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(4)
More Scottorum:
Buildings of Worship in Ireland, c.500–950

TOMÁS Ó CARRAGÁIN

In the period covered in this paper the vast majority or churches in Ireland were of timber or other organic materials. No fabric from any of these buildings survives and, with the exception of a few at unrepresentative minor sites, virtually no evidence for them has been recovered through archaeological excavation. A few congregational mortared stone churches were built before the mid tenth century but, as we shall see, they rarely survive either. This, then, is a paper about a group of buildings that have left very few physical traces. And yet we can discuss their form and character with a fair degree of confidence, more confidence perhaps than in the case of many of their non-extant Anglo-Saxon counterparts. In part, this is because of contemporary textual and art historical sources, but the principal reason is the tenacity of tradition in early Irish architecture: as a result of this it can be inferred that the later (tenth to twelfth century) churches of mortared stone which still survive at many sites provide us with a good indication of what their predecessors looked like.

In keeping with the scope of this publication, this paper presents a broad overview of ecclesiastical architecture in Ireland from the fifth century to the mid tenth century. It should be pointed out that the mid tenth century is a somewhat artificial chronological break, for the English monastic reform movement had little impact on Ireland, architectural or otherwise. In Ireland, the most significant reform movement prior to the late eleventh century was the eighth- to ninth-century Céli Dé (Servants of God) movement. There are no indications, either in the archaeological record or in the abundant texts produced at Céli Dé establishments, that the leaders of the movement sought to instigate architectural change, though they did promote some liturgical changes, such as an increase in the frequency of Masses,[1] which may have encouraged the construction of ever more single-altar churches at major sites. Their aim was to revive the ascetic ideals embodied by Ireland's first monastic founders and so they were happy to perpetuate the predominant church form, which was becoming closely associated with these early founding saints. While no contemporary Céli Dé churches survive, this conclusion is supported by the fact that their tenth- and eleventh-century mortared stone replacements at powerhouses of the movement such as Derrynaflan (Tipperary), Terryglass (also Tipperary) and Dysert Aenghusa (Limerick), are in this simple conservative tradition.

1 W. Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in Celtic History 23 (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 202.

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Fig. 4.1 Aerial view of the minor ecclesiastical site of Currauly on the Dingle peninsula, Co. Kerry. The vast majority of Irish ecclesiastical sites are delimited by curvilinear enclosures, usually somewhat larger than this. (© Copyright T. Ó Carragáin.)

In this paper I will consider the small number of excavated churches of organic materials and the advent of stone construction in the eighth and ninth centuries. Of necessity, the treatment here is far from exhaustive and the arguments are set out in greater detail elsewhere.[2] To begin with, let us briefly consider the range of sites at which these churches stood. While some ecclesiastical sites were established in the fifth century, the sixth and seventh centuries saw a great increase in the rate of foundation. Far fewer were founded after 800, and (in contrast to England) very few new ecclesiastical settlements were established between 900 and 1100.[3] This is testimony to the great density of sites that had been established by 900: on average there was a church for about every 10–20 square kilometres (4–8 square miles) according to a preliminary analysis carried out as part of the 'Making Christian Landscapes' Project.[4] These sites varied greatly in character from great episcopal-

2 T. Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory* (New Haven and London, 2010).

3 T. Ó Carragáin, 'Church Buildings and Pastoral Care in Early Medieval Ireland', *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building*, ed. E. FitzPatrick and R. Gillespie (Dublin, 2006), pp. 91–123 at pp. 92–101; T. Ó Carragáin, 'Cemetery Settlements and Local Churches in Pre-Viking Ireland in Light of Comparisons with England and Wales', *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell and M. Ryan, = *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 157 (2009), pp. 239–61 at p. 241.

4 T. Ó Carragáin, 'Church Sites and Other Settlements in Early Medieval Ireland: Densities, Distributions, Interactions', in *Converting the Isles, vol. 2: Converting Landscapes,* ed. N. Edwards (Turnhout, forthcoming).

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monastic *civitates* like Armagh and Clonmacnoise (Offaly) to community churches associated with particular population groups to minor hermitages and proprietary churches established for particular families or kin-groups (Fig. 4.1). While in England church foundation was restricted to kings and the more important nobles, in Ireland the relatively numerous nobles, and probably also some non-noble freemen, were entitled to found a church where they and their kin could be buried. Other families chose to be buried at a range of non-ecclesiastical cemeteries, some of which continued in use until well into the Viking Age.[5] Despite their diversity of function, virtually all Irish ecclesiastical settlements follow the same basic grammar when it comes to layout: most are delimited by one or two curvilinear enclosures. The function of ecclesiastical sites is best expressed in the size and composition of their cemeteries (for example, segregated burial at monastic sites) and, as we shall see, by the size of their churches. Indeed, where both variables are known, there seems to be quite a close positive correlation between them.

Timber Churches

The sparse distribution of early stone churches in most areas, and their virtual absence from large regions (notably Ulster and east Connacht), illustrates the ubiquity of churches built of other materials even in the period *c*. 900–1130 when all but a handful of these stone churches were built. While excavation may yet make a significant contribution to our understanding of early timber churches, two factors are against this. The first is the possibility that many important churches were of sill beam construction which, even in ideal conditions, would leave little archaeological trace. The second is the strong Irish tradition of burial within ruined medieval churches, which means that most of the key sites are not available for excavation, and in any case the evidence is probably badly disturbed if not obliterated. To date, a handful of minor sites with relatively few post-medieval burials, along with one or two subsidiary churches at important sites (Iniscealtra (Clare), Cashel (Tipperary)), have produced substantial evidence for organic churches.

A few of them were of turf construction. Liam de Paor excavated a subsidiary church, about 18 by 13 ft (5.5 by 4 m.) internally, at Iniscealtra.[6] Its 8 ft 3 in. (2.5 m.) thick turf walls were supported by close-set wattles. In contrast, the walls of the seventh-century example on Illaunloughan, Co. Kerry were just over one metre wide and were delimited at the base by upright stones, while posts set at intervals along the wall supported the roof (Fig. 4.2).[7] New radiocarbon dates from Church Island, Co.

[5] *Death and Burial in Early Medieval Ireland in the Light of Recent Excavations,* ed. C. Corlett and M. Potterton, Research Papers in Irish Archaeology 2 (Bray, 2010).

[6] L. de Paor, 'Inis Cealtra: Report on Archaeological and other Investigations of the Monuments on the Island', Report submitted to the National Monuments Service, Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (Dublin, 1997), pp. 85–6.

[7] W. Marshall and C Walsh, *Illaunloughan Island: An Early Medieval Monastery in County*

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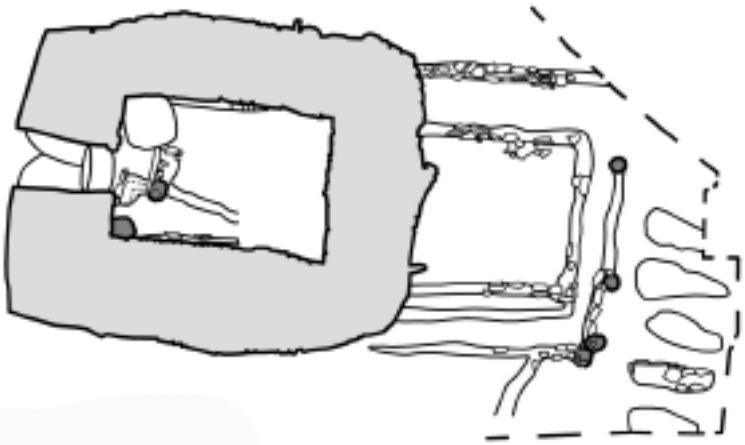


Fig. 4.2 Foundations of a sod-built church were excavated under the drystone church on the tiny island monastery of Illaunloughan, Co. Kerry. (After Marshall and Walsh as n. 5; © T. Ó Carragáin.)

Kerry, suggest that the probable turf-built oratory there was maintained from the seventh/eighth century to the tenth/eleventh century. All that survived of it was a rectangular arrangement of postholes but, as Hayden has pointed out, the metre-wide gap between postholes and burials suggests perhaps a turf-built church.[8] A number of other posthole arrangements may represent churches of upright corner posts with walls of horizontal planks, or else post-and-wattle churches. For example, at Caherlehillan (Kerry) burials occur immediately outside the line of postholes ruling out the possibility that it was of turf construction.[9] There are a few references to wattle churches in Irish hagiography. Thus, according to his Latin Life, before founding his principal establishment St Kevin 'constructed for himself a little oratory from rods [*ex virgiis*] so as to pray to God daily'.[10]

Most of our sources, however, describe or depict high-quality carpentry churches and *dairthech*, literally 'oak house,' was the most common term for 'church'. There is no evidence for churches of palisade construction of the sort sometimes found in Britain (such as Whithorn (Wigtownshire), Greenstead (Essex)), but there is evidence for sill-beam construction: both interrupted by earthfast posts and continuous sill-beam construction without earthfast posts. Usually sill-beams are laid

Kerry (Bray, 2005).

8 A. Hayden, 'A Terraced Shrine and Other Structures on Church Island, Valentia, Co. Kerry (Licence No. 03E1518)', Report for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Dublin, 2008), p. 3.

9 J. Sheehan, 'A Peacock's Tale: Excavations at Caherlehillan, Iveragh, Ireland', in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches: Proceedings of a Conference on the Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches, September 2004*, ed. N. Edwards, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 29, Society for Church Archaeology Monograph 1 (Leeds, 2009), pp. 191–206 at p. 195.

10 *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1910), vol. 2, p. 243.

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directly on the ground, and so they tend to leave little archaeological trace. As a result the only archaeological evidence for churches of interrupted sill-beam construction is often an arrangement of postholes. It is generally agreed that most posthole churches in mainland Europe were constructed in this way.[11] A possible Irish example was found under the chancel of Cormac's Chapel at Cashel. The evidence comprised two parallel rows of four rock-cut posts, representing successive phases of the south wall of a small church (*c.* 19 ft 6 in. × 13 ft (6 × 4 m.), probably a royal chapel like its successor.[12] Buildings of uninterrupted sill-beam construction are much more elusive archaeologically, but most Irish watermills (which survive because of water-logging) are built in this way.[13] A number of documentary sources suggest some churches were also. For example, in the Latin *Life of Samthanne*, it is recorded that a wooden church was moved from part of the monastery to another without dismantling it.[14] Such episodes suggest familiarity with well-jointed churches without earthfast posts.

Virtually all of our art historical and documentary sources suggest that, like their mortared stone successors, the wooden churches were rectangular with short proportions and a single door in the west wall. We should be ever conscious of the possibility that churches of other forms were built. In particular Cogitosus' description suggests that the seventh-century church at Kildare had a door in each of its sidewalls, but this is an unusual case.[15] I have suggested elsewhere that the basic form of Irish churches arrived from Roman Britain in the late fourth/early fifth century: most of the basic tenets of Irish church-design are found there and, especially in western Britain, the majority of new churches in this period were of wood rather than stone.[16] Unicameral churches (*Saalkirchen*) were quite common elsewhere in early medieval Europe. What is different about Ireland is the minimal amount of variation. The unwillingness to experiment suggests that, already, the unicameral form had become a defining characteristic of a church.

11 C. Ahrens, *Die Frühen Holzkirchen Europas*, Schriften des archäologischen Landesmuseums 7, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 2001), vol. 2; G. Descoeudres, 'Die Pfarrkirche von Ursenbach', *Archéologie Suisse*, 16 (1992–3), pp. 97–8.

12 B. Hodkinson, 'Excavations at Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, 1992 and 1993: A Preliminary Report', *Tipperary Historical Journal*, 7 (1994), pp. 167–74; B. Hodkinson, *Excavations at Cormac's Chapel, Cashel* (Dublin, forthcoming).

13 C. Rynne, 'Waterpower in Medieval Ireland', in *Working with Water in Medieval Europe: Technology and Resource-Use*, ed. P. Squatriti, Technology and Change in History 3 (Leiden, 2000), pp. 1–50.

14 Translated from *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 2, p. 257.

15 S. Connolly and J.-M. Picard, 'Cogitosus: Life of Saint Brigit', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 117 (1987), pp. 11–27 at pp. 25–6.

16 T. Ó Carragáin, 'Skeuomorphs and *Spolia*: The Presence of the Past in Irish Pre-Romanesque Architecture', in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. R. Moss (Dublin, 2007), pp. 95–109 at p. 98; Ó Carragáin, *Churches*, pp. 36–8.

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This may be partly because the form had become associated with Ireland's first and most important evangelisers. For example, in several texts it is specified that the churches built by Patrick, and therefore reputedly the first built in Ireland, were quadrangular. This form may also have become sacrosanct because it was associated with the Jerusalem Temple (the historical Temple), and especially with the idea of the Temple as a metaphor for the institution of the Church made up of the community of believers (the metaphorical Temple).[17] The 'Judaizing tendencies' of the early Irish Church are well documented: Irish clerics identified themselves closely with the Levites and considered the layout of their ecclesiastical sites to be based on that of Jerusalem.[18] It is therefore not surprising that the Temple is the predominant model for churches in Irish documentary sources. In Insular exegesis on the metaphorical Temple it is depicted as a simple quadrilateral. This is because the world was metaphorically conceived as quadrangular. In Jennifer O'Reilly's words,

> space, time and matter were seen as part of a fourfold ordering: the four winds or cardinal directions; the four season of the year; the elements of earth, air, fire and water [...] The underlying unity of this quadripartite world was seen to flow from its divine Creator made known in Christ and revealed in the harmonious testimony of the four gospels.[19]

Within this framework it is not surprising that there is a marked emphasis in exegesis on the four corners of the metaphorical Temple. These are described as being supported on the four cardinal virtues, which represent the four evangelists whose message has been brought to the four corners of the world.[20] Thus the Temple, and by extension any church which alluded to it, was a microcosm and a foreshadowing of the world to come.

The singular design feature of pre-Romanesque mortared churches in Ireland is the monumentalisation of their corners in the form of antae: square-sectioned projections of the side walls beyond the end walls (Fig. 4.3). That these are skeuomorphs of features found in wooden churches is confirmed by St MacDara's, Co. Galway, and the Romanesque church at Kilmalkedar, Co. Kerry: the only two

17 *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, ed. H. Wasserschleben, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1885), § 40:14; C. Swift, 'Forts and Fields: A Study of "Monastic Towns" in Seventh- and Eighth-Century Ireland', *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 9 (1998), pp. 105–125 at pp. 107, 120.

18 M. Herren, 'The "Judaizing tendencies" of the Early Irish Church', *Filologia mediolatina*, 3 (1996), pp. 73–80.

19 J. O'Reilly, 'Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography', *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in età romanobarbarica,* ed. A. M. Luiselli Fadda and É. Ó Carragáin (Rome, 1998), pp. 49–94 at pp. 54, 79–81.

20 M. Krasnadębska-D'Aughton, 'The Four-Symbols Page in Cracow Cathedral Library MS. 140: An Image of Unity', *Peritia*, 14 (2000), pp. 323–41 at p. 331; also N. Hiscock, *The Symbol at Your Door: Number and Geometry in Religious Architecture of the Greek and Latin Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 198.

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Fig. 4.3 Pre-Romanesque church with antae and plain trabeate doorway at Kilree, Co. Kilkenny. It is probably tenth to early twelfth century. (© Copyright T. Ó Carragáin.)

churches in which antae are combined with a stone roof. In these churches the antae are one element of a skeuomorphic package including stone copies of end-rafters and finials (Colour Plate 4.4).[21] But why were wooden churches given such prominent corner-posts? There is no obvious functional explanation; for example, they were not needed to carry the roof over the gable, for extensions of the wall places facilitate this in churches throughout Europe. One possibility is that that an interest in the cosmological connotations of the quadrangle contributed to the appeal of antae in Ireland and discouraged the addition of extra cells that would compromise this sacred form.[22]

As far as we can tell, there could be no straying from this model. It seems that the particular function of a church was expressed only in its size and probably in its internal layout. Though there is little archaeological evidence for them, we know that churches had chancel screens, usually referred to as *crann-chaingel*, a compound of 'wood' and '*cancellus*'.[23] A number of sources indicate that the altar was near the chancel screen and that the celebrant stood in the small space between them during the mass. Probably in the larger churches there was considerable room behind the

21 P. Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland: The Monuments and the People* (London, 1991), p. 98.
22 Ó Carragáin, *Churches,* pp. 38–46.
23 T. Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Mass in Early Medieval Ireland', *Medieval Archaeology*, 53 (2009), pp. 119–54 at p. 125.

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chancel screen and altar. This was usually the case elsewhere in early medieval Europe, including for example the eighth-century church excavated at Whithorn.[24] In the case of the later Irish stone churches the position of the altar is suggested by that of the solitary south window.[25] The altar in the larger examples seems to have been positioned further west than that in the smaller examples. In part at least this was probably to facilitate more elaborate liturgies in the important episcopal and/or monastic churches. This space may also have had other purposes: some of the clergy may have sat here and, by analogy with churches on the Continent, it is possible that in some cases some of the space was used as a library and/or vestry. In contrast, the altars of smaller churches, which in many cases probably had a pastoral function, were located closer to the east wall so that a greater proportion of the more limited available space was available for the congregation. Depending on the function of the church the nave could also be subdivided. The clearest example of this is Cogitosus' famous description of the church of the double monastery of Kildare, the nave of which was divided longitudinally with the lay women and nuns at the left of the partition and the lay men and monks on the right.[26]

The Advent of Stone Construction

In peninsular Kerry a local tradition of drystone domestic buildings and churches with corbelled stone roofs developed, probably during the eighth century, and as a result this is the only area in Ireland where even very minor sites acquired stone churches.[27] These buildings had little or no influence on architecture elsewhere in Ireland. By contrast, the mortared stone churches built before 950 are usually at very important sites whose other church, or churches, were still of wood. In part at least, mortared stone construction was chosen to express the fact that these particular churches were special.

We know from the *Annals of Ulster* that there was an 'oratorium lapideum' at Armagh by 789.[28] Other written sources hint that this was built in the eighth century and that it was a congregational church.[29] But, if so, what changed during the eighth century to convince Armagh clerics to rebuild their church in mortared stone? One possible explanation is the influence of the writings of Bede. During the seventh century, Armagh instigated a campaign to have the successors of Patrick recognised, at home and abroad, as archbishops of the Irish. Among other strategies, it did so by

24 P. Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian: The Excavation of a Monastic Town, 1984–91* (Stroud, 1997), Fig. 4.15.
25 Ó Carragáin, 'Architectural Setting', pp. 135–43.
26 Connolly and Picard, 'Cogitosus', pp. 26–7.
27 Ó Carragáin, 'Church buildings', p. 109.
28 *The Annals of Ulster (to AD 1131)*, ed. S. Mac Airt and G. MacNiocaill (Dublin, 1983).
29 *Annals of the Four Masters*, in *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, ed. J. O'Donovan, 7 vols (Dublin, 1851), vol. 2 *s.a.* 1020.

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acquiring relics of Peter and Paul and other Roman martyrs.[30] Already in late seventh-century Northumbria the use of mortared stone was itself considered an expression of *romanitas* but this idea is not evident in Ireland before the arrival there of Bede's writings in the eighth century.[31] It is in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, completed in 731, that we get by far the clearest expression of the symbolic dichotomy between stone churches built 'in the Roman manner' and wooden churches built 'in the Irish manner' ('more Scottorum');[32] and we know that, on the Continent, the dissemination of this text bedded down the idea that mortared stone construction was an expression of *romanitas*.[33] In a similar way, it may be no coincidence that this relatively early Irish annalistic reference to a stone church concerns a site which was particularly anxious to cultivate links with Rome.[34]

The only other mortared stone churches which seem to have been built before 900 are a small group of diminutive churches at a number of important sites such as Clonmacnoise, Iona (Argyll) and Labbamolaga (Cork) which I have termed shrine-chapels (Fig. 4.5).[35] These seem to have been built over the graves of founder saints in order to house their relics. There was no shrine-chapel at Armagh, as far as we know: Patrick was believed to have been buried at Downpatrick (Co. Down) so Armagh was only major site which did not possess the grave and corporeal relics of its founder. When radiocarbon-dated by Rainer Berger, mortar from three or four shrine-chapels produced date ranges centring on the eighth and ninth centuries suggesting they may be earlier than any extant congregational church.[36] This relatively early date range makes historical sense, for it is in the eighth and ninth centuries that we get evidence for the translation of the corporeal relics of a minority of Irish saints. Translation was not necessary for the development of an Irish saint's

30 R. Sharpe, 'Armagh and Rome in the Seventh Century', in *Ireland and Europe: The Early Church*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 58–72; Bieler, 'Patrician Texts', pp. 122–3, pp. 186–9.

31 R. Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture* (Oxford, 1999), p. 34; T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 329–30; R. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites*, 2 vols (Swindon, 2005–6), vol. 1, p. 352.

32 R. Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 46 (1983), pp. 1–18 at p. 1.

33 N. Gauthier, 'Note annexe: les églises en bois du VI^{e} siècle d'après les sources littéraires', *Grégoire de Tours et l'éspace gaulois: actes du congrès international, Tours, 3–5 novembre 1994*, ed. N. Gauthier and H. Galinié, Supplement à la revue archéologique du centre de la France 13 (Tours, 1997), pp. 237–40 at pp. 237, 240.

34 Further: Ó Carragáin, *Churches*, pp. 61–6.

35 T. Ó Carragáin, 'The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics in Early Medieval Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 133 (2003), pp. 130–76 at p. 130.

36 R. Berger, '14C Dating Mortar in Ireland', *Radiocarbon*, 34 (1992), pp. 880–9; R. Berger, 'Radiocarbon Dating of Early Medieval Irish Monuments', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 95C (1995), pp. 159–74.

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Fig. 4.5 The shrine-chapel of St Molaga at Labbamolaga, Co. Cork, is believed to mark the saint's grave. Immediately north of it are the foundations of a congregational Romanesque church which probably replaced a wooden pre-Romanesque church. (© Copyright T. Ó Carragáin.)

cult: most remained in their original graves and the shrine chapels, along with other 'outdoor' reliquary foci such as gable shrines, show that even there they were translated their bones were usually kept at the gravesite. An exception is Kildare where, according to Cogitosus, the shrines of Brigit and the first archbishop Conlaed were to either side of the altar in the main congregational church: an arrangement much more common in contemporary Francia and England. In documentary sources shrine-chapels seem to have been equated with the little ædicule built over the tomb of Christ in Jersualem.[37] Stone was therefore an appropriate choice of materials for according to Adomnán this was 'carved out of one and the same rock [… and] covered with choice marble'.[38] Of course, as Harbison has pointed out, the relics they contained were safer in a building of mortared stone than they would have been in one of wood.[39]

Clonmacnoise cathedral appears to be both the largest and the oldest congregational stone church surviving in Ireland (Fig. 4.6). It served as a cathedral in the high medieval period when its south was rebuilt to reduce its size, but Conleth

37 Ó Carragáin, 'Architectural Setting of the Cult of Relics', pp. 142–6.

38 *Adamnán's De Locis Sanctis*, ed. D. Meehan, Scriptores latini Hiberniae 3 (Dublin, 1958), pp. 45–7.

39 Harbison, *Pilgrimage*, p. 151.



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Manning has shown that it was originally about 200 square metres (240 square yards) internally.[40] Unfortunately none of its original apertures survive. It was built in 909 by Abbot Colmán and King Flann of the Southern Uí Néill immediately after the latter's victory over the men of Munster at the battle of Belach Mugna, in which he was recognised as high king of Ireland. They also commissioned the famous Cross of the Scriptures and placed it immediately west of the cathedral and repositioned older high crosses at equal distances north and south of it. As a result, though the cathedral was unicameral rather than cruciform its axis represented the shaft of a cross inscribed across the sacred core of the site. This early tenth-century scheme may perpetuate one of *c.* 700, for excavation revealed large postholes under the extant high crosses presumably for wooden ones.[41]

Conclusion

As far as we can tell, this cathedral was the first congregational stone church built in Ireland since Armagh's *damliac mór* almost two centuries before. From then on, however, such buildings became increasingly common at important sites, especially those patronised by the two most important royal powers in the country, the Southern Uí Néill and the Dál Cais. The only other major architectural change around this time is the advent of the round tower, a monument type first referred to in 950. Both of these developments will be considered in the next volume in this series, along with the changes in church form that one finally sees from the end of the eleventh century, mainly as a result of liturgical and theological imperatives. Until then the quadrangular form established during the conversion period predominated. This church type could, with variations in size and internal layout, serve a wide range of purposes. As we have seen, despite its formal simplicity, this was also symbolically sophisticated architecture.

Fig. 4.6 (opposite) Clonmacnoise Cathedral, Co. Offaly, along with the Cross of the Scriptures that stands due west of it, was erected in 909. Its inserted Romanesque doorway (and the pre-Romanesque one that it replaced) was originally at the centre of the west wall, but in the later medieval period the south wall was entirely rebuilt in order to reduce the size of the cathedral. (© Copyright T. Ó Carragáin.)

40 C. Manning, 'Clonmacnoise Cathedral', in *Clonmacnoise Studies, Volume 1: Seminar Papers 1994*, ed. H. King (Dublin, 1998), pp. 56–86.

41 H. King, 'Burials and High Crosses at Clonmacnoise', in *Death and Burial in Medieval Europe,* ed. G. de Boe and F. Veraeghe, Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge Conference 1997, 2 (Zellik, 1997), pp. 127–31.