Perceptions of the Slave Trade in Britain and Ireland:

'Celtic' and 'Viking' Stereotypes

This article examines the slave trade through the lens of cultural interactions between different population groups in Britain and Ireland; it investigates how the resultant tensions impacted on their viewpoints of each other and, in particular, how their writers reported the taking and trading of slaves. This study will confine itself to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when these tensions were heightened by conquests and the process of Europeanisation. The influence of these medieval tensions and perceptions on the way our available written sources discuss slavery must be considered. Viewpoints on the slave trade, and those involved in it, are especially foregrounded in source references to the trade being brought to an end. This article will critique the 'Viking' and 'Celtic' stereotypes of our sources, which have sometimes seeped into scholarship on the matter too. It will challenge the notion of Scandinavian-imported slavery, foisted upon Britain and Ireland, and analyse the biases of Anglo-Norman writers in their portrayals of 'Celtic' barbarians, particularly of Scottish forces at the Battle of the Standard in 1138.

The Evidence for Slavery and its End

Slaves are virtually invisible in the archaeological record.[1] In addition, slaves are likely to be under-represented in historical sources.[2] In particular, little evidence remains of the practicalities of the taking and trading of slaves. Our written sources largely focus on elite conflicts of lasting importance, which likely obscures our view of slave-taking on more mundane military expeditions. According to Rio, these sources 'are unlikely to tell us much about smaller-scale raiding, such as short-ranging cross-border raids, and they tell us even less about such activities occurring within a single polity. This does not, of course, mean that it did not happen, and it is probably unsafe to assume that raiding activity happened only across political borders'.[3] The trafficking—as well as taking—of slaves is also difficult to reconstruct both archaeologically and textually. This lack of

[1] Fontaine identifies four archaeological 'indicators' of slave-trading (shackles, fortified settlements, currency and burials) but notes that all are problematic (Janel M. Fontaine, 'Early medieval slave-trading in the archaeological record: comparative methodologies', *Early Medieval Europe* 25.4 (2017), 466–488).

[2] Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 20 (referring to the Mediterranean).

[3] Alice Rio, *Slavery after Rome, 500–1100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 20.

written evidence for the sale and trade of slaves applies more widely to economic affairs: McCormick notes that the 'apparent absence of mentions of traders in the historical sources should not be a surprise; the writers of the time were largely indifferent to merchants and trade'.[4] This might partly be a product of a Christian dislike for commerce and trade.[5] This is especially interesting with regards to the slave trade since Christians were not supposed to own others of their faith but we know that this principle was not always observed.[6]

Indeed it has often been argued that Christianity and a strengthened church brought an end to the medieval slave trade. And while it certainly contributed, particularly encouraging manumission, the slave trade continued into the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In Ireland at least there is in fact, as Holm observes, a 'relatively clear-cut case that slavery became more widespread in the course of the 11th century'.[7] The continued existence of the slave trade is borne out by written evidence, in the form of annalistic records of slave-taking, which will be discussed further later, but also in the form of laments at the trade's continued existence and attempts to curb it.

The VII Æthelred law code, from around 1009, specifically prohibits the sale of men out of the country.[8] This is a recurring concern in legislation associated with Wulfstan, archbishop of York.[9] The II Cnut law code also disallows selling people abroad and adds 'ne sylle ne on hæðendóme huru ne bringe'.[10] It seems therefore that slaves were traded with both Christian and heathen lands, but it is not specified which lands deemed heathen received slaves sourced from Anglo-Saxon England. While there might be a practical element to the concern for those enslaved in unfamiliar areas, presumably facing linguistic and cultural barriers, the primary objection seems to be to the notion of heathens owning Christians (not the notion of slavery itself). A legal code attributed to William the Conqueror reiterates the prohibition against selling people out of the

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[4] McCormick, p. 576.

[5] McCormick, p. 13.

[6] For instance, the existence of Anglo-Saxon slaves in Rome is well documented.

[7] Poul Holm, 'The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries', *Peritia* 5 (1986), 317–45 (p. 339)

[8] VII Æthelred §5

[9] David A. E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England: from the reign of Alfred until the twelfth century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995), p. 91.

[10] *Cnut II*, §3 (ed. F. Liberemann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen von F. Liebemann; hrsg. im Auftrage der Savigny-Stiftung* (Halle: Niemayer, 1903–1916), p. 310): 'and especially of conveying them into heathen lands' (transl. A. J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), p. 177).

country.[11] These repeated injunctions might reflect the trade's continued survival, but also reflect the ruler's desire to appear pious while upholding order.

The trade was presumably too profitable to cease, notwithstanding these legislative attempts to limit it. Bristol in particular seems to have been a centre of the slave trade and connected to Dublin's slave market, perhaps not surprising given the considerable economic connections between the two towns. According to William of Malmesbury in his *Vita Wulfstani* ('Life of Wulfstan', bishop of Worcester from 1062 to 1095), the people of Bristol were so impressed by one of the saint's miracles that as a result 'ab eis morem uetustissimum sustulit, qui sic animis eorum occalluerat ut nec Dei amor nec regis Willelmi timor hactenus eum abolere potuisset'.[12] Pelteret suggests that the text would have stated if these merchants in Bristol had been foreigners, but notes that we do not know 'whether many of these English traders actually went out and captured the slaves themselves, as many of the Scandinavians certainly did'.[13] It seems likely that William of Malmesbury's emphasis on these slaving activities being a long-standing custom in the area is to attribute much of the blame to the pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxons, whose general morality he questioned in his works, even crediting it for their defeat at Hastings. The *Vita Wulfstani* particularly mentions that the slaves were destined for Ireland while decrying the actions of the Englishmen involved in the trade at length:

> Homines enim ex omni Anglia coemptos maioris spe questus in Hiberniam distrahebant, ancillasque prius ludibrio lecti habitas iamque pregnantes uenum proponebant. Videres et gemeres concatenatos funibus miserorum ordines et utriusque sexus adolescentes, qui liberali forma, aetate integra, barbaris miserationi essent, cotidie prostitui, cotidie uenditari. Facinus

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[11] *Leges Wilhelmi*, §3 (*English Historical Documents. Volume II, 1042–1189*, ed. David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway (2nd edn London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), p. 400).

[12] William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, ii. 19 (ed. M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury Saints' Lives: SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 100: 'he put a stop to an ancient habit of theirs which had become so ingrained that neither love of God nor fear of King William had hitherto been able to abolish it' (transl. *ibid*., p. 101).

[13] Pelteret, p. 76.

execrandum dedecus miserabile, nec beluini affectus memores homines necessitudines suas, ipsum postremo sanguinem suum, seruituti addicere![14]

This condemnatory account by a twelfth-century historian reflects the fact that by his own day attitudes in England towards slavery had apparently shifted.

The Council of Westminster in 1102 issued a general ban on all trade in slaves in England.[15] It is unclear how effective this was, though. In Ireland the slave trade presumably continued late into the twelfth century if we believe Gerald of Wales' account of the council of Armagh in 1170 which decided 'ut Angli ubique per insulam servitutis vinculo mancipati in pristinam revocentur libertatem'.[16] Holm, though, argues that these 'liberated Englishmen may well have been born in Ireland of English parents' and that the bulk of this trade between England and Ireland had come to an end, perhaps surviving illicitly on a smaller-scale.[17] The churchmen at this council also agreed that the Anglo-Norman or English conquest of Ireland had occurred 'propter peccata scilicet populi sui, eoque precipue quod Anglos olim tam a mercatoribus quam predonibus atque piratis emere passim ei in servitutem redigere consueverant, divine censura vindicte hoc eis inccommodum accidisse, ut et ipsi quoque ab eadem gente in servitutem vice reciproca iam redigantur'.[18] Gerald's depiction of the Irish is in general rather unfavourable, portraying them as uncivilised barbarians. Unfortunately there is no other account of this council to compare to Gerald's version. Interestingly,

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[14] William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, ii. 19 (ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, pp. 100, 102: "… they would buy up men from all over England and sell them off to Ireland in hope of a profit, and put up for sale maidservants after toying with them in bed and making them pregnant. You would have groaned to see the files of the wretches roped together, young persons of both sexes, whose youth and respectable appearance would have aroused the pity of barbarians, being put up for sale every day. An accursed deed, and a crying shame, that men devoid of emotions that even beasts feel should condemn to slavery their own relations and even their flesh and blood!" (transl. *ibid*., p. 101, 103)

[15] *Nequis illud nefariium negotium quo hactenus homines in Anglia solebant uelut bruta animalia uenundari deinceps ullatenus facere praesumat* (ed. Martin Rule, *Eadmeri Historia Novorum in Anglia: Et opuscula duo de vita Sancti Anselmi et quibusdam miraculis ejus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 143): 'That no one is henceforth to presume to carry on that shameful trading whereby heretofore men used in England to be sold like brute beasts' (transl. Geoffrey Bosanquet, *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England: Historia Novorum in Anglia* (London: Cresset Press, 1964), p. 152).

[16] Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ch. 19 (ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin, *Expugnatio Hibernica: the Conquest of Ireland, by Giraldus Cambrensis* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), p. 70): 'that throughout the island Englishmen should be freed from the bonds of slavery and restored to their former freedom' (transl. *ibid*., p. 71).

[17] Holm, p. 340.

[18] Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ch. 19 (ed. Scott and Martin, p. 70): 'because of the sins of their own people, and in particular because it had formerly been their habit to purchase Englishmen indiscriminately from merchants as well as from robbers and pirates, and to make slaves of them, this disaster had befallen them by the stern judgement of the divine vengeance, to the end that they in turn should now be enslaved by that same race' (transl. *ibid*., pp. 69, 71)

Gerald notes that when the English had similarly committed these crimes, it had also led to their punishment by conquest:

> Anglorum namque populus, adhuc integro eorundem regno, communi gentis vico liberos suos venales exponere, et priusquam inopiam ullam aut inediam sustinerent, filios proprios et cognatos in Hiberniam vendere consueverant. Unde et probabiliter credi potest, sicut venditores dim ita et emptores tam enormi delicto iuga servitutis iam meruisse.[19]

Such a one directional view of the trade might be simplistic. Another problem here is that the Irish church was portrayed as inherently corrupt, secular and in dire need of reform as an excuse for invasion, when, in reality, it had enthusiastically embraced European trends.[20] Wyatt notes that the measures against unchivalric activities imposed by this council 'were inextricably bound up with the ideology of the reform movement'.[21] This was made more explicit at the Synod of Cashel in 1172 where it was claimed that 'tam ecclesias quam regnum Hibernie debent' to the king of England for abolishing previous wickednesses.[22] Gerald, once more, is our only source for this proclamation. Of course, perhaps ironically, it was the wealth of the Hiberno-Scandinavian towns and Dublin in particular, presumably partly derived from the slave trade, which attracted the king.[23]

A 'Viking' Stereotype

Medieval perceptions of those involved in the taking and trading of slaves have inevitably influenced the texts upon which we rely for the evidence of slavery, but the views of modern

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[19] Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ch. 19 (ed. Scott and Martin, p. 70): 'For the English, in the days when the government of England remained fully in their hands, used to put children up for sale—a vicious piracy in which the whole race took part—and would sell their own sons and relations into Ireland rather than endure any want or hunger. So there are good grounds for believing that, just as formerly those who sold slaves, so now also those bought them, have, by committing such a monstrous crime, deserved the yoke of slavery' (transl. *ibid*., p. 71).

[20] See Clare Downham, *Medieval Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2018), p. 319; Marie Therese Flanagan, *The Transformation of the Irish Church in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. xi, 243.

[21] David Wyatt, *Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800–1200* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 389.

[22] Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ch. 35 (ed. Scott and Martin, p. 100): 'both the realm and the church of Ireland are indebted' (transl. *ibid*., p. 101).

[23] Like William the Conqueror, though, Henry does seem to have outlawed slavery, projecting a pious image (see Wyatt, *Slaves*, p. 390).

historians have also contributed to how this topic has been discussed. Scholars have tended to focus on vikings raiding and taking slaves, rather than on other population groups, and have also assumed that when other population groups did take part in these activities it was encouraged by the vikings. For example, in an early survey of the slave trade in medieval Wales, Bromberg asserted that the infrequent references to Welsh slaves on the continent meant that they could not have been traded by the Welsh themselves but by the Anglo-Saxons after border skirmishes. Ultimately 'it was probably the Viking trader-raider who turned the attention of the Welshman to the slave trade'.[24] The state of slavery was familiar in early Britain and Ireland, though. Most slaves would probably have been taken as prisoners of war or had entered into debt-bondage. The use of slave labour was presumably also quite common.[25] There were several words for slaves in Old Irish and one of them, *cumal* ('a female slave'), even became a legal unit of value in Ireland.[26] Crucially, though, we have no clear evidence of the actual sale and trade of slaves in Ireland before the Viking Age.[27] The same cannot be said, though, of Anglo-Saxon England and the continent. Since raiding and warfare was probably the main source of slaves, Woolf suggests that 'most slaves were probably allocated to the households of those who had engaged in the fighting or distributed by the local kings and lords as part of the practice of redistributive chieftaincy that characterised the Irish political system'.[28]

Despite this lack of definitive evidence for a pre-viking trade, this does not mean that the later trade in Ireland was exclusively Hiberno-Scandinavian. Wyatt notes that the annalistic evidence of native Irish slave raiding in the eleventh century 'would appear to undermine the argument that the medieval slave trade may be explained away by the external exploitation of the small community of Hiberno-Norse raiders and traders'.[29] That community would have been rather overstretched to be able to supply and run the slave markets entirely without contributions from other population groups. Indeed, Woolf suggests that while a single warrior was capable of taking

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[24] Erik I. Bromberg, 'Wales and the mediaeval slave trade', *Speculum* 18.2 (1942), 263–9 (p. 263).

[25] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), p. 45

[26] *Ibid*., p. 46.

[27] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland, 400–1200* (2nd edn. London: Routledge, 2017) p. 273; Alex Woolf, 'The Scandinavian Intervention', in *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Volume I: 600–1550*, ed. by Brendan Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 104–130 (p. 129).

[28] Woolf, p. 129.

[29] Wyatt, *Slaves*, p. 341.

slaves or was owed their share of the spoils from a larger venture 'it is unlikely that these individuals would carry through the entire exportation process themselves'.[30]

The Scandinavian incomers might have changed the way that the Irish viewed slavery or its scale.[31] Holm argues that Irish kings learnt how useful slavery as a tactic of warfare could be and that it is certainly conceivable 'that the Vikings were punished by their own weapon in the 10th century and later', suggested by annal entries of 942 and after.[32] This passage of the Irish text *Cogadh Gaedel re Gallaib* ('The War of the Irish against the Foreigners') shows pleasure, at least on the part of a twelfth-century author, at Hiberno-Scandinavians across Ireland being enslaved by Brian Bóruma: 'Cona rabí cáthlech …gan gall indairi fair, ocus narab bro gan gaillsig'.[33] Ó Cróinín admits that the Irish 'show signs of having adopted the practice themselves' but argues that they 'appear to have restricted its use to Viking prisoners of war, "an act of defiance and humiliation" visited only on their Viking enemies'.[34] Since vikings were increasingly allied with Irish factions, one wonders whether such a restriction could have been practically applied when a defeated army might have contained both Hiberno-Scandinavians and Irishmen. Moreover, those involved in the slave trade may not have had such qualms; before viking raids, the Irish had evidently had no qualms about raiding other kingdoms, including the wealthy monasteries they contained. It seems probable, in fact, that slave-taking was not just deliberately used by the Irish as a weapon against Hiberno-Scandinavian forces, but it was used against other Irish factions too. There are occasional annalistic references to Irish royals taking captives (sometimes alongside cattle) in warfare against Irish kingdoms in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. For example, it is recorded that in 1011 Murchad mac Briain of Munster and his allies 'do innredh Ceniuil Conaill co tuc .ccc. do brait & bú imda'.[35] The following year Flaithbertach ua Néill, king of Ailech, attacked Ard Ulad and 'co tuc

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[30] Woolf, p. 128.

[31] Woolf suggests a comparison 'to the trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan slave trade of more recent centuries which transformed the endemic and localised West African slavery, very similar to early Irish slavery, into something far less humane' (p. 139).

[32] Holm, p. 338.

[33] *Cogadh*, ch. 70: 'So that there was not a winnowing sheet… that had not a foreigner in bondage in it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman' (ed. and transl. James Henthorn Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh: The war of the Gaedhil with the Gaill, or, The invasions of Ireland by the Danes and other Norsemen* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), pp. 116–17).

[34] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 282.

[35] AU 1012.2 (Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, ed. and transl., *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983) [online revised version, Corpus of Electronic Texts, Cork, 2008], p.440): 'invaded Cenél Conaill and took 300 captives and many cows' (transl. *ibid*., p. 443).

gabhala is moamh tuc ri riam eter brait & innile, ce nach n-arimter'.[36] The fate and destination of these captives is not specified, but perhaps some were sold on to Hiberno-Scandinavian markets. There is not a noticeable difference in vocabulary for those captives taken by vikings or Hiberno-Scandinavians compared to those taken by their fellow Irishmen.[37] Slave-taking was clearly not just the preserve of the vikings; it was expected to happen to a defeated army, and perhaps to their wider community too.

It is particularly instructive that slave raiding in Ireland actually escalated in the latter half of the eleventh century, after Dublin has been taken over by native Irish rulers.[38] Indeed, the latest known attacks by Dublin forces acting alone, without allies, are in 1037.[39] While the intensification of slave raiding might partly be due to an economic boom, it also possible that Dublin's political decline meant that warriors shifted their raiding activity to areas outwith Dublin: they might then provide slaves for the Dublin market who 'had not been taken as a result of political complications, but simply for profit'.[40] Thus, it seems that the nature and extent of slavery and slave-taking in Ireland had been altered due to the increasing economic development spearheaded by the Hiberno-Scandinavian towns; slavery cannot, though, be blamed on the Scandinavian incomers alone.

Insular slave-taking

Slave-taking not only shows the connections of the Hiberno-Scandinavians to the rest of Ireland but also to the wider Insular world. It seems that native Irish rulers were not alone in supplying Dublin's slave market. This is seen in the actions of Welsh and Scottish rulers in particular. An entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1055 provides an interesting window into slave-taking. Ælfgar the earl of Mercia, the son of the previous earl of Mercia, Leofric, and of the famous Lady Godiva, had a troubled relationship with the king of England, Edward the Confessor,

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[36] AU 1012.2 (p. 440): 'took the greatest spoils, both in captives and cattle, that a king ever took, though they are not counted' (transl. p. 443)

[37] For example AU 895.6 and AU 1031.4.

[38] Wyatt, *Slaves*, pp. 340–1.

[39] AFM 1037.10 (John O'Donovan, ed. and transl., *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616*, 2nd ed., 7 vols. (Dublin: Hodges, Smith, 1856) [online revised version, Corpus of Electronic Texts, Cork, 2002], p. 373): assaults on the monasteries of Skreen and Duleek. Bhreathnach suggests that this was a response to Dublin's decreasing power in Brega (Edel Bheathnach, 'Columban Churches in Brega and Leinster: Relations with the Norse and the Anglo-Normans', *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 129 (1999), 5–18 (p. 13)).

[40] Holm, p. 331.

and was outlawed in 1055. The Chronicle records Earl Ælfgar's attack on Hereford following his banishment, with the forces he had gathered to his cause, including Gruffudd ap Llewelyn, king of Gwynedd. In this attack 'þæt folc slogan 7 sume on weg læddan'.[41] Holm claims that this incident 'shows that the Welsh practised slaving expeditions against Anglo-Saxon territories with the help of English outlaws', referring to Ælfgar.[42] But Holm neglects to mention that the Hiberno-Scandinavians may actually have been involved in this expedition directly, since the same chronicle entries relate that Ælfgar had gone 'to Irlande 7 begeat him ðær lið' and then turned to Gruffudd ap Llewelyn and the Welsh.[43] While it is of course still plausible that the Welsh would have taken slaves without direct Hiberno-Scandinavian involvement, in this instance one wonders if their presence increased the likelihood of slave-taking; it could even have been part of the bargain when they agreed to be Ælfgar's mercenaries.

It seems significant that it was the later reign of Gruffudd ap Cynan, who had longstanding ties to the Dublin area, which 'was to be the culmination of slaving' in Wales.[44] Gruffudd, described by Griffiths as 'the ultimate Irish Sea hybrid Viking',[45] was born and grew up around Dublin, near Swords. His father Cynan ab Iago had fled to Ireland after his own father's death in 1039 and married a daughter of Óláfr Sitricson, providing a direct connection to the Hiberno-Scandinavian dynasty, which perhaps hoped to reinforce Dublin's influence in north Wales.[46] Like Ælfgar, Gruffudd attempted to restore his rightful position with the help of Hiberno-Scandinavian mercenaries which may have increased the likelihood of slaving in his reign.

Scottish kings are also recorded as taking captives during raids on Northumbria in 1058, 1061, 1065, 1070, 1079 and in 1138.[47] The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle account of king Máel Coluim harrying Northumbria in 1079 mentions that he took captives but without the exaggerated moral

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[41] ASC C 1055 (ed. O'Brien O'Keefe, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C*, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition, ed. D. Dumville and S. Keynes, 5 (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), p. 116): 'they killed the people and some they carried off' (EHD, II, p. 134).

[42] Holm, p. 341.

[43] ASC C 1055 (ed. O'Brien O'Keefe, pp. 115–6): 'to Ireland and there got himself a fleet' (EHD, II, p. 133).

[44] Holm, p. 341.

[45] David Griffiths, *Vikings of the Irish Sea* (Stroud: History, 2010), p. 158.

[46] According to Duffy, 'there seems to be no sensible reason for doubting this' marriage as 'Gruffudd's son, Owain Gwynedd, also looked to Ireland for a wife, and the fact that Gruffudd gave the Scandinavian forename Ragnhildr to one of his own daughters is a point that should not be overlooked' (Seán Duffy, 'Ostmen, Irish and Welsh in the Eleventh Century', *Peritia* 9 (1995), 378–96 (p. 390)).

[47] See Pelteret, p. 73: King Máel Coluim III also made incursions into northern England in 1091 and 1093 (when he killed near Alnwick) but there is no specific reference to him taking captives on these occasions.

outrage of twelfth-century sources describing such conduct. Gillingham comments that in this period 'English observers, themselves members of a slave owning, slave raiding, slave trading society, would not have noticed anything peculiarly repellent in Celtic warfare'.[48] The *Historia Regum*'s account of Máel Coluim's raid in 1070 is not as neutral and brief as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry of a similar attack: after detailing the murder of babies, it claims that Máel Coluim had taken so many 'juvenes vel juvenculæ' that 'Repleta est ergo Scotia servis et ancilissi Anglici generis'.[49] The surviving version of the *Historia Regum* contains sections which were interpolated at Hexham in the mid twelfth century.[50] One of those interpolations, which are more impassioned and more hostile to the Scottish, is the description of Máel Coluim's attack.[51] Slavery was no longer acceptable in the author's own society and he may himself have gained greater experience of such horrors during the invasion of his region in 1138. Thus later developments had an influence on the reporting of events in the eleventh-century: 'this was 1070 seen through mid-twelfth-century eyes'.[52] The benefit of hindsight and evolving societal norms impacted perceptions of other cultures.

A 'Celtic' Stereotype

Slave-taking as a stereotype of Viking Scandinavians was noted earlier, but in the twelfth century it instead became associated with 'Celtic' peoples, particularly in disparaging accounts by Anglo-Norman writers, as has been emerging in the course of this discussion. While it has been observed that these peoples did become involved in the taking of slaves, this stereotype can be connected to the wider portrayal of Celtic peoples as barbarous in various sources, particularly chronicles. In this regard later writers followed in the footsteps William of Malmesbury; Gillingham contends that it was one of William's 'most creative and influential achievements … to introduce

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[48] John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), p. 47.

[49] *Historia Regum* (ed. T. Arnold, *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omni*a, 2 vols. (London: Longman 1882–1885), vol. ii, pp. 190–192): 'youths and girls … Therefore Scotland was filled with slaves and handmaids of the English race' (transl. Alan O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers* (London: D. Nutt, 1908), p. 93). The *Historia Regum* has traditionally been attributed to Symeon of Durham but other scholars prefer to simply refer to 'the Durham chronicler'.

[50] H. S. Offler, 'Hexham and the *Historia Regum*', *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland*, n.s. 2 (1970): 51–62, esp. 53, 55.

[51] Gillingham, p. 47.

[52] *Ibid*.

this imperialist perception of Celtic peoples into history'.[53] While it may be a little simplistic to credit this development to one writer,[54] this perception of Celtic peoples spread rapidly. Previously there had been a clear division between Christian and non-Christian but 'William also used a non-religious system of classification, dividing them into the "civilised" and the "barbarians"', with the Celtic-speaking peoples falling into the latter category.[55] Along with their rustic laziness and their improper sexual (and marital) practices, conduct in war was one of the key aspects of this perception.

Perhaps the most famous example of this depiction of martial behaviour is in descriptions of the Scottish forces at the Battle of the Standard, fought between Scots and English, in 1138 near Northallerton, north Yorkshire.[56] For example, Henry of Huntingdon refers to 'hii qui in hac patria templa Dei uiolarunt, altaria cruentauerunt, presbiteros occiderunt, nec pueris nec pregnantibus pepercerunt, in eadem condignas sui facinoris luant penas'.[57] This speech is put into the mouth of Ralph bishop of the Orkneys (deputising for Thurstan, archbishop of York, who was too ill to be present), egging on the English and Normans just before the clash. Considering the further context of this battle is useful at this juncture. Our sources tell us that Thurstan had been instrumental in raising the English army, preaching that to go to war against the Scots was to do God's work. Ailred of Rievaulx relates that Thurstan issued an episcopal edict throughout his diocese, enjoining people

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[53] Gillingham, p. 9, see also pp. 27–9. He notes that while earlier English kings might have claimed imperial rule 'they were not imperialists' and that 'the culture of Celtic peoples was not disparaged' (p. 9, see also p. 43).

[54] Indeed, relations between the English church, namely Canterbury, and the Irish church in this period have often been viewed as aggressively expansionist and a form of ecclesiastical imperialism, as Canterbury tried to increase its suffragans and claimed primacy over Ireland. For example, James F. Kenney referred to the 'imperialism of Canterbury' (*The Sources for the Early History of Ireland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), p. 758), while Aubrey Gwynn described archbishop Lanfranc's 'wellplanned campaign of ecclesiastical imperialism' ('The first bishops of Dublin', *Reportorium Novum*, 1 (1955) 1–26 (p. 8)). This historiographical interpretation seems tinged with Irish nationalist sentiment, whereas English scholars have seen Canterbury's involvement as merely 'incidental to the main issue of Canterbury's assertion of primatial authority over the see of York' (Marie Therese Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 54).

[55] Gillingham, p. 43.

[56] Gillingham claims that the writers of the time portrayed the Battle of the Standard 'not just as a battle between Scots and English but as a titanic and ferocious struggle between two opposing cultures, the civilised and the savage' (*English*, pp. 14 and 48).

[57] Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, x, 8 (ed. and trans. Diana Greenway, *Histora Anglorum: the history of the English people* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) pp. 714–15) "… those who in this land have violated the temples of God in this country, have spilt blood on altars, have murdered priests, have spared neither children nor pregnant women, shall in this same country undergo their deserved punishment for their villainy".

'ecclesiasm Christi contra barbaros defensuri'.[58] A holy cause of course requires a heinous enemy to rally against, providing another reason to portray their Celtic foes as primitive and uncivilised. Even in instances of conflict without explicit church backing, the religious dimension is more broadly pertinent to interpreting the Anglo-Norman sources. While admitting that there might be some truth to these accounts, Wyatt suggests that the emphasis on the Scottish forces indiscriminately attacking ecclesiastical centres and personnel was an attempt 'to dehumanise and "de-Christianize" their Scottish foes by portraying them as sub-human heathens'.[59] Previously there had been a concern that pagans might own Christian slaves, but now the perception of Celtic peoples as deficient in their Christianity (also seen in the dismissive accounts of the Irish church, noted earlier) seems to have gone hand-in-hand with the perception of their propensity to slave-taking and barbaric conduct in warfare.

Scotland and Galloway

The Scottish case is particularly interesting as regards the 'Celtic' stereotype. In some sources, the Scots are viewed as uniformly barbarous in comparison to the English. However, there were also tensions within Scotland between more traditional Gaelic lords and coastal areas of Scandinavian settlement on the one hand and the core of Alba with its Norman leanings on the other hand. This is exemplified by the succession dispute on the death of Máel Coluim III in 1093. Máel Coluim's brother, Domnall (Donald) Bán seized the kingship, adhering to a more traditional succession pattern, and 'ealle þa Englisce út adræfon' who had been in Máel Coluim's court.[60] His nephew Donnchadh mac Máel Coluim (Duncan II) successfully invaded with the aid of Northumbrians and Anglo-Normans, but shortly after a Scottish uprising killed most of his followers and only allowed him to continue as king on the condition that he should 'næfre eft Englisce ne Frencisce into þam lande ne ge logige'.[61] The French and English influence would win out in the end in Scotland, under Donnchadh's half-brothers, who were Máel Coluim's sons by

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[58] Ailred of Rievaulx, *Relatio De Standardo*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols., ed. R. Howlett, III: 182: 'to defend the church of Christ against the barbarians' (transl. Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, p. 191).

[59] Wyatt, *Slaves*, p. 375.

[60] ASC E 1094. *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. C. Plummer and J. Earle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892–1899), p. 288: 'drove out all the English' (transl. M. J. Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London: Dent, 1996), p. 228).

[61] ASC E 1094. *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, p. 288: 'never again introduce English or French into the land' (transl. Swanton, p. 228).

Margaret from the West Saxon dynasty.[62] These sons, Edgar, Alexander and particularly the long-reigning David (1124–53) are often credited with strengthening, and even forming, the Scottish kingdom. David had grown up in the court of Henry I and continued his associations with the Anglo-Normans during his reign over Scotland.

Some Anglo-Norman writers praise David I for being a civilising influence in Scotland; William of Malmesbury claimed that he was more courtly due to his time in England which 'omnem rubiginem Scotticæ barbariei deterserat'.[63] William of Newburgh even called David 'rex non barbarus barbarae gentis'.[64] Margaret's hagiographer, Turgot, is also unsurprisingly positive about the queen and her family. This more selective view of the Scots contrasts to the more blanket approach taken by writers such as Henry of Huntingdon, whose account of Scottish conduct leading up to the Battle of Standard was quoted above. Richard of Hexham's account of the Battle of Clitheroe, an earlier engagement in the campaign which culminated in the Battle of the Standard, is similarly sensationalist about the actions of the Scottish forces in the north of England, relating that they carried away widows and maidens:

> … illi bestiales homines, adulterium et incestum ac cetera scelera pro nichilo ducentes, postquam more brutorum animalium illis miserrimus abuti pertæsi sunt, eas vel sibi ancillas fecerunt, vel pro vaccis aliis barbaris vendiderunt.[65]

This description features most aspects of the Celtic stereotype, include the taking and selling of slaves. David I had been loyal to Henry's daughter Matilda and opposed to her rival contender for

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[62] The daughter of Edward the Exile and sister of Edgar *ætheling*, she was born in Hungary.

[63] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (R. A. B. Mynors et al., ed. and trans., *Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 726–7: 'rubbed off the barbarian gaucherie of Scottish manners'.

[64] William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs, Book I*, ed. and transl. P. G. Walsh and M. J. Kennedy (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), pp. 102–3: 'a civilised king of an uncivilised race'.

[65] Richard of Hexham, *De Gestis Regis Stephani* in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols., ed. R. Howlett (Rolls Series, London: Longman, 1884–1889), III:157: '… these bestial men, who regard as nothing adultery and incest and the other crimes, after they were weary of abusing these most hapless creatures [the widows and maidens] after the manner of brute beasts, have made them their slaves or sold them to other barbarians for cows' (transl. Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, p. 187)

the English throne, Stephen, so sources which are pro-Stephen are likely to also be anti-David.[66] Other sources treat David as an exception to their portrayal of the Scots more generally.[67]

Ailred of Rievaulx narrows and focuses the Celtic barbarian stereotype onto the Galwegians, rather than all Scots. For instance, he claimed that during David's raid into Northumbria in 1136 that 'cum impiissima gens Galwensium inaudita crudelitate sævirent, nec sexui parcerent, nec ætati; nostrates, qui erant cum rege, pietate commoti, plures de eorum manibus ad Haugustaldunum quasi ad certum suæ salutis auxilium transposuerunt'.[68] David's retinue are presented as civilised in contrast to the Galwegians who still engage in slaving. Galloway's remote location on the western seaboard and its cultural makeup, originally Brittonic but undergoing Gaelic-Scandinavian settlement, set it apart from the main kingdom of Scotland, with its Anglo-Norman leanings, and from England. It also maintained an uneasy political relationship with the kings of Scots, retaining relative independence under its own lords. These factors made Galloway the perfect target for dismissive Anglo-Norman commentators. Ailred's account of the Battle of the Standard also stresses that the forces from Galloway do not wear armour and are ill disciplined which contributes to the defeat of the Scottish forces.[69] According to Ailred the Galwegians, supported by earl of Strathearn, had claimed the right to form the army's vanguard, and David relented despite the opposition of his better-equipped men. This dispute is arguably reflective of 'tensions between David's Gaelic lords and English knights, with the former resentful of the influence enjoyed by the latter in his counsels'.[70] While these tensions seem to have been real, it also suits Ailred's purposes. He had spent time at David's court and his monastic order was one of those who had received gifts

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[66] For instance the *Gesta Stephani* suggests that David I gave his forces free reign to act as despicably and savagely as they could (K. R. Potter and R. H. C. Davis, ed. and transl., *Gesta Stephani* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 54–55).

[67] John of Hexham remarked that in 1138 David set free some of the widows and maidens who had been taken as slaves by his troops, giving them to Robert, prior of Hexham, for safe-keeping (see T. Arnold, ed. *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (London: Longman 1882–1885), vol. ii, p. 290).

[68] *De Sanctis Ecclesiæ Haugustaldensis*, p. 183: 'when the most cruel nation of the Galwegians raged with unheard brutality, and spared not sex nor age, our countrymen, who were with the king were moved by compassion and sent many rescued from their hands, to Hexham, as a sure defence of their safety' (transl. Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, p. 171)

[69] This version of events (for a summary see Ronan Toolis, '"Naked and Unarmoured": A Reassessment of the Role of the Galwegians at the Battle of the Standard', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 78 (2004), 79–92 (pp. 80–2)) has been challenged by Toolis who argues that the Galwegians were intended to encounter their counterparts, the lightly-armoured English skirmishers, and that instead it was David's knights, under Earl Henry, and archers that failed to secure victory (p. 90).

[70] Richard D. Oram, *Domination and Lordship: Scotland 1070–1230* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 94.

of land in Scotland. As a result of his own conflicting ties, Ailred found a solution in the Galwegians that allowed him to praise the defenders of England and the Scottish king, while also decrying the attacks on Northumbria.[71]

An Increase in Slave-Taking?

These descriptions of the taking of slaves in a number sources give the impression that there was a marked increase in 'Celtic' slave raiding during the twelfth century. Wyatt claims that such an increase was 'symptomatic of an equally powerful cultural antipathy evident within the more traditional elements of Welsh, Irish and Scottish society. This antipathy was directed against the increasingly invasive cultural and political influences exerted by the English elite within these communities'.[72] He further asserts that slave raiding campaigns were 'a defiant gesture of adherence to traditional warrior values in the face of an increasing infiltration of the external cultural norms of chivalry and reform'.[73] The stereotypes and assumed divides of our source material can be difficult to escape completely in our historical analyses. Wyatt's implication here that Celtic peoples had internalised an external stereotype of themselves to such a degree is unconvincing. Certainly they might react to external pressure but would they consciously play into the stereotype rather than simply attack those who they saw as intruders? The increase in conflicts between Scots and English along the border might also have simply given greater opportunities for slave raiding.

This increase in slave raiding has been viewed as another symptom of the evident trend for 'Celtic peoples', supposedly on the 'fringes' or periphery, to reinforce their bonds mutually. This is particularly evident in Scotland where leaders and groups to the north and west looked to each other and to Ireland for alliances and dynastic marriages, and to a lesser extent to the lowlands and the Anglo-Norman world at large.[74] This strengthening of alliances was more likely to be responsible for a proliferation in slave raiding in Scotland by connecting these areas more firmly to the Irish Sea and the Dublin market, rather than cultural antipathy. Wyatt claims that 'the slave raiding and anti-

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[71] Toolis, p. 89.

[72] David Wyatt, 'Slavery, Power and Cultural Identity in the Irish Sea Region, 1066–1171', in *Celtic-Norse relationships in the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages 800–1200*, ed. by Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Timothy Bolton (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 97–108 (p. 108).

[73] *Ibid*.

[74] See G. W. S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity 1000–1306* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 107; R. Andrew McDonald, 'Matrimonial politics and core–periphery interactions in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Scotland', *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995), 227–247.

ecclesiastical attacks that characterised the Scottish raids upon England may well have constituted a deliberate and symbolic reaction against cultural infiltration'.[75] While the raids themselves were likely to be a reaction to external incursions, an impact on the behaviour of the raiders seems less feasible. It also assumes quite a high degree of reliability in the reports of Anglo-Norman commentators.

Conclusion

The Scandinavians did not bring slavery to Britain and Ireland, they simply gave it the international connections characteristic of their expansion during the so-called 'Viking Age'.[76] While the resultant trade network was economically sophisticated, from the overwhelmingly monastic, post-Conquest positions of Anglo-Norman commentators, slavery was perceived to be culturally backward. Interestingly, though, there seems to have been greater distaste for the trade in slaves than for the existence of slavery itself, even from the later Anglo-Saxon period, as seen in the writings of Wulfstan of York. This was particularly true if that trade brought Christians into the hands of heathens, or rather, as time went on, into the hands of Christians deemed uncivilised.

This discussion has also reinforced the interconnected nature of the Insular world—both economically and politically. The slave trade in Ireland cannot be explained away merely as a viking imposition: Irish kings do seem to have provided Hiberno-Scandinavians towns with slaves to trade and certainly took their fellow Irishmen captive. Other Insular rulers also took slaves during military engagements and are likely to have been involved in supplying this trade in slaves. In terms of the slave trade, examining the reality behind cultural perceptions and ethnic stereotypes is hampered by the lack of evidence. It is apparent that cultural perceptions were constantly shifting and dependent on points of view: the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of England were criticised for their involvement in the slave trade, particularly in Bristol, but later the English directed the same criticism at their Celtic neighbours. Similarly, the kings of Scotland and the lowland core of Alba were viewed by the largely Gaelic and Gaelic-Scandinavian peripheries around their kingdom as too foreign and Anglo-Norman, but, simultaneously, were sometimes viewed by the Anglo-

[75] Wyatt, *Slaves*, pp. 375–6

[76] Holm's article on the slave trade can be seen as part of the revisionist interpretation of the vikings, which was initiated by Peter H. Saywer, *The Age of the Vikings* (London: Arnold, 1962). This interpretation can be stretched too far, implying that all vikings were merely wrongly vilified traders; indeed, their violence should also be acknowledged. It would be equally lacking in nuance, however, to suggest that their behaviour was unique and to thereby absolve other groups of people who were involved in the same sorts of activity.

Normans themselves as too Celtic and barbarous. In general the historian should be wary of drawing too hard and fast a distinction between the 'core' and the 'periphery', and of believing disparaging accounts from the core of their backwards and barbaric opponent.[77]

It does seem, though, that the slave trade was one aspect which persisted in the so-called peripheries. By the twelfth century, there had been an apparent shift in tone in England, or the Anglo-Norman sphere, in the way that slave-taking was described and that slavery was deemed unacceptable in their culture, but, of course, reality may not always have met expectation.[78] Nevertheless, the extent to which the slave trade remained in Ireland, Scotland and the Irish Sea region has perhaps been overstated in the hyperbole of Anglo-Norman writers, or at least their accounts have been coloured by wider stereotypes and by cultural and political tensions.

[77] As noted in terms of the church, it is overly simplistic to claim than in 'Celtic' areas the church was lagging behind the rest of Europe and had to be shown the light by the English or Normans.

[78] For instance the *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* notes that Hugh of Avranches, earl of Chester, bribed an Irish war fleet with promise of youthful female slaves (Wyatt, *Slaves*, p. 101). Hugh was one of William the Conqueror's most important Norman lords.