies who were seeking to take possession of the kingdom, that is Máelgarb and Máelodar, he hastened from Aghaboe⁸⁹ to deliver him, though he had neither a chariot nor a horse. But God had pity on the weary saint, and a certain woman living in Achad Mebri,⁹⁰ seeing Cainnech exhausted on his journey, wanted to help him with her chariot and horses. But the devil did not want this and brought about a great mist and so hid the horses and the chariot. Then Cainnech raised his hand, and the whole plain was lit up by light of his hand, and his charioteer found the horses.</p> <p>And the Lord did another very wonderful thing at that time. For Cainnech was small in stature, and he could not climb up into the chariot. Then the Lord raised up the ground under his feet, and that mound raised up under his feet by God remains in that place today as a sign of his miraculous power.</p>
<p>47. Cumque sanctus Kannechus in curru per Campum Ragni <pergeret> ad regem, occurrit ei alius pinguis princeps Domnich Moir Roigni, inimicus regi et invidus. Qui superbo animo dixit sancto: “Scio quod ad Colmanum tibi⁹¹ amicum ad liberandum festinas. Sed tibi non prodest, quia non invenies eum, nisi cadaver eius iugulatum et combustum igni.”</p> <p>Cui Kannechus dixit: “Scit Filius Virginis quod est alius carius quam quod cogitas. Nam antequam ad cellam tuam pervenias, mortuus eris.” Quod ita completum est. Nam, cum ipse pinguis in suo curro per aliam ianuam sue civitati<s> vicinam introisset, valva que dicitur</p>	<p>While Saint Cainnech was going across the plain of Mag Roigne in the chariot, there came to him another man, the fat ruler of Domnach Mór Roigne⁹³ who was an enemy to the king and envious [of him]. With a proud mind he said to the saint, “I know that you are rushing to save your friend Colmán. But it will do you no good, for you will not find him except as a corpse, slain and burned with fire.”</p> <p>Cainnech said to him, “The Virgin’s Son knows that the other man is more beloved than you think. And before you return to your church you will be dead.” And that was fulfilled. For when the fat man went in his chariot through</p>

⁸⁷ Osraige, a kingdom on the margins between Leinster (Laigin) and Munster (Mumu). Its name survives in that of the modern diocese of Ossory. Its territory coincided roughly with modern Co. Kilkenny and the western part of Co. Laois.

⁸⁸ Heist thought some text was missing here, but it makes sense as it stands as a Latin calque on Gaelic *mór di* (Charles-Edwards 2000, 262n).

⁸⁹ Achad Bó (modern Aghaboe) means ‘field of the cow’, here translated into Latin as *Campulus Bovis* ‘little field of the cow’.

⁹⁰ Unidentified, but it must surely be between Aghaboe and Mag Roigne in Osraige.

⁹¹ *tibi* here is probably a scribal error for *tuum*, produced by eye-skip from the *tibi* that occurs six words later in the following sentence.

<p><i>dorncleth</i> in caput eius cecidit, et statim mortuus est.⁹²</p> <p>Sanctus Kannechus, in curru celeriter festinans, pervenit ad castellum regis, magna multitudo circumdatum et igne succensum. Tunc Kannechus intravit in castellum igne ardens et per Dei potentiam, nemine vidente, nemine sciente, regem de magno periculo inter turbas celatave foras produxit.</p> <p>Et longe a castello secum migrans, dixit illi sanctus: “Exspecta hic. Licet solus sis hodie, non sic eris cras. Tres enim viri prius in isto loco ad te venient, postea tricinti, et die tercia rex iterum eris totius Ossirgi.” Quod ita completum est.</p>	<p>another nearby entrance of his monastery, the door known as a <i>dorncleth</i> fell on his head, and he died straight away.</p> <p>Saint Cainnech, driving quickly in his chariot, arrived at the king’s fort. It was surrounded by a great host and was being set on fire. Cainnech entered the fort which was burning with fire, and by the power of God, no one seeing, no one knowing, he brought the king out of his great danger, hidden as he passed through the crowds.</p> <p>And going far from the fort with him the saint said to him, “Wait here. For though you are alone today, you will not be so tomorrow. For three men will come to you first in this place; and after that three hundred, and on the third day you will again be the king of all Osraige.” And so it came to pass.</p>
<p>48. Alio autem tempore, sanctus Kannechus, homines fugiens, sine nave, sine rate, siccis pedibus intravit in insulam stagni Cree,⁹⁴ ibique excemplo Domini .xl. diebus et noctibus sine cibo et potu ieiunavit. Nec ymber, nec pluvia, nec tenebre, nec fames, nec sitis, nec homo eum occupabat. Quadam autem die, cum esset in ista insula, vidit turbam demonum, sedentes in equis, secus se festinantes. Illoque interrogante eos quo pergerent, unus respondit ei: “Nos festinamus ad contentionem anime alicuius viri divitis <i>hi</i>⁹⁵ Mollib Muscraige.”</p> <p>Cui Kannechus dixit: “Ad me iterum venias cum fabulis.”</p> <p>Cumque post pugnam ad eum redisset, vidit eum Kannechus sine equo, claudicantem pede:</p>	<p>Another time Saint Cainnech was fleeing from some men and had no ship and no raft, but with dry feet he went to an island in Lough Cré where, following the Lord’s example he fasted for forty days and nights without food or drink. Neither mist, nor rain, nor darkness, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor any human being disturbed him. But one day, when he was in that island, he saw a crowd of demons riding horses rushing alongside him. When he asked them where they were going, one of them replied to him, “We are hastening to do battle over the soul of a certain rich man in the hills of Muscraige.”⁹⁶</p> <p>Cainnech said to him, “Come back to me again with your account.”</p> <p>And when he came back after the battle,</p>

⁹³ The ‘fat’ ruler is presumably a cleric, for he rules *Domnach Mór Roigne*. The Old Gaelic word *domnach* meant ‘church’, and it was generally used of more ancient churches, and perhaps more important ones. There is a common pattern of churches called *Domnach Mór X*, or *Domnach Mór Mag X*, where the *X* or *Mag X* was the name of the plain and territory which the church served. Here the church is *Domnach Mór Roigne*, ‘the big church of [Mag] Roigne’. The church-title *domnach mór* is still found in modern Irish place-names in the form Donaghmore.

⁹² See *DIL*, *dorchla* with variants *dorncleth*, *dornchladh*, *dorncla* etc., ‘door’.

⁹⁴ Loch Cré in Co. Tipperaray about 8 miles NW of Aghaboe. It was drained in 1799, but it and its surrounding bogs had formed the north-eastern boundary of Co. Tipperaray where it marched with Laois and Offaly (Hogan, s.n. Loch Cré).. Immediately to the west is Roscrea (*Ros Cré*) which name shares the same second element. The island of Monahincha (or Monahinsha) was the site of an early medieval church or monastery. Elarius was ‘anchorite and scribe’ there (*ancorita et scriba Loch Cré*) when he died in AU 807. The place became an Augustinian priory in 1140 (Carville, 112). The name Monahincha (*mòine na h-innse*) is ‘bog of the island’, properly the name of the bog or wet ground surrounding the island. This seems to be the lake ‘in the north of Munster’ mentioned by the writer Gerald of Wales in his *History and Topography of Ireland* circa 1185. He mentions two islands on the loch, the larger with ‘a church venerated from the earliest times’ and the smaller with a chapel cared for by a few celibates (probably *Céli Dé*). He adds that no woman or female animal can enter the larger island without dying immediately. And in the smaller island, no one has ever died, no matter how ill they become (Bk i, Ch. 37).

⁹⁵ Note the Gaelic form of the preposition, instead of the expected Latin *in*.

⁹⁶ The Muscraige were a people located in various parts of Munster.

<p>sagitta enim per eius genu intravit. Et interrogans eum Kannechus, ille respondit: “Nos victi sumus. Nam ille dives .iii. capitula de ympno Patrici ante mortem cantavit, nobis nescientibus, et per hoc liberatus est de manibus nostris.”</p>	<p>Cainnech saw him without a horse, limping in his foot, for an arrow had gone through his knee. And when Cainnech questioned him he replied, “We were defeated. The rich man had sung three verses of Patrick’s hymn before he died, but we did not know this, and so he was delivered from our hands.”⁹⁷</p>
<p>49. Cum vero Dominus voluisset sanctum suum prodire, quidam venator cum canibus cervum persecutus est ad stagnum Cree. Tunc cervus, sequentibus eum canibus, natavit in insulam et ante Kannechum stetit. Cannechus canes compescens, se movere non poterant.</p> <p>Adveniens vero, venator invenit ibi sanctum. Et comminatus est ei Kannechus et iuramento vinxit eum ne se proderet nisi ante horam mortis sue. Quod ille venator implens, statim ad domum revertens <gravi dolore> gravatus est et in confinio mortis sue Kannechum manifestavit, et sanctus heremita iterum reductus est.</p>	<p>When the Lord wanted to advance his saint, a certain hunter chased a deer with his dogs to Loch Cré. Then the deer, followed by dogs, swam to the island and stood before Cainnech. Cainnech restrained the dogs and they could not move.</p> <p>When he arrived, the hunter found the saint there. And Cainnech warned him and bound him by an oath that he would not return except before the hour of his death. The hunter fulfilled this, going home at once; but he was weighed down by severe pain and when he was on the verge of death he revealed it to Cainnech, and he was brought back again as a holy hermit.</p>
<p>50. Alio autem tempore, rex iste supradictus Colmanus cum suo exercitu et Kannechus cum suo populo in uno loco fuerunt. Tunc rex ille, pomum mire magnitudinis in manu sua habens, aspiciens clericos, dixit: “Clericus qui nunc diceret quot sunt grana in isto pomo, magno honore honorificarem illum.”</p> <p>Cui Kannechus dixit: “Magnum est pomum, sed unum granum intus habet.” Et. sisso pomo, sic inventum est.</p>	<p>Another time the aforesaid King Colmán with his army and Cainnech with his people were in one place. Then the king, holding an apple of amazing size in his hand, looked at the clerics and said, “The cleric who can tell me now how many pips there are in this apple, I will honour him with great honour.”</p> <p>Cainnech said to him, “That is a big apple, but it has only one pip inside.” And when the apple was divided, so it was found to be.</p>
<p>51. In illa itaque congregatione vir quidam, equum agitans velociter, cecidit de equo, et femor eius confractum est in duas partes. Kannechus autem, audiens vocem illius viri agitantis equum, agnovit quod filius vite esset et benedixit femor eius, et statim sanatum est. Et vir obtulit se Deo et Kannecho et fuit postea vir sanctus.</p>	<p>In that assembly a certain man, riding his horse fast, fell from the horse and broke his thigh in two pieces. Now Cainnech, hearing the man’s voice as he drove his horse, knew that he was a son of life, and he blessed his thigh and at once it was healed. And the man offered himself to God and Cainnech, and he was thereafter a holy man.</p>
<p>52. Alio quoque tempore, sanctus Kannechus in insula stagni Cree quatuor evangeliorum volumen scripsit, quod usque hodie in loco eius et dicitur Glass Kannechi.</p>	<p>At another time, when Saint Cainnech was in the island of Loch Cré he wrote a book containing the four Gospels which is still in his church today and is called Cainnech’s <i>Glass</i>.⁹⁸ there today</p>

⁹⁷ Again, as in §14, a saint helps bring a dying person to heaven, fighting demons. Here Saint Patrick, rewarding the dead man’s devotion to his hymn, had evidently come to his assistance along with the angels. One might suppose that this ‘rich man’ was in danger of damnation in this story precisely because of his wealth for, as the Gospel tells us, ‘It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God’ (Matthew 19:24).

⁹⁸ *Glass*, or more usually *glas*, is an adjective meaning various shades of green and blue, merging with grey. So this relic of the saint is ‘the green/blue (thing) of Cainnech’, referring perhaps to the sheen of the metal of its cover or reliquary. The use of *glas* as a descriptor of a relic is also found in the medieval story of the sons of Úa

<p>Quadam autem die, cum sanctus postea evvangelium predicasset in insula Ie et valde placuisset omnibus, finita predicatione, dixit ei Columba Kyle: “O Kenniche, quis tibi istum sensum in evvangelio docuit?”</p> <p>Kannechus respondit: “Scit Filius Virginis quod cum essem in Hybernia, iuxta montem Smoir, in insula stagni Cree, Dominus Iesus Christus ad me ibi venit, et apud semetipsum evvangelium legi, et ipse michi hunc sensum docuit.” It hoc Columba audiens intellexit, et omnes Deo gratias egerunt.</p>	<p>One day, when the saint was preaching after the Gospel on the island of Iona, and it was very pleasing to everyone, when he had finished preaching Colum Cille said to him, “O Cainnech, who taught you that meaning in the Gospel?”</p> <p>Cainnech replied, “The Virgin’s Son knows that when I was in Ireland beside Mount Smoir, on the island of Loch Cré, the Lord Jesus Christ came to me there and I read the Gospel with him, and he himself taught me this meaning.” And hearing this, Columba understood, and all gave thanks to God.</p>
<p>53. Sanctus Brandanus Maccu Alte,⁹⁹ habens secum artifices facientes calicem altaris, aurum sufficienter non habuit ad illam fabricam. Tunc alii dixerunt ei: “Vade ad Kannechum. Forsitan aurum cum eo invenies, quia frequenter in Britanniam vadit.”</p> <p>Tunc Brandanus ad Kannechum veniens, dixit ei: “Si habes aurum, da nobis ad nostram necessitatem.”</p> <p>Hoc audiens Kannechus, valde compunctus erubuit, et ille apud hospites cibum superfluum comedit et statim evomit. Et invenit eum aliquis vomentem et dixit ei: “Quis est hic?” Cui Kannechus respondit, dicens: “Kannechus calvus modicus est, hic suam caritatem vomens.”</p> <p>Et vomitus iste totum aurum purum et optimum inventus est, quod datum est Brandano, et illo auro calix factus est, qui usque hodie manet.</p>	<p>Saint Brendan moccu Altae¹⁰⁰ had with him some craftsmen who were making a chalice for the altar, but they did not have enough gold to make it. Then some other people said to him, “Go to Cainnech. Perhaps you will find he has some gold, for he often goes to Britain.”¹⁰¹</p> <p>Then Brendan came to Cainnech and said to him, “If you have some gold, give it to us for our need.”</p> <p>Hearing this, Cainnech was very ashamed.¹⁰² With the guests he ate too much food, and at once he vomited. And someone found him vomiting and said to him, “Who is this?”</p> <p>And Cainnech replied, “Little bald Cainnech, vomiting his love here.”</p> <p>And that vomit was found to be entirely pure and excellent gold, and it was given to Brendan, and a chalice was made of that gold which remains unto this day.</p>
<p>54. Quodam autem tempore, cum sanctus Columba Kyle in mari navigaret et navis in tempestate magna periclitaretur, dixerunt ei fratres sui: “Roga Dominum pro nobis.”</p> <p>Quibus Columba dixit: “Non est meum hodie liberare vos, quia non michi, sed sancto Kannecho Deus donavit.”</p> <p>Tunc Kannechus inter fratres suos iuxta mensam stans in Achuth Bo, audivit vocem Columbe: “Nunc periclitatur.” Tenens unum ficonem circa pedem, cucurrit ad ecclesiam, et</p>	<p>At one time when Saint Colum Cille was sailing on the sea and his ship was endangered by a great storm, his brothers said to him, “Pray to the Lord for us.”</p> <p>Columba said to them, “It is not for me to deliver you today, for God has granted it not to me but to Cainnech.”</p> <p>Now Cainnech was standing among his brethren beside the table in Achad Bó and he heard the voice of Columba. “Now he is in danger,” [said Cainnech], and though he was only</p>

Suanaig, where a violent man called Cubladama swears on a relic called *in glas-bachail* ‘the green-blue-grey staff’ - though he swears falsely and therefore dies shortly afterwards (Plummer 1922 i, 315, § 10).

⁹⁹ Brendan moccu Altae, that is Brendan of Clonfert (to be distinguished from the earlier saint Brendan of Birr). His designation *Maccu Alte* identifies him as a member of the Altraighe. His earliest appearance in the literary record is in the *Vita Columbae* of Adomnán.

¹⁰⁰ This is Brendan (Bréanainn) of Clonfert, Co. Galway. Founded in the sixth century by Bréanainn, this important church became a diocesan cathedral in the re-organisation of the church in Ireland in AD 1111.

¹⁰¹ Does this suggest that gold was more readily available in Britain, when this story was written, than it was in Ireland; or that some British port was the principal trading centre for gold?

¹⁰² Because he had no gold to give.

<p>orante illo, facta est tranquillitas magna in mari. Tunc Columba dixit: “O Kanneche, oportunos est nobis tuus cursus cum uno ficone ad ecclesiam.”</p>	<p>wearing one shoe on his foot, he ran to the church, and at his prayer a great calm came on the sea. Then Columba said, “O Cainnech, it was fortunate for us, your racing to the church with one shoe.”¹⁰³</p>
<p>55. Quadam nocte, quidam fur venit ut triticum sancti Kannechi furaretur, et postquam ille onus tritici elevavit super humerum, statim exaruit et nec ambulare nec onus de humeris suis deponere potuit, donec a sancto Kainnecho benedictus solutus est.</p>	<p>One night a thief came to steal Saint Cainnech’s grain, and after he had lifted a load of grain onto his shoulder he lost his strength¹⁰⁴ and could neither walk nor put down the burden from his shoulders until he was blessed by Saint Cainnech and set free.</p>
<p>56. Quedam virgo de vicino sibi loco habitans occulte fornicavit, et uterus eius partu intumuit. Que a sancto Kannecho postulavit ut uterum suum, quasi aliquo dolore tumescentem, benediceret. Cumque ille benedixisset eam, statim infans in utero eius non apparens evanuit.</p>	<p>A certain nun living in his neighbourhood committed fornication secretly, and her womb began to grow with the child conceived. She asked Saint Cainnech to bless her belly, as though it was swollen by some pain. And when he blessed her, immediately the infant in her womb vanished, not appearing.</p>
<p>57. Erat quidam allumpnus apud Kannechum, qui valde mundum amabat. Quem Kainnechus sepe docuit ne caducum mundum amaret, sed ille non audivit. Quadam autem die, dixit ei sanctus: “Nos ambo hodie eamus in viam, et squietham nostram cum libris deduc tecum.” Cumque simul in via ambularent, venerunt ad mare. Tunc sanctus dixit puero: “Cuculum tuum circa caput tuum da et, meum tenens cuculum, me sequere.” Igitur per longum spacium ambulaverunt supra mare quasi per planum campum, nullam aquam sencientes. Tandem dixit senior iuveni: “Faciem tuam detege et cuculum tuum supra mare expande, et super illum simul sedeamus, et libros de squieta prome, et hic interim legamus.” Illudque facientes, viderunt nubem horridam valde tenebrosam ad se venientem trans mare, plena magna multitudine demonum. Cumque venissent ad eos, dixerunt demones ex uno ore: “Kainnechus calvus, Kainnechus calvus.” Quibus ille dixit: “Nolite transire secus nos sine nostra salutatione, sed quod bonum est nobis narrate.”</p>	<p>Cainnech had a fosterling who loved the world very much. Cainnech often taught him not to love this perishable world, but he would not listen. One day the saint said to him, “Let us both go on a journey today, and bring with you our satchel¹⁰⁵ with books.” When they were both walking on the road they came to the sea. Then the saint said to the boy, “Put your cowl around your head, and hold on to my cowl and follow me.” So for a long time they walked on the sea as if over a level plain, not noticing the water at all. At length the elder said to the youth, “Uncover your face and spread your cowl on the sea, and let us sit on it together, and take out the books from the satchel and let us read here for a while.” While they were doing that they saw a horrible cloud, very dark, coming towards them across the sea. It was full of a great host of demons. When it had come to them the demons spoke in one voice, “Baldy Cainnech, Baldy Cainnech!” He said to them, “You may not cross over to our side without our greeting. But tell us what is good.”</p>

¹⁰³ This story echoes *Vita Columbae* ii, 13. Of course, it shows the holiness of Cainnech and the dependence of Columba, which fits our author’s agenda.

¹⁰⁴ Literally, ‘he dried up’.

¹⁰⁵ Latin *scheda* ‘sheet of paper’, seems to be the word, implying a wrapper. But by this time it has probably become a book satchel. It is the source of Old Gaelic *secota* ‘satchel or case for carrying a copy of the scriptures, a wrapping for books or relics’ (*DIL* s.v.). It also appears to be the name of a saint! In the Life of St Ailbe of Emly a saint appears called *Sancta Squieth* or *Squietha*, also *Squiatha*. A place called *Fert Squietha* (‘Squietha’s grave’) is named after her, apparently somewhere near Emly in Co. Tipperary (Heist 1965, 127). See Hogan 1910 s.n. *Fert Scéithe* for her appearance in other place-names.

<p>Tunc omnes demones quasi ex uno ore clamabant: “Relinque mundum, o baculate, relinque mundum.”</p> <p>Hoc audiens, puer sancti viri, ex illa hora usque ad diem mortis sue, ab omne avaritia et ab amore mundi sanatus est.</p>	<p>Then all the demons cried out in one voice, “Leave the world, O staff-bearer, leave the world!”</p> <p>Hearing this, the saint’s boy, from that time until the day of his death, was healed of all avarice and love of this world.”</p>
<p>58. Aliquando sanctus Kannechus ad insulam Nepotum Conkynn in qua erant sancte femine, venit ad hospicium, ibique magnam letitiam invenit. Iste autem femine habebant agnum separatum, bene pastum, diligenter cibatum, forma amenum, moribus iocundum, quem occiderunt in adventu sancti hospitis. Crastino autem die, audiens Kannechus quod in adventu suo iste femine suum agnum amabilem occidissent, cor eius misertum est eis. Undique pellem istius agni extensam, vocavit eam ad se; ad sanctum se vocantem velociter cucurrit, et statim factus est agnus vivus et sanus, sicut prius fuit.</p>	<p>At another time Saint Cainnech came to the guest house on an island of the Uí Chonchenn¹⁰⁶ where there were holy women, and there he found great delight. These women had a special lamb, well-pastured, lovingly fed, delightful in form, pleasant in its behaviour. And they killed it at the coming of their holy guest. The next day however, when Cainnech heard that these women had killed their own beloved lamb on account of his coming, his heart felt great pity for them. The hide of this lamb was already being stretched out, but he called it to him and, when the saint called it, it ran to him quickly, and at once the lamb was made alive and well, just as it had been before.</p>
<p>59. Quadam autem die, cum sanctus Kannechus esset in predicto loco, scilicet hi Cluoin Bronich, vir vaccas venit ad eum cum querela, dicens: “Vitulum vaccarum duarum luppus comedit.”</p> <p>Cui Kannechus dixit: “Leto animo vade ad vaccas tuas mulgendas, et plausum fac manibus tuis.” Cumque ille hoc fecisset, luppus ille reus cum humilitate et penitentia in locum vituli venit, deditque caput suum in vinculum vituli, et due vacce illum amantes hinc inde lambebant; et cotidie quandiu vacce fetosse erant, vespere et mane sic veniebat et revertabatur in grunnam; et ex illa die in eternum fecit sanctus pacem inter lupos et peccora in illo loco simul habitantes, et non nocebant.</p> <p>Et multa alia miracula Kannechus fecit, et .xi. mortuos suscitavit.</p>	<p>On another day, when Saint Cainnech was in the aforesaid place, that is in Cluain Brónaig, the man who milked the cows came to him with a complaint saying, “A wolf has eaten the calf of two cows.”¹⁰⁷</p> <p>Cainnech said to him, “Go back and milk your cows with a glad mind, and clap your hands together.” When he had done this, that wicked wolf, in humility and penitence, came and replaced the calf. It put its head into the calf’s halter, and the two cows loved it and licked it all over. And every day, as long as those cows were productive, the wolf came every evening and morning to the bog; and from that day the saint made peace for ever between wolves and the cattle living there together, and they did no harm.</p> <p>And Cainnech did many other miracles. He resuscitated eleven dead people.</p>
<p>60. Cum autem dies exitus eius venisset, toto corpore infirmatus est. Noluitque accipere de manu cuiusdam de familia sua sacrificium, dicens: “Alium virum sanctum mittet Dominus ad me, qui michi corpus Christi dabit.” Tunc sanctus Fintan Meldub, missus a Domino, venit</p>	<p>When the day of his departure had come, he was enfeebled in his whole body. He did not wish to receive the sacrifice from anyone in his own community, saying, “God will send another holy man to me who will give me the Body of Christ.” Then saint Fintan Máeldub¹⁰⁸ came to him, sent</p>

¹⁰⁶ The following section makes it clear that the Uí Chonchenn occupied land near Cluain Brónaig, and as we have already seen that is on the border of southern Uí Néill territory and Munster, near Birr. I do not know of any other reference to this kindred.

¹⁰⁷ Sic. It would be interesting to know if there was something peculiar about medieval dairy farming in Ireland which made it sensible to refer to a calf as the calf of *two* cows.

¹⁰⁸ Some confusion surrounds this saint, Fintan Máeldubh, whose feast in martyrologies generally associates him with Durrow in Co. Laois (not to be confused with the better-known Durrow, a Columban foundation in

ad eum. Et accipiens eucharistiam de manu eius, migravit ad Dominum, cui honor et gloria in secula seculorum. Amen.

by God. And receiving the eucharist from his hand, Cainnech went to the Lord, to whom be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Co. Offaly).. However, he may be identical with his namesake Fintan mac Tulcháin who, we may note, was the little boy whose father was commanded by Colum Cille to throw him into the sea (see above, § 26). This latter saint, Fintan aka Munnu, is commemorated principally in Taghmon in Co. Wexford, but also appears in a scatter of churches and chapels in Argyll. See Ó Riain 2011, 344; Márkus 2015. In the Life of Fiontan of Clonenagh, Fiontan Máeldubh gives Fiontan of Clonenagh communion at his death, and succeeds him as abbot of Clonenagh. There must be some doubt around this confusing story. See Ó Riain 2011, 344.

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MAP 1

Some places associated with the cult of Cainnech mentioned in this document



MAP 2

Place-names in Scotland which refer, or may refer, to Cainnech from www.saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk q.v.

