

THE SLAVE TRADE OF DUBLIN, NINTH TO TWELFTH CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT. From the ninth century, the taking of slaves was an integral part of Viking warfare. Though never the prime motive for raiding, it was a means of indicating defiance and was followed up by the extraction of ransom and tribute. Slave-trading with Scandinavia and Iceland developed slowly. In the eleventh century, when the Irish internal struggle for over-kingship escalated, the taking of slaves became a widespread phenomenon. Warring Irish kings sold prisoners of war in the Dublin slave-market and Dublin experienced a growing slave-trade with western Europe. In the second half of the eleventh century, there seems to have developed a specific Irish-Sea slave-market, but in the twelfth century Norman legislation against the slave-trade seems to have been effective and Dublin's control of the Irish Sea was broken.

KEYWORDS: History, mediæval, Ireland, Dublin, Vikings, kingship, slavery, warfare, raiding, trade.

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One result of the Viking raids was the taking of captives who risked the fate of being enslaved. There is no agreement between scholars on the social and economic importance of this phenomenon, and more often than not historians are content to state the problem and illustrate their story by random selections from the annals, twelfth-century sagas and laws. It is, however, often assumed that the taking of slaves reached its peak in the ninth and tenth centuries and that the advent of christianity made the institution of slavery morally unacceptable.¹

¹ The only modern monograph on Scandinavian slavery, C. Nevius, *Trälarna i landskapslagarna samhälle, Danmark och Sverige* (Uppsala 1974) is not satisfactory from a historical point of view. Optimist and pessimist opinions on the role of the church are expressed by P. Foote and N. Skyum-Nielsen in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder* 19 (Copenhagen 1975 s.v. træl). Ø. Andersen emphasizes the acceptance by the mediæval church of ethnic slavery, *Slaveri og avvikling i komparativt perspektiv* (Trondheim 1983) 33-46. Both P. Sveaas Andersen, *Sam-*

In this study I propose to analyse the information supplied by the Irish annals on Viking and Irish practices in regard to slavery. I shall argue that the taking of slaves was a marginal aspect of the Viking raids proper, which centred on the taking of portable wealth. Slave-raiding became an integral part of the warfare of the Dublin kings of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, first and foremost as a means of retaliation and of displaying the military capacities of the king or his would-be successor. The economic importance of slaves for the Dublin market was directly dependent on the political circumstances of the Viking kingdom, and the taking of slaves was not a primary motive for warfare as such. I shall further argue that the boom of the Dublin slave market occurred in the late tenth and eleventh centuries as a result of the work of freebooters, and especially of the struggles of Irish overkings for supremacy. Thus the market expanded in response to the profound changes of internal Irish warfare and to the changing role of Dublin in the Irish power struggle. The declining importance of slavery in the twelfth century was probably caused by the severance of links with Scandinavia, the rise of Bristol in Irish Sea trade, and the establishment of territorial kingdoms with defined boundaries.

I

In all, 23 annals for years between 821 and 1032 record the taking of prisoners en masse which I take to indicate deliberate action by the Vikings to meet a demand for slaves. Closely related to this was the taking of prominent nobles or ecclesiastics apparently with the object of obtaining ransom money; this is attested in at least eight instances. Whereas ransomming is recorded from all over Ireland, slave-taking is only known from the eastern parts of Ireland (except for one Hebridean raid on the Aran Islands in 1015). Even though slave-raiding probably also took place in the west and the south, there can be little doubt that the areas most stricken lay on the routes from Dublin west to Kildare and north to Armagh. These were the areas struck again and again for two centuries and it was in these areas bordering on Leinster and the Uí Néill territories that Dublin's political interests encountered the continuing power-struggles of contending Irish kingdoms. The area to the north was the border area of the Northern and Southern Uí Néill, Brega and Ulaid; the area to the west, the border between Leinster,

lingen av Norge og kristningen av landet (Oslo 1977) and E. Gunnes, *Rikssamling og kristning, Norges historie 2* (Oslo 1976) believe that the numbers of slaves in Norway were at their highest before c. AD 1000. The discussion has primarily been based on retrospective argument from twelfth-century laws and sagas.

Osraige, and Meath. Opportunist alliances with one or the other rival kingdom enabled Dublin to survive and reap the fruits of war.

In the 820s and 830s the Vikings primarily adhered to hit-and-run tactics in which the taking of slaves was a fairly regular feature, though probably not on a large scale. Taking of prisoners is attested for the years 821 on Howth (AU s.a. 820),² 831–32 in the first grand inland operation from the Boyne to Armagh (AU s.a. 830), 834 in the attack on Clonmore in Leinster (AClon s.a. 833), 836 in south Brega (AU s.a. 835) and 840 on Louth (AU s.a. 839). Bishops were taken probably to be ransomed in 824 and 845, and a king made his escape from Vikings in 844 (AU s.a. 823, 844; AFM s.a. 843, 844). The defeats in 847–8 of the armies under the control of a king of *Laithlind* apparently created a leadership crisis for the Norwegians. The split between followers of Iargne ('Iron-knee') and followers of the deceased Thorir, who was of royal extraction from *Laithlind* (probably Rogaland, Norway), can be observed right through the rest of the ninth century and was to have some bearing on our problem. The crisis was settled for some two decades by the advent of Olaf from *Laithlind* who initiated a new policy of alliance with differing Irish kings.³

The politics of shifting allegiances in the 850s and 860s was probably not only the result of Olaf's cleverness but also a hard necessity if the new settlement of Dublin by the Liffey river should have any hope of long-term survival. In 855, Olaf broke his oath of friendship with the king of Meath and the Uí Néill by attacking a monastery in the heart of Meath, killing the bishop of Slane and plundering Lusk.⁴ This bit of bravery must have impressed his Dublin warriors, and even though the taking of slaves is not mentioned it

² For the correction of Irish annalistic dates see Paul Walsh, 'The dating of Irish annals', *Ir Hist Stud* 2 (1940–41) 255–75.

³ AU s.a. 846, 847; CS s.a. 848. Ierne is mentioned AU s.a. 851, Olaf s.a. 852. The identification of *Laithlind* is linguistically uncertain. D. Greene, 'The evidence of language and place-names in Ireland', Th. Andersson and K. I. Sandred (ed), *The Vikings* (Uppsala 1978) 120 prefers to translate the name as 'the muddy estuary' and places the location in Man or Scotland. His suggestion is historically unacceptable since Olaf (and before him, Thorir) is expressly called son of the king of *Laithlind*. Norse kingship in the Hebrides or indeed Man (which was not colonized until the end of the ninth century according to D. M. Wilson, *The Vikings in the Isle of Man* (Odense 1974)) is hardly conceivable, and the annals seem to use such titles as jarl, *löueth*, and *ri* with much care. Archaeological evidence and historical circumstance point unequivocally to the west of Norway as the basis for Irish contacts (see further below n 20) and, even though linguistic certainty cannot be obtained for the identification of *Laithlind* with Rogaland, there is no reason to doubt Olaf's West Norwegian origin. For a concise discussion of the indications of a ninth-century kingdom in Rogaland, see Sveaas Andersen, *Samlingen*, 62–65.

⁴ FrA §243. AFM s.a. 853, also FrA §270, AU s.a. 855, CS s.a. 856.

would have been an appropriate act of defiance. Dublin now allied with the kingdom of Osraige,⁵ and for the next decade the fate of Dublin warriors was closely connected with Irish need and willingness to pay for their services. Using the Dublin forces as spearheads and assassins in the early 860s, the Northern Uí Néill finally secured a hegemony over Osraige and a momentary peace.⁶ From 865 to 868 the annals for once do not record one Irish war.

Peace, however, left the Vikings out of work, and the Dublin unity of action seems to have disintegrated. Whilst the mercenary activity lasted, it must have secured the warriors a stable revenue. Now the only opportunity was to take up raiding again. Olaf and Audgisl took their followers to Scotland in 866 and secured tribute from the Picts.⁷ In the same year, others followed jarls like Grim and Colphin to take up a new round of old-time freebooting in Munster.⁸ King Aed of the Uí Néill took advantage of the dispersal of leadership and routed the mercenary camps at Lough Foyle (AU s.a. 865; see also FrA §327). Thus, Olaf's well-tested diplomatic scheme broke down, and on his returning from Pictland, internal rivalry apparently was so tense that Olaf killed his brother Audgisl.⁹ In 867 Olaf united with the badly-beaten forces of Grim and Colphin (AI s.a. 867). The most serious blow to his power came the next year as Aed descended on Brega and Dublin and killed Olaf's son Karl (AU s.a. 867; AFM s.a. 866). Olaf took revenge in 869 by plundering and burning Armagh and, according to the annals, killing or taking prisoner 1,000 persons (AU s.a. 868).

Our fairly detailed knowledge of events before Olaf's new practice of large-scale slave-taking give us an interesting insight into the mechanisms behind raid actions. Olaf was under heavy pressure in 869 and had taken severe blows. To keep up his prestige as king-warrior he had to do the spectacular. Rather than seeing the Armagh attack of 869 as merely a continuation of the attacks of the 830s, we should recognise that the taking of slaves was now part of Olaf's revenge on Aed and a political necessity for his own survival as undisputed leader of Dublin warriors. These were probably the real motives

⁵ AU s.a. 856, CS s.a. 858; see also J. H. Todd (ed.), *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (London 1865) 23 (hereafter CGG).

⁶ AU s.a. 859, FrA §279, further AU s.a. 860, 861, CS s.a. 861, AFM s.a. 859. The alliance was sealed by Olaf's marriage to the daughter of Aed, FrA §292.

⁷ AU s.a. 865. Tribute was secured by hostages (*geill*), not simply captives who are always termed *brat*.

⁸ AI s.a. 866; FrA §§337, 340, 341; AFM s.a. 864; FrA 338; CGG 25, 231–32. AFM s.a. 865; cf. FrA §342.

⁹ CGG 33; see FrA §338. A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian kings in the British Isles, 850–880* (Oxford 1977) 143–47, presents a radically different order of events, but he misses AI s.a. 867 and distorts CGG 33, which seems to be based on a Lismore source containing the miracles of St Mochutu.

behind this first major supply to the postulated slave market of Dublin.

Olaf's resumption of interest on the other side of the Irish Sea may reinforce that view. In 871 he made a resounding return to Dublin with Ivar and 200 ships and a large number of captives.¹⁰ The taking of this enormous booty was reported as far away as France.¹¹ Now, finally, it may have seemed, Olaf had secured for Dublin its ability to lead its own ambitious policy. He left, however, the same year as a successful warrior-aristocrat to take over his father's kingdom.¹² Ivar took over Dublin. He seems to have set his mind on a full-scale attack on southern Ireland but the large pincer movements in Munster 871–73 came to a halt with death.¹³ For the next decade succession struggles seem again to have restrained Dublin's military capacity.

The 880s are credited with two instances of the taking of large numbers of captives, i.e. slave raids, that seem again to have been closely connected with Dublin's political allegiances. In 881 Bard attacked Duleek and took its full complement of people, probably in an attack on the king of Meath (AU s.a. 880). After Bard's death the same year, the rival party of Iron-knee descendants resumed the leadership which they had lost to Olaf thirty years before. Ottar Jernknæsøn immediately forged an alliance with the king of Meath (AU s.a. 881),¹⁴ and he may have been the leader of the attack on Kildare in 886 when 280 persons including the prior were said to have been led to the Viking ships – incidentally we know the prior to have been ransomed as his obit is listed in the annals for 907.¹⁵ The masters of this raid may also have been the two sons of Ivar who had fled to the south coast waiting their opportunity.¹⁶ The

¹⁰ AU s.a. 869, 870: *Amklaiph 7 Ivar do thuidecht a fithisi du Ath cliath a Albain, dihb cetaibh long, et preda maxima hominum Anglorum et Britonum et Pictorum deducta est secum ad Hiberniam in captivitate* 'Olaf and Ivar returned to Dublin from Scotland with two hundred ships, and a large prey of people, English, and British, and Pictish, was brought by them to Ireland in captivity'.

¹¹ *Annales Xantenses* s.a. 871, R. Rau (ed.), *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte II* (Darmstadt 1980): 'Pagant quoque tunc totam pene Hiberniam vastantes cum spoliis multis sunt reversi et per aquosa loca Franciae atque Galliae humano generi multas miseras intulerunt'.

¹² FrA §400. If Laithlind is Western Norway, there is no reason to doubt the information that his father was under pressure from outside, namely from the Vestfold king. The problem of events in Norway in these years leading up to the defeat of Harald Hårfagn's opponents is not, however, finally solved (see Sverre Andersen, *Samlingen*, 79–84).

¹³ FrA §§401, 408; AFM s.a. 870; CS s.a. 873; AI s.a. 873.

¹⁴ Ottar's alliance with Meath was confirmed by his marriage to Murgel, daughter of Mael Sechnaill.

¹⁵ CS s.a. 886. Subne died in Kildare (AFM s.a. 903). The conflict between Ottar and the dynasty of Olaf is highlighted by Ottar's and Murgel's killing of the son of Audgisl (AU s.a. 882; CS s.a. 883).

¹⁶ This seems to be the meaning of the very garbled passage on the sons of Ivar in CGG 28,

supported by AI s.a. 883.

attack may indeed have occurred on their way to Dublin, as they ousted Ottar some time between 886 and 888 (CS s.a. 886; AU s.a. 887).

The sons of Ivar immediately shifted allegiances to the Northern Uí Néill and attacks on Brega and Meath were duly resumed (AU s.a. 887, 888; AFM s.a. 886; CS s.a. 891). The major slave-raid on Armagh in 895 can hardly have been endorsed by any Irish interests however, and least of all the Uí Néill. The annals record that 710 prisoners were taken by the combined efforts of the son of Iron-knee and the grandson of Ivar (AU s.a. 894). The events of these years are obscure, but a sort of understanding between the rival factions in Dublin is clearly attested by this united action which seems, however, to have left Dublin without Irish allies. The killing of several Dublin leaders at Irish hands the next year appears to have been a shattering blow (AU s.a. 895; CS s.a. 896), and warriors are seen once more to leave Dublin to set up individual camps all over Ireland (AFM s.a. 893, 895, 896; CS s.a. 898, 900). This lack of unity and the loss of Irish allies may be part of the explanation of the heavy defeat of Dublin in 902 (AU s.a. 901; AFM s.a. 897) which effectively stopped Viking settlement for almost fifteen years – even though individual raids are still heard of.¹⁷

On the basis of this brief summary of ninth-century raiding, I will advocate a 'minimal theory' of early Viking slavery. In the first half of the century, the Vikings practised military tactics which do not suggest large-scale slave-raiding. Hit-and-run operations could not possibly be effective slave raids, but were certainly very successful when it came to the taking of portable wealth like church treasures and the pressing of ransom payments. In the first fifteen years of Olaf's reign, Viking activities seem to have taken a new turn as Dublin became engaged in Irish in-fighting – more or less as a simple mercenary army. I have argued, however, that the new situation of the late 860s made spectacular success imperative for Olaf and that this was probably the time when massive slave-taking was employed by him as a response to heavy Irish pressure on Dublin. Further, I believe that the recorded slave-raids of the last decades of the century ought to be seen in the same light. Thus, slave-raiding was not so much a goal in itself as an extreme expression of defiance and bravery for the king or the would-be king of Dublin. The leadership problems of Dublin were closely connected with the problem of persuading warriors to stay in Ireland at times – such as the end of the ninth century – when there were other opportunities in France and England for easy spoil.

We must take note, on the other hand, of the growing demand for labour in ¹⁷ AFM s.a. 900. Individual traders seem to have been welcome at the Irish courts, as evidenced by silver hoards c. 905 (M. Ryan et al., 'Six silver finds from the Viking period from the vicinity of Lough Ennell, Co Westmeath', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 334–81).

the new settlements of the North Atlantic. A conservative estimate puts the population of Iceland at 20,000 around AD 930.¹⁸ Perhaps a quarter of this population were slaves, most of them of Celtic origin.¹⁹ As settlement accelerated in the last quarter of the ninth century there must have been a growing market for slaves for these territories. Celtic bronze objects in Norwegian graves attest that Irish Vikings maintained some connection with the home-lands.²⁰ The much-quoted Vita of St Fintan is good evidence of this connection and illustrates the somewhat haphazard selling of a slave from one ship to another until he finally ends on a ship bound for Norway – or the Orkneys.²¹ The Vita does not indicate a fully-fledged slave-trade in the hands of professional slave merchants. Nevertheless, mercantile relations were already in place between Ireland and Scandinavia as is indicated by the flow of Arabic silver from Scandinavia via Dublin to Irish chieftains and silversmiths. This flow apparently occurred in the last twenty or thirty years of the ninth century.²² Some of the flow may be accounted for as the payment of

¹⁸ P. Meulengracht Sørensen, *Saga og samfund* (Copenhagen 1977) 18.

¹⁹ The empirical basis for any discussion of this problem is admittedly weak. However, of the 270 men of known nationality in the *Landnámabók*, 10% were Gaelic. These were mostly persons of high status, and the Gaelic admixture to the lower social strata is generally supposed to have been stronger, even more so among the women. Furthermore, 25% of the Norwegians of *Landnámabók* are said to have settled first on the British Isles before going to Iceland (Sørensen, *Saga og Samfund*, 17–18). Arguing from a sceptical point of view, S. Ránísson concludes, nevertheless, that in the period of settlement, slavery was relatively more common in Iceland than in Scandinavia ('Comments on the settlement of Iceland', *Norv. Arktisk Rev.* 10 (1977) 70). Any guess at the ratio of free to slaves must be vague, but for my purpose it is enough to observe the unquestionable indications of Gaelic slaves. Scandinavian sources are few for this period. Around 800, Rimbert saw women traded as slaves in chains (MGH SS 2 (Hanover 1829) 722–23). A recent survey has disclosed a perhaps surprising number of graves which indicate the sacrificial slaying of slaves at the master's death (O. Hemmendorff, 'Människoolöf', *Fornvännen* (1984) 4–12).

²⁰ E. Wamers, 'Some ecclesiastical and secular Insular metalwork found in Norwegian graves', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 277–306. Of these graves 69 may be dated from the find combination. A count based on Wamers and J. Petersen, reveals that 57 of them must be dated to the ninth century, only 12 to the tenth. Twenty-nine graves are from a West Norwegian context (counties Rogaland, Møre, Sogn og Fjordane).

²¹ MGH SS 15/1, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hanover 1887; cf. Smyth, *Scandinavian kings*, 158–60. ²² The flow reached Sweden c. 850 (P. H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings* (London 1982) 124–26) and reached Norway some two decades later (K. Skaare, *Coins and coinage in Viking-age Norway* (Oslo 1976) 48, suggests an early ninth-century influx, which does not seem to be borne out by his material). The earliest find from the British Isles of Kufic coins is the Croydon hoard concealed sometime after c. 875. Frankish tributes levied in silver to Viking hands in the last half of the century (the Frankish annals mention tributes amounting to a minimum of 45,000 pounds of silver, E. Albrechtsen, *Vikingene i Franker* (Odense 1976) 142). The striking wealth of Irish Vikings was recognized by J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'The Viking-age silver hoards of Ireland', B. Almqvist and David Greene (ed),

marriage alliances and other political necessities, but some of it was probably traded. Unfortunately, we do not know what the commodities may have been, but in this state of complete darkness it is conceivable that one luxury item may have been Irish women and children and skilled craftsmen.

In this sketch of early Viking slavery I have found myself only once in agreement with the theory of Alfred P. Smyth.⁴³ He does point to the descent on Armagh in 869 as a decisive turn in the activities of Dublin, but he seems to attribute this change wholly to the aggressive heathenism of Ivar and Olaf. I cannot find any indication that the conflict between paganism and christianity should be the driving motive for the silver-hungry kings of the Vikings. Only late Icelandic christian sagas attest to this conflict from the point of view of the attackers, and I would prefer the simpler explanation of revenge and bravado. More interesting to me is his notion of a very active trade between Dublin and the Spanish Caliphate. Smyth rejects the idea that Scandinavia and Iceland could have had a market to absorb the output of Western European slave-raids and thus finds himself forced to look for other possible markets. Unfortunately, he is badly served by his reference to Brøndsted's work on the Vikings, first published in 1960, since Brøndsted's theory that over-population was the cause of the Viking emigration must now be finally rejected. It rests on such medieval evidence as Dudo's and Jordanes' explanations of such varied phenomena as the migrations of the Goths and the Normans.⁴⁴ I would rather find part of the explanation of emigration in the standard references in the Icelandic sagas to the harsh regime of Harald Hårfagri which forced aristocratic Norwegians to find fresh lands abroad if they would not swear allegiance to the king. That explanation certainly indicates the crux of the matter: the social upheavals in Scandinavia in connection with the rising demands of the national kingdoms. Thus, we should be concerned with the social and political causes for the emigration of aristocrats and their war-bands. Under any circumstance, the mere fact of emigration does not preclude the introduction of foreign labour. We may find a parallel to this in the migration of Swedes in the nineteenth century to take up jobs left by Danish and Norwegian emigrants to America.

Smyth's actual indications of trade between Dublin and Spain are few

Proc Seventh Viking Congress (Dublin 1976) 39–74.

⁴³ Smyth, *Scandinavian kings*, 154–68. A thorough review of Smyth's book is given by D. Ó Corráin, 'High-kings, Vikings and other kings', *Irish Hist Stud* 21 (1979) 283–323. My remark is not meant to discredit studies of the religious beliefs of the Vikings which surely is a crucial matter; only such studies must be based on contemporary sources.

⁴⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian kings*, 159 ff.; Johannes Brøndsted, *The Vikings* (Harmondsworth 1965) 24–26; Brøndsted's authority was J. C. H. R. Steenstrup, *Normannerne* (Copenhagen 1876) 202–08.

INDEED. THE TAKING OF SLAVES IN AURETANIA WHICH ARE LED TO IRELAND, AS we are told in the *Fragmentary Annals*, Al-Ghazal's obscure diplomatic mission in the 840s to a Viking king of unknown situation, 13 dirhems from Spain out of a total of 62,000 Kufic coins found in Scandinavia, and the pair of lead weights found on Colonsay inscribed with Scandinavian ornament that imitates Arabic script of unknown origin. This evidence requires no comment, but I cannot help observing that the slave-trader of Laxdœla saga – whom Smyth goes to great trouble to link with the Gall-Goidil – in fact sold an Irish princess as a slave to Iceland.

The general outline of the practice of slavery as known from the Irish annals is broadly paralleled in the Frankish annals, whereas the only ninth-century Anglo-Saxon evidence is the treaty between Guthrum and Alfred c. 886 in which the parties agreed not to harbour the other's runaway slaves.⁴⁵ Between 834 and 896 the Frankish annals report 26 raids which included the taking of prisoners; 15 of these events took place between 873 and 896.⁴⁶ There are explicit indications that the victims were often women and child-

ren whereas men seem preferably to have been taken if they had special skills – too many men might mean too much trouble, we may imagine. One Northman who was denied tribute threatened that 'he would kill all men and lead all women and children with all their property into captivity'.⁴⁷ In the *Miracles of St Berthold*, written before 877, Adrevaldus depicts briefly the camp of the Vikings: 'In the meantime, they had an island ... [St-Florent-le-Vieil, at the Loire] organized as a port for their ships – as a refuge for all dangers – and they built fortifications like a hut camp, in which they held crowds of prisoners in chains and in which they rested themselves after their toil so that they might be ready for warfare. From that place they undertook unexpected raids, sometimes in ships, sometimes on horseback, and they destroyed all the province ...'.⁴⁸ Adrevaldus's account may be taken as a biased description of the camp as it was before the agreement in 873 with Charles the Bald that all heathens should leave the island whereas those willing to be baptized might stay and carry on peaceful trading.⁴⁹ Maybe the exact meaning of the treaty was that christians were no longer to be put on sale on the island? It is known from most early medieval law codes that the sale of christians abroad

⁴⁵ D. Pelteret, 'Slave raiding and slave trading in early England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981) 99–114.

⁴⁶ Skjölde-Nielsen, op. cit. (n 1) 19.

⁴⁷ *Annales Fuldenses* s.a. 873 (ed. R. Rau, *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte* iii (Darmstadt 1982): '... ille vehementer iratus iuravit prae superbis se omnibus maribus occisis mulieres et parvulos cum omni substantia illorum in captivitatem esse ducturum'.

⁴⁸ MGH SS 15/1, 494.

⁴⁹ *Annales Bertiniani* (Rau, *Quellen*, iii), s.a. 873.

was prohibited. Charles probably tried to make the Vikings comply with that regulation. We should not forget that the Vikings filled an acceptable role in society as long as they traded heathen slaves and maybe even foreign Christians. In this respect, they may have been as welcome – and despised – as the Jews.³⁰ The problem with the Vikings was not that they practised slavery – every self-respecting aristocrat did that – but that they did not follow the rules of society and that they had the foreigners' ambition to carve out a piece of land for themselves.

II

Whereas Ireland must have been somewhat of a backwater in the late ninth century when great battles were fought by Norsemen in both England and France, the stabilisation of Viking territories in the Danelaw and Normandy in the second decade of the tenth century seems a plausible background for renewed interest among young warriors in independent adventuring in Ireland. Raiding again reached the peaks of the 830s and 840s, but now it is clear that the grandsons of Ivar had control of the armies that began pouring in at Waterford harbour from 914. In the next decade, Sigtryg and Godfred built up a system of control that was based on coastal strongholds, Waterford in the south-east, Carlingford and Strangford Loughs and Anagassan in the north-east. The river Barrow was effectively under their control and linked Waterford to Dublin. The northern forces seem, on the other hand, to have been unable to open up the hinterland, except for sudden summer campaigns. From 922 independent Vikings under the leadership of Thormod Helgeson operated from Limerick and brought for the first time the extensive Shannon river system under the control of Norse fleets. During this Viking build-up, we hear occasionally of the taking of prisoners from the Irish, evidently for ransoming.³¹

The competition between the Dublin and Limerick leaderships was to be the underlying motive for most Viking actions for fifteen years, even when directed against the Irish. At first, Dublin's response to the threat from the Shannon was to secure its northern bases which were on Ulaid territory. In 926, the forces of Strangford Lough succeeded in destroying the promontory

³⁰ A good introduction to the problem is Ch. Verlinden, 'Ist mittelalterliche Sklaverei ein bedeutsamer demographischer Faktor gewesen?', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 66 (1979) 153–73.

³¹ In 923, the former king of Cashel was taken to Limerick and later redeemed (AFM s.a. 921; obit recorded s.a. 942). Two years later, the king of Leinster experienced the same (AFM s.a. 923; obit s.a. 940).

fort of Dunseverick at the northern coast of the Ulaid, and a large number of people seem to have been taken captive at this occasion (AU s.a. 925). Later the same year, Godfred suffered serious setbacks in the north when the Cenél nEógain king entered the fighting; the Cenél nEógain seem through the tenth century to have followed a consistent policy of not allowing Viking settlements on the northern coast. Nevertheless, Godfred sought to win the kingship of York the next year when he emptied the camp at Anagassan of warriors that were to follow him to York.³² His failure in York later the same year must have lost him the loyalty of many of his followers, and in Ireland his position on the north-eastern coast seems to have been endangered. Limerick warriors took up a position on Lough Neagh and thus filled the power vacuum left by Anagassan (AU s.a. 927). Godfred's reaction was to strengthen his hold on the south-eastern Waterford-Dublin axis; in 928 his son went up the Barrow to Kildare and carried away captives and much booty, and Godfred repeated the action the following year from Dublin (AFM s.a. 926, 927). In 930, Limerick, however, established a base in Osraige under the command of one Harald, grandson of Ivar (AU s.a. 929; cf. AFM s.a. 929) – possibly a distressed brother of Godfred who had given up all hope of succession in Dublin after the failure at York. Limerick's action may even have been welcomed by the Osraige who may have hoped to break the Dublin-Waterford connection by introducing the Limerick band. Such an alliance would explain the ferocious slaughter of the Irish assembly in Dunmore Cave by Godfred in 930: enslavement and mass-killings were evidently Godfred's means of keeping in control of the waterway.³³ At the same time, Godfred's retaliations of the late 920s may be seen as half-desperate moves to compensate his entourage for the rich prize they had lost in York.

The background of the next recorded round of Viking slave-taking is connected to Olaf Godfredson's attempt to win back York in 937, after his successful limiting of the Limerick sphere of interest the year before. As replacement in command of the Irish bases, he left behind a son of Barith who used the opportunity to vaunt his military capacities by the burning and looting of Kilkullen, a minor north-eastern monastery (AFM s.a. 935). After his defeat at Brunanburh, Olaf returned to Dublin and seems immediately to have demonstrated his supremacy over the warrior camp by a slave-raid on Old Kilkullen up the river Liffey.³⁴

³² AU s.a. 926; see further A. P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin II* (Dublin 1979) 22–24.

³³ AU s.a. 929. A. Wynne Foot, 'An account of a visit to the Cave of Dunmore, Co. Kilkenny, with some remarks on human remains found therein', *J. Roy. Hist. Archaeol. Assoc. Ire.* 11 (4th ser. 1) 1870–71 [1878] 65–94 and M. Dolley, 'The 1973 Viking-age coin find from Dunmore Cave', *Old Kilkenny Rev.* (1975) 70–79.

³⁴ AFM s.a. 936. Kilkullen was plundered again at the return of Olaf from York in 946, in re-

At this time, the taking of slaves seems to have become a regular feature of Dublin warfare, as the camp was again under heavy pressure and spectacular success was needed for any commander. Olaf's misfortune in York had been immediately utilized by the kings of Meath and Cenél nEógain to besiege Dublin and ravage its hinterland (AU s.a. 937). In 939, Olaf took revenge on the Cenél nEógain and had their king ransomed at what we may imagine was a shattering price (AU s.a. 938). The same year, we hear of the first united Viking-Irish action including the taking of prisoners when Célachán of Cashel with the Norse of Waterford plundered Meath and took many captives, among whom the abbots of Clonenagh and Killeigh (AFM s.a. 937). One of the abbots was evidently led to Dublin to be kept prisoner at the Dalkey Island; he drowned when trying to escape the next year (AFM s.a. 938). His fate gives us a sudden glimpse of the practical circumstances of slavery. He may have been sold off to Dublin when there was no prospect of obtaining ransom money and have waited on Dalkey for the slave market. The use of a lonely island off the coast as a prisoner's camp is paralleled in the account of St-Florent-le-Vieil, mentioned above.

The question of the Irish involvement in the taking of slaves is intriguing. Slavery was certainly practised in Ireland before the advent of the Vikings, but the annals of the ninth century do not attest to any instances of the taking of prisoners en masse by the Irish. In 913, the Annals of Ulster record for the first time two instances of the taking of prisoners (*ergabail*) (as distinct from the regular practice of the taking of hostages (*gialla*) (AU s.a. 912)). Only in 934 do we again hear of captives of war when the Cenél nEógain king punished an assaulting party led by the Ulaid and Dublin kings by taking captives (AFM s.a. 931). Apart from the unexplained incidents of 913, we must observe that the taking of captives by Irish kings seems exclusively restricted in the tenth century to retaliatory expeditions against the Vikings. In 944, when Dublin was again losing strength, Congalach, king of Brega, destroyed the Dublin camp and took its jewels, treasures and *brat mór* (AU s.a. 943); we may translate 'a great spoil' as Hennessy does but, as is by now apparent, the precise meaning seems to be 'many captives'. The Annals of the Four Masters turn the terse annal of AU into dramatic prose for the year 944: 'The destruction brought upon it was this, i.e. its houses, divisions, ships, and all other structures, were burned; its women, boys, and common folk, were carried into bondage. It was totally destroyed, from four to one man, by killing and drowning, burning and capturing, excepting a small number who fled in a few ships and reached Dalkey' (AFM s.a. 942). If we trust AFM there is no doubt as to the vengefulness of Congalach, but we are cautioned by the style which very much looks like an eleventh- or twelfth-century inter-

venge for the Leinster sacking of Dublin (see Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, i 144-50).

polation in the style of *Fragmentary Annals*. More comforting is the terse style of AU when describing the second defeat of Dublin in 948 when a great number of Viking warriors were lost, 'both wounded and captives' (AU s.a. 947). From this evidence, we may conclude that the Uí Néill kings took captives in numbers large enough to make it worth the annalist's while to mention them. The reduction of Vikings to slaves was evidently an act of defiance and humiliation, just as much as it was a conduct which was learnt from the Vikings (as we know that the Irish adopted Viking armour and ships in the early tenth century).³⁵

After the defeats of the 940s which included the loss of bases like Strangford Lough and Anagassan and which eventually meant the final blow to the hopes of regaining York, Dublin was clearly reduced to a second-rate Irish power dependent on the establishment of political alliances with the Irish over-kings. As in Olaf's days, this development increased the usefulness of the Dublin warriors as mercenaries, and Dublin became directly involved in the struggles between the Irish kings. Any tenth-century Irish king evidently reckoned the Viking warriors a valuable asset, and the Irish seem to have paid well for their services. The political demise of Dublin was accompanied by an economic blossoming of the city as steady revenues and stipends were received in the place of the shifting fortunes of war. The taking of slaves became a very minor aspect of Dublin's affairs under these circumstances.

Significantly, the only attested slave-raid in the 950s occurred when Olaf Kvaran made the last bid to take York and left his brother in command of Dublin. Like the son of Barith in 937, Godfred manifested his qualifications of leadership by the sacking of numerous monasteries in 951 and the taking of an alleged number of 3,000 captives, and a wealth of cattle, gold, and silver (AU s.a. 950). In 962, the obscure free-booting band of the Lagmanns came to Ireland and plundered along the eastern coast. The son of Olaf (probably Godfred) who had joined up with them seems to have had success and went off from Ireland's Eye to England with a large prey, probably including slaves for sale (AU s.a. 960). The activities of Dublin after c. 960 are generally little known, and unfortunately we have no information on the circumstances that led up to the raid on Kildare in 964: 'Kildare was plundered by the foreigners, but it was compassionated by the wonderful piety of Niall Ua hEruilb, nearly all the clerics being redeemed for God's name; viz., the

³⁵ E. Rynne, 'The impact of the Vikings on Irish weapons', *Atti del Congresso Internazionale delle Scienze Preistoriche e Protoistoriche* iii (Rome 1962) 181-84. The first mention of an Irish naval fleet is in AU s.a. 912; see further A. T. Lucas, 'Irish-Norse relations: time for a reappraisal?', *J. Cork Hist. Archaeol. Soc.* 61 (1966) 62-75.

full of the great house of St Brigit, and the full of the oratory, is what Niall ransomed of them with his own money'.³⁶ The entry must be read quite literally, i.e. that most of the clerics were redeemed, whereas the rest, including the many laymen likely to be around the monastery, were led away. Incidentally, the pious Niall may have been of Norse extraction as his grandfather's name Erulb is perhaps Norw. *Hergolf*.³⁷

During the first half of the tenth century, slaves were still a by-product of a particular kind of war, namely retaliatory actions and military adventures designed to vaunt the capabilities of the would-be successor. The object of most ordinary attacks was probably portable wealth, mostly precious metal, whereas cattle and slaves demanded a higher organisation of the attack and were not as easily turned into money. Even though the taking of slaves occurred regularly, the economic importance of slavery to Dublin was probably slight, and we may imagine that most slaves would be used for household purposes as concubines, servants or perhaps as skilled workers. An unknown proportion of slaves were bought by itinerant slave-dealers or brought home to the new settlements of the north Atlantic. The mention of the large loot led overseas by the son of Olaf in 962 rather suggests that this sort of enterprise was rare.

Some Irish kings seem to have learnt the practice of slave-taking from the Vikings. They turned this humiliating weapon against the Norse, but a casual remark in the annals seems to suggest that the idea of Irish slaves for Irish households was perhaps spreading. General social developments seem to have degraded some peasants to a social status near that of the slaves, and some might sell their children to cope with debts incurred in a harsh winter.³⁸

³⁶ AU s.a. 903: 'Ceall dara do orcan do Ghallaibh, sed miserable (?mirabile) pietate miser-tus est tria Niall Ua h'Eruilbh, redemptis omnibus clericis pene pro nomine domini .i. lan in taigi moir san Brigit, 7 lan in derthaigt, issed do ruagelt Niall dia dia argat tesin'. There seems to be a confusion in AU as Niall's obit is recorded s.a. 957, or perhaps the meaning is that his money was used posthumously. Niall is first mentioned AU s.a. 948.

³⁷ C. J. S. Marstrand, 'Bidrag til det norske sprogs historie i Irland', *Videnskapselskabet Skriftl. II. Hist.-Filos. Kl.* 1915/5 (Kristiania 1915) 145. Kuno Meyer derives Erulb from Anglo-Saxon *Hrinnulf* and would place Niall in a purely Irish context with the Uí Eruilb of Genél nEógain (*Z Celt Philol* 13 (1919) 108).

³⁸ cf. the entry of AU s.a. 964: *Gorta mór diúlachta in n-Eirinn, co remadh int alhair a mac 7 a ingen ar biadh* 'A great intolerable famine in Ireland, so that the father would sell his son or daughter for food'. This kind of debt-servitude is well known also in Scandinavia and on the Continent. Debt-servitude seems to have been fixed for a certain period according to the amount of debt, and—as an important contradistinction from the slave of war—the person who sold himself or his children retained his rights of kin. Cf. the Norwegian twelfth-century law code of the *Udathing*: *Éttborenn maðr ma geva barnn sitt i skuld, ef hann gefir a þingi, æða at öld-rhust, æða at kirkju sokn. Þa ma hann geva i þriggja marca skuld oc eigi meir* 'A man of kin may give his child for debt if it is done at the thing, or at the ale-house, or at the parish congre-

As a whole, however, we must conclude that there is no evidence to suggest that the institution of slavery in Ireland and even in Dublin was anything more than a marginal phenomenon of luxury for the nobles.

III

During the last hundred years to 1054 of an independent kingdom of Dublin, the warrior camp was transformed into a merchants' town with a growing market and expanding economic relations with the Irish kings, serving their needs for luxury products. A priori, we may imagine that an article of extreme luxury like slaves would become more important. What is certain is that settled craftsmen in Dublin from the mid-tenth century built up a market among the Irish courts.³⁹ The interest of the Dublin king in reaping the profits of trade was well marked by the issue of a Dublin penny from c. 997.⁴⁰ This economic growth gave a new role and importance to the Dublin military machine. On the one hand, mercenaries continued to be in high demand and must have represented a fairly steady income. On the other hand, the decline of Dublin's political power forced many warriors either to settle or to take up free-booting, more or less out of control of the Dublin king. These half-independent warriors supplied the Dublin slave-market with captives that had not been taken as a result of political complications, but simply for profit.

The defeats of Dublin and Limerick in the 970s and 980s created gangs of young frustrated warriors that seem to have gathered on the Scottish Isles. The band of the Lagmanns and the sons of Harald (probably the sons of the last Limerick king who was killed in 977) harried the Irish Sea for two decades, Wales in particular. The captives and the ransom money of these operations⁴¹ probably wound up at the Dublin market. One descent on the south coast of Munster the year after the last attack on Wales was probably

gation. Then he may give for three marks, not more'. If his debts were higher, he would have to pledge himself. (*Norges gamle love indtil 1387* (Christiania 1846) 36).

³⁹ B. Ó Riordáin, 'The High Street excavations', B. Almqvist and D. Greene (ed), *Proc Seventh Viking Congress Dublin 1973* (Dublin 1976) 135–40.

⁴⁰ M. Dolley, 'Some Irish evidence for the date of the Cruz coins of Æthelred II', *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1973) 145–54.

⁴¹ *Annales Cambriae* s.a. 979: 'Iago captus est (a gentilibus, MS C); s.a. 987: 'Gothric filius Haraldí cum nigris gentilibus vastavit Mon. captus duobus milibus hominum; reliquias vero Maredut secum asportavit ad Keridigion et ad Demetiam; s.a. 989: 'Maredut redemit captivos a gentilibus nigris, nummo pro unoquoque dāw'. Lagman is probably the same as the Laccman who fled to Normandy after the Danish conquest of England (see L. Wood Breese, 'The persistence of Scandinavian connections in Normandy in the tenth and early eleventh centuries', *Viator* 8 (1977) 59. See also R. H. M. Dolley and E. J. E. Pirie, 'The repercussions

also the act of these freebooters. Rosscarbery was attacked in 990, and Brian Boru later ransomed the imprisoned lector on Scattery Island (AI s.a. 990) – the fate of the monks and laymen that may have been caught in the same action is unknown. The Danish assaults on England in the 990s may eventually have distracted the attention of these freebooting gangs from the Irish Sea.

Within Ireland, on the other hand, the Dublin army does not seem to have taken slaves to any significant degree. Our sparse information suggests nothing but the occasional capture of an Irish king to obtain political concessions and ransom money.⁴² After the battle of Tara in 980, the king of Meath is reputed to have freed all the Irish slaves of Dublin, on top of the exaction of a heavy tribute of 2,000 cows: 'It was then, moreover, Mael Sechnaill proclaimed "let every one of the Irish who is in the territory of the foreigners in servitude and bondage depart thence to his own territory with peace and happiness"' (CS s.a. 978). Like the entry for 944, this looks very much like a late interpolation. The precise allusion to a verdict of Mael Sechnaill may, however, be genuine and it seems quite plausible that he freed the Irish slaves – not of course slaves of foreign extraction. Indeed Dublin harboured any significant number of slaves at this time, they must have been supplied, to some degree, from sources other than Dublin's own military actions. All this must remain the matter for conjecture as all we know from this period is the name of one slave who slew his master, the king of Dublin Iron-knee, allegedly whilst drunk; he had been given the Norse name Kolbeinn (AU s.a. 988).

The freeing of captives was repeated by Brian Boru's and Mael Sechnaill's joint action on Dublin after the victory over Leinster and the mercenaries of Dublin in 999. The victors proceeded from the battle-field to Dublin where they remained 'for a full week and carried off its gold and silver and prisoners' (AFM s.a. 998). The prisoners may have been Vikings meant for slavery and/or freed Irishmen.

After the battle of Glenn Máma, king Sigtryg of Dublin had to surrender his hostages to Brian, and for the next years Dublin acted as the front troopers for Brian's claim of an all-Irish sovereignty. We may surmise that the old-style attack on the Ulaid in 1002 by Sigtryg was a result of a careful consideration to vaunt his own abilities and perhaps to serve Brian's purposes by descending on two minor monasteries. At any rate, this was the occasion for the

on Chester's prosperity of the Viking descent on Cheshire in 980'. *Br. Numismat. J.* 33 (1964) 39–44.

⁴² CS s.a. 977: the taking of Donnall Clóen who was *only* released from Dublin in 980; also AFM s.a. 998.

first recorded taking of captives by a Dublin fleet in Ireland for forty years (AFM s.a. 1001; ATig s.a. 1002).

Dublin's engagement in the struggle of the over-kings for Irish supremacy seems to have left little room for this kind of freebooting. Only after the defeat of the mercenaries of the Scottish Isles in 1014 do we hear again of a band of surviving freebooters in seven ships who raided the islands off the Irish west coast and 'carried off one hundred and fifty as booty' (AI s.a. 1015). The death of Brian Boru immediately caused the break-up of the fragile oaths of allegiance that had helped secure his control over the south and the midlands. Evidently, the new power vacuum also opened fresh possibilities for Sigtryg, and the old conflict with Mael Sechnaill started again. In 1018, Sigtryg plundered Kells, one of the main monasteries of Meath, probably as part of an understanding with the king of Leinster who yet again defied the supremacy of Meath. Sigtryg's assertion of his (and Leinster's) powers was properly expressed by the taking of 'innumerable spoils and prisoners' and the slaying of many persons in the middle of the church.⁴³ What evidence we have seems to indicate that Dublin and Leinster upheld an uneasy alliance for the next decade.⁴⁴ In 1022 the Dublin navy was beaten at sea by the Ulaid who punished the survivors by enslaving them (AU s.a. 1022). Dublin's main rival, however, was Brega, and in 1023 they took its king prisoner 'in their own assembly', evidently a thing meeting to which he had been promised safe-conduct. Relations between Brega and Dublin were so bad that he was not let go free for a ransom, but sold 'across the sea'.⁴⁵

By 1025 Dublin had succeeded in taking the hostages of several kingdoms, but interventions by the Cenél nEógain and the Dál Cais restrained Dublin's power (AU s.a. 1025, 1026). The threat of the reconstructed over-kingdoms momentarily reconciled Sigtryg and Flannacan, the new king of Brega, and they joined in pilgrimage to Rome in 1028 (AU s.a. 1028). Hostilities immediately broke out between the sons left in command, and Olaf Sigtrygson was taken prisoner by Flannacan's son and only redeemed at the exorbitant price of 1,200 cows, 60 Welsh horses, 60 ounces of gold and silver, the hostages of Leinster, and the insignium of Dublin kingship, the 'Sword of Carulus' (AU s.a. 1029). Sigtryg's retaliation came two years later when Ardbraccan was burned with 200 people and another 200 were led into captivity (AU

⁴³ AFM s.a. 1018 = ATig s.a. 1018. The Vikings and Leinstermen were stopped near Navan the preceding year by Mael Sechnaill (AU s.a. 1017).

⁴⁴ Sigtryg blinded the son of the king of Leinster (AU s.a. 1018) but was defeated three years later (AU s.a. 1021), after which some sort of understanding must have been agreed upon.

⁴⁵ AU s.a. 1023: Donnchad Ua Duinn, ri Bregh, do ghabail do ghallaib ina n-airiucht feir, 7 a breith dar muir. AFM s.a. 1023 add that the abbot of Armagh had been his guarantor. By then, Dublin had had some christianity for at least half a century.

s.a. 1031). Sigtryg launched Dublin's last offensive the next year against the Airgialla, when 300 were alleged to have been killed or captured (AFM s.a. 1032).

The Indian summer of Dublin was well over by now, however. Sigtryg's operations in the 1020s were only made possible because of the sudden collapse of the Dál Cais supremacy in 1014. Sigtryg's machinations were mostly confined to the immediate hinterland, and the reassertion of Leinster under Diarmait mac Máel na mBó soon reduced Dublin to a minor political factor. Skirmishes with Brega brought Dublin little success,⁴⁶ and Sigtryg seems to have concentrated his political ambitions on the Norse settlement of the Isle of Man. The long reign of Sigtryg must also have caused discontent among young and impatient aristocrats in Dublin. These factors seem to have been the background for political infiltration in Wales⁴⁷ and piratical activities around the Irish Sea.⁴⁸ Most important and obscure were developments on the Isle of Man which may have become a regular pirates' nest under the loose control of Dublin.⁴⁹ Whereas Dublin's role in Irish politics was eventually tamed by the overlordship of Leinster in 1052, the Norse sphere of influence around the Irish Sea was expanding. A new model for Viking activity was created on the basis of a symbiosis of pirates and merchants on Man and in Dublin which was to control the trade of the Irish Sea for the next half-century. Slaves were now to become a very important merchandise.

IV

By the eleventh century, Dublin became the foremost trading centre of Ireland, taking over the role of such former nuclei as the great monastic settlements. Other Norse towns like Waterford and Limerick also became renowned ports⁵⁰ and valuable assets to any Irish king who could claim his overlordship and thus control the distribution of luxury articles as wine, silk,

⁴⁶ Ardraccan was plundered again in 1035, and Brega reacted promptly with an attack on Swords, a monastery of the Fingal of Dublin (AU s.a. 1035). The last recorded independent assaults by Dublin are attacks on the monastery of Skreen and Duleek (AFM s.a. 1037).

⁴⁷ *Annales Cambriae* s.a. 1039, 1042 record the capture of two Welsh kings.

⁴⁸ Rathlin Island was attacked by a rival of Sigtryg, ATig s.a. 1038.

⁴⁹ Sigtryg's last years are very confused. He seems to have engaged himself in activities in Wales in 1036, according to ATig s.a. 1036, where his son was killed by a son of Iron-knee. Rivals for his throne were Echmarcach, Ivar and Harald (ATig s.a. 1038, 1046), but he seems to have remained in power till his death in 1042 (AFM s.a. 1042). Connections between Dublin and Man at this time are treated by M. Dolley, *Some Irish dimensions to Manx history*, Belfast New Lecture Series 92 (Belfast 1976) 17–21.

⁵⁰ cf. the well-known incitement in *Egil's saga* to go south to Limerick 'as that road is now the most famed'.

handicraft and precious stones.⁵¹ To buy these articles, Ireland would supply largely two commodities, cattle and slaves. Leather and beef were in local demand in cities all round the Irish Sea, and such a luxury article as slaves was in demand by any aristocrat, Scandinavian, Irish, or Anglo-Saxon.

We have already seen how the very idea of the taking of prisoners of war spread to the Irish in the tenth century, but it was only in connection with the heavy expenditures caused by the struggle for the kingship of Ireland in the early eleventh century that Irish kings began taking captives in large numbers. The first indication that a profound change in Irish warfare was under way is attested for 1003 when the Uí Méith plundered Brega, but were defeated and either slaughtered or imprisoned (*ergabáil*) (AFM s.a. 1002). The next year, Meath was attacked by the Cenél nEógain, but Mael Sechnaill had 200 warriors killed or imprisoned (AFM s.a. 1005). These actions were probably meant to deter from further assaults, but in the decisive campaigns up to 1014 punitive actions seem to have greatly increased. The Cenél nEógain king Flaithbertach was the leading slaver in a number of actions on neighbouring territories. In 1011 he united with the son of Brian Boru and allegedly took many cows and 300 captives (*brat*), a word hitherto restricted to Viking assaults) from the Cenél Conaill (AU s.a. 1010), and the following year he is credited with the largest booty any king had taken of captives and kine from the Ulaid (AU s.a. 1011). In 1013 the son of Brian took 'much booty and innumerable captives' from the lands of Kilmainham and Glendalough (AU s.a. 1012). In 1015, Flaithbertach and Mael Sechnaill united to retaliate on Leinster and Osraige by taking 'many thousands of captives and cattle', to follow the inflated language of the annals.⁵²

Their action was obviously one of revenge upon Leinster which had joined with Dublin the previous year to take 'many prisoners and much cattle' from Meath and Brega (AFM s.a. 1013). After this climax, relatively peaceful years followed. In 1022 a band of Viking marauders were taken prisoners by the Ulaid (AU s.a. 1022), and in 1031 the Ulaid were themselves robbed of the doubtlessly exaggerated numbers of 3,000 cows and 1,200 persons. In retaliation, the Ulaid turned against the Uí Echach the same year and killed four monks and carried away thirty prisoners (AU s.a. 1031) – more trustworthy figures.

For two decades, Leinster was now the centre for slavers as the Uí Muiredaig and Uí Cheonsclaig kings struggled for supremacy. In 1035,

⁵¹ The wealth of eleventh-century Norse towns is frequently praised in panegyrics like CGG which lauds the oriental wealth of Limerick in order to bring before the reader's mind the great prey of Brian when he took the city in 968 (CGG 78).

⁵² AFM s.a. 1014, 1015: *brat 7 imitib, brat 7 iomda*. A clear distinction between the taking of prisoners and the taking of hostages (*a ngialla*) is evident from this entry.

the Uí Muiredaig raided Fír Chúili and took many prisoners (AFM s.a. 1035), but the leading place of the Uí Chennselaig is well attested by the spoils of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó: in 1041 he took many prisoners from several Uí Muiredaig churches in Kildare and Carlow (AFM s.a. 1040), and the next year he avenged the burning of Ferns and the murder of his brother by an attack on Killeslin where 100 were said to be killed and 400 captured (AU s.a. 1042). In 1048 he took captives and kine from the Déisi (AFM s.a. 1048). In the same years, the Cenél nEógain took a fearful revenge upon the Airgialla for the profanation of the 'Bell of Patrick's Will': 1,200 cows and a great many prisoners from the Uí Méith and Cualnge, and many cows and prisoners from the Mugdorna (AU s.a. 1044). In 1053, the Dál Cais and Meath kings made a desperate move to crush Diarmait mac Máel na mBó's power when they took the hostages of Diarmait and the wife of the lord of Ostrage and many prisoners from the church of Lusk. Diarmait immediately avenged this attack by burning and plundering the churches of Meath and taking captives and great spoil. The fugitives of Diarmait's action crowded into Gailenga territory where they were attacked again from the north by the Airgialla who seem to have spotted easy prey; many cows and prisoners were led away, in spite of the efforts of the lord of Gailenga (AFM, ATig s.a. 1053).

The Airgialla attack was evidently one of the very many plain raids not part of any larger political scheme that were seasonal traditional manifestations of the bravado of young warriors. This long-established custom was called *crech*, a prey or a raid for cattle.³³ By now, the taking of captives also became part of these heroics. In 1055 the king of Connaught led the 'May Prey' (*crech na bealltainne*) against the Uí Chairpre of West Meath and took a large booty and many captives (AFM s.a. 1055). The weakness of Meath was perhaps the reason why the overking did not avenge the attack but diverted his attention to the Dal nAraide of Ulster whence 200 cows and 60 prisoners were taken in the following year (AU s.a. 1056). In 1060 a *crech* was led by the Eile and the Uí Forga to Clonmacnoise where they took captives in the church and slew a student and a layman. The Delbna pursued the assailants, however, and brought back the captives the next day and killed the young tanist of Uí Forga who seems to have directed the raid (AFM s.a. 1060). In 1063 the Conmaicne raided the assembly of a neighbouring territory, gathered in a cave much like the Viking assault of 930; they took their jewels and 160 prisoners (AFM s.a. 1063).

The rising power of the Northern over-kings is marked in the annals by heavy exactions on neighbouring kingdoms. In 1059 the Cenél nEógain took a great prey of cattle from the Ulster kingdom of Dál nAraide and killed or

captured 200 persons (AU s.a. 1059). The following year the Cenél nEógain demonstrated their power to Connaught and claimed a prey of no less than 6,000 cows and 1,000 captives (AU s.a. 1062). From this time, the Cenél nEógain seem to have practised this kind of warfare regularly. Again in 1084, Ulaid was assaulted as the first target of the new king, Domnall Ua Lochlainn, who took many cows and captives (AU s.a. 1084). In 1108 his son manifested his prowess against Connaught, and two years later Domnall repeated the action and allegedly took 3,000 captives (AFM s.a. 1108, 1110). In 1112 Domnall demonstrated his opposition to the high-king Muirchertach Ua Briain of the Dál Cais by taking a large prey of cattle and captives from the territories of Dublin which were under the protection of the high-king (AU s.a. 1112). Traditional hostilities to the Ulaid were demonstrated again as late as 1130 and 1149 (AU s.a. 1030; AFM s.a. 1149).

The Ua Conchobair kings of Connaught who were at times near achieving total supremacy over Ireland practised the new kind of warfare in their campaigns. Repeating *crech na bealltainne* of 1055, a young lord led a band against the Uí Chairpre in 1080 and took away many prisoners. The annalist notes that this youthful adventure was called 'crech Chusin' (AFM s.a. 1080). Settled to the east of the Shannon, the Cairpre were the natural enemies of Connaught, and these two recorded actions show them as the *prügelknaben* much in the line of the relationship between Cenél nEógain and Ulster.

In 1100, Muirchertach of the Dál Cais who was now being seriously threatened by Connaught mustered a large force against the Uí Briúin of Connaught and took many captives from the islands of Loch Oughter (AFM s.a. 1100). The Uí Briúin took revenge upon Meath, the ally of Muirchertach, by burning and killing and leading off many captives (AU, AFM s.a. 1109). The final blows to Dál Cais supremacy were accompanied by great predatory expeditions in 1115 and 1116, but the prisoners of the last campaign were afterwards released as a homage to God and to St Flannán of Killaloe – the patron saint of the Dál Cais.³⁴

After the climactic years of 1108 to 1115, the taking of captives seems to have become a rare phenomenon. Apart from the two attacks on the Ulaid in 1130 and 1149 already mentioned, we hear only of one other instance, that of the Dál Cais attacking the Uí Fáilge in 1146 (AFM s.a. 1146). Thus, we have reasons to believe that after c. 1115 changes in the practice of warfare and in the claiming of sovereignty made *slaving* obsolete.

What were the driving motives behind the massive taking of prisoners by Irish kings of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries? First of all I would

³³ AU s.a. 1115. The devastations of 1116 must have been terrible: in this year AFM note again that famine reigned in Ireland 'so that the father would sell his son and daughter for food'.

³⁴ cf. Padraig Ó Riain, 'The *crech* ríag' or 'regat prey', *Éigse* 15 (1973) 24–30.

point to the very striking functional similarity between the warfare of Dublin and Irish kings. Simple lessons of the humiliating function of slavery to the prestige of any king were well learnt by the Irish, and it seems quite plausible that once learnt they put it to their own use. Thus, it is clearly comprehensible that the Vikings were punished by their own weapon in the tenth century and later. The vengeful feeling of some Irishmen is well attested in *Cogadh Gaedhel re Galliaibh*. After the account of Brian's seizure of Limerick in 968, it is stated quite bluntly that 'every one of them that was fit for war was killed, and every one that was fit for a slave was enslaved'. Other passages of the text express satisfaction at the enslavement of the Vikings: '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' (CGG 80, 116). Whatever we may think of this as history, the passages certainly betray the attitudes of the early twelfth-century poet – not towards the contemporary inhabitants of Limerick, but towards an imaginary horror film of the Vikings that had slowly changed even Irish attitudes to their own neighbours!

Further, we know that the great struggles of the over-kings for supremacy were to a large degree decided by the use of naval fleets.⁵⁵ These fleets were either indirectly controlled by the over-king as a consequence of their control of Norse cities or they were hired from Norse settlements in Ireland or the Scottish Isles. Of course, Irish kings gradually came to possess know-how and man-power under their own direct control, but the Dublin fleet was in demand even on the eve of the Norman conquest. The Cenél nEógain were handicapped by their success of earlier times in wiping out Scandinavian settlements and thus were more dependent on Norse fleets for hire.⁵⁶ From the middle of the twelfth century we know that the Dublin fleet was hired for thousands of cattle that were driven to the city in payment.⁵⁷ We know nothing of earlier arrangements, but it is conceivable that in addition to payments in cattle fleets were also hired for slaves. This procedure would explain the preeminent role of up-and-coming high-kings in the taking of captives, such as is evidenced in the cases of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó – until he achieved the over-lordship of Dublin for his son in 1052 – and the Cenél nEógain and Ua Conchobair kings. Apart from this very direct relationship, one might also point to the need of the kings for foreign luxury items that were largely obtainable only from the Norse cities. Luxuries such as silk,

⁵⁵ Lucas, 'Irish-Norse relations'.

⁵⁶ The importance of the Norse cities for economic and military potential to high-king is stressed by F. J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (London 1973) 268–72.

⁵⁷ In 1154, Mac Lochlainn gave Dublin a *tuarastal* of 1,200 cows, and a *tuarastal* of 4,000 cows is noted in 1166 (AFM).

jewels, even foreign slaves, were necessary for the keeping of the king's household and essential for the attraction of local lords to the court.

As the evidence stands, there is no way that we can substantiate the hypothesis that Irish captives were sold to Norse slave dealers. What we do have is a relatively clear-cut case that slavery became more widespread in the course of the eleventh century. We have further circumstantial evidence of the importance of slavery to Irish kings. *Lebor na Cert* (Book of Rights) was written c. 1100, and probably compiled (in part at least) at the court of Muirchertach of the Dál Cais (who also patronized the writing of other panegyric literature, such as *Cogadh Gaedhel re Galliaibh*). The text contains highly fictitious lists of the stipends (*tuarastal*) of the over-kings to the lesser kings of their domain, together with lists of tributes due from the lesser kings. Whereas the latter largely deal with hard necessities such as cows, oxen, boars, sows, etc., the over-kings clearly were expected to bestow goods of extreme luxury, such as horses, ships, shields and swords, gold, and slaves. Even though the stipends as listed were certainly never paid, the descriptions of the slaves are highly interesting.

The distinction between male and female slaves reveals some functions of slavery. Female slaves are referred to as 'full-grown', 'swarthy', 'fair', 'graceful' and 'valuable', and the Leinster king is obliged to give 'eight women whom he has not dishonoured'.⁵⁸ Male slaves are described as 'lads', 'hard-working', 'strong-fisted', 'willing', 'expensive', and 'spirited'.⁵⁹ If we may deduce anything from these descriptions, the slaves seem primarily to have been intended for the household, as servants, concubines, mountchanks, the drabants of the court.

Further, *Lebor na Cert* draws a clear distinction between native and foreign slaves ('foreigners who do not know Irish', 'women from over the great sea'),⁶⁰ an indication that not only were slaves recruited by internal warfare but some were also supplied by foreign trade. The role of the Norse cities as I have hypothesized seems supported by a casual line of the poem: it may be in his capacity as over-king of Dublin and Waterford that the king of Leinster is expected in one list to provide the king of Cashel with 'gold and wealth from beyond the sea'.⁶¹

Most foreign slaves must have come by way of the Norse cities. The synod of Armagh in 1170 saw the conquest of Ireland as God's punishment

⁵⁸ M. Dillon (ed), *Lebor na Cert*, Irish Texts Society 46 (Dublin 1962) lines 438, 442, 998, 1045, 1219, 1302, and 1587. The old use of *caimel* for a female slave was evidently obsolete by 1100, and instead *mná* (*daera*) or the crude *banmug* were used. In the Leinster list, Dublin is entitled to 'thirty women with large families' – an indication perhaps of the furnishing of Dublin warriors with concubines? ⁵⁹ *ibid.*, lines 486, 1042, 1047, 1207, 1213, 1225, 1292, 1305, and 1588. ⁶⁰ *ibid.*, lines 591, 995, 1013, 1313, and 1444. ⁶¹ *ibid.*, line 249.

³⁴⁰ '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'. The synod decreed 'that throughout the island Englishmen should be freed from the bonds of slavery and restored to their former freedom'. The decree clearly seems to have been dictated by the Normans as the explanatory clause reveals: 'For the English, in the days when the government of England remained fully in their hands, used to put their children up for sale ... 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 the slaves, so now also those who bought them, have, by committing such a monstrous crime, deserved the yoke of slavery'.³⁴² This reference to the days before 1066 may contain some truth. There are many indications of a slave trade between Bristol and Dublin, all of eleventh-century date. The persistent stand against the selling of christians abroad had been reiterated in all Anglo-Saxon law codes from Æne to Cnut, but William the Conqueror seems to have had some success in enforcing the law. He prohibited the slave-trade of Bristol and, in 1102, finally, the Westminster Council declared a general prohibition against all trade in slaves in England.³⁴³ Although some illicit trade probably continued, the clear reference of the synod of Armagh to these regulations does indicate that the hey-day of Anglo-Irish slave trading was well over by 1170, and the liberated Englishmen may well have been born in Ireland of English parents. Hermann the monk warned c. 1120 that Irish traders in Bristol were notorious for their invitation of foreigners aboard their ship when they would suddenly up anchor and sell their guests in Ireland.³⁴⁴ This disreputable practice, if anything, rather suggests that the organised slave trade of Bristol had come to an end.

V

Irish evidence points to the eleventh century as the grand days of the Irish Sea slave-trade. By way of conclusion, I shall present some further indica-

³⁴² A. B. Scott & F. X. Martin (ed.), *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 70: 'quod Anglos olim tam a mercatoribus quam predonibus atque piratis emere passim et in servitutem redigere consueverant ... ut Angli ubique per insulam servitutis vinculo mancipati in pristinum revocentur libertatem. ... Anglorum namque populus, adhuc integro eorumdem regno ... et priusquam inopiam ullam aut incediam sustinerent, filios proprios et cognatos in Hiberniam vendere consueverant. Unde et probabiliter credi potest, sicut venditores olim ita et emptores tam enormi delicto iuga servitutis iam meruisse'.

³⁴³ See D. Pelteret, 'Slave raiding ... in early England', 112-14.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 114.

tions to this effect and finally try to fit in Dublin in the general developments of early medieval Western Europe.

Slave-taking generally seems to have reached its peak in the Celtic areas in the eleventh century. Scottish kings are known to have taken slaves from Northumbria in 1058, 1061, 1065, 1070, 1077 and again in 1138.³⁴⁵ Kapelle has pointed out that these raids 'are the usual result of contact between agriculturalists and a semi-pastoral folk given to plundering and slaving from an inaccessible homeland'.³⁴⁶ Kapelle neatly argues that the Scots could only be stopped by the Norman enforcement of territorial sovereignty behind well-defined borders. The same background is evidently relevant to the Welsh experience.

When the grand-daughter of Sigrtryg Silkenbeard was married to a Welsh king sometime in the middle of the eleventh century, it was an appropriate expression of the growing interest of Dublin merchants and warriors in the conflicts and resources of Wales. Their son, Gruffydd ap Cynan, built up his power by the help of the Norse fleet. An annalistic entry for 1055 shows that the Welsh practised slaving expeditions against Anglo-Saxon territories with the help of English outlaws,³⁴⁷ but the reign of Gruffydd was to be the culmination of slaving. In 1081 William the Conqueror liberated several hundred people from servitude in Wales,³⁴⁸ but by then the involvement of the Vikings was complicating matters. We have already noted Viking descents on Wales in the 980s and 1030s as a result of internal struggles between Dublin factions. The accession to the Dublin throne of Godfred of the Isle of Man (1072-1094) was probably a result of the growing importance of links across the Irish Sea. In 1079, Gruffydd tried to win Northern Wales for himself with the help of thirty ships of Norse and Irish mercenaries. 'Then the Danes, the men of his house and household waxed wrath because they did not obtain their customs as had been promised them, and plundered the greater part of Anglesey in spite of him, and returned to their country with their ships full of men and spoil, and carried him with them against his will'. After a stay at the court of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó, Gruffydd made a return with a fleet of Waterford, and in 1088 he helped the king of Deheubarth, Rhys ap Tewdwr, against a usurper; their Viking and Irish aides were paid an immense number of captives.³⁴⁹ In 1098, mercenaries were again employed in the

³⁴⁵ W. E. Kapelle, *The Norman conquest of the North* (London 1979) 90, 92, 99, 124; A.L.C. s.a. 1138. Pelteret, *op. cit.*, 113, mistakenly ascribes this raid to an Irish warband.

³⁴⁶ *op. cit.*, 227.

³⁴⁷ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, C-version, s.a. 1055.

³⁴⁸ A. Jones (ed.), *The history of Gruffydd ap Cynan* (Manchester 1910) 123.

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 124-26; Annales Cambriae s.a. 1088: 'Ingentem censum captivorum gentilibus et Scottis Res filius Teudur tradidit'.

struggles of Gruffydd against the Norman earl of Chester; they betrayed him, however, for a rich promise from the earl. He paid them with 'all the toothless, deformed, lame, one-eyed, troublesome, feeble hags', and the disappointed Vikings left for Ireland.⁷⁰

The logic of slaving led the Welsh, too, to prey upon each other. In 1124, Gruffydd's sons took a punitive force to Merionydd and drove away many captives and much cattle.⁷¹ In 1110, prince Owain of Ceredigion led a band of 'hotheads' against Dyfed and seized the people and carried them off with them bound to the ships which Owain had brought with him from Ireland'. Owain's expeditions were resented by his father who only held Ceredigion for the Norman over-king on condition that he severed all relations with his sons. Owain fled to Ireland, only to return a year later to take over his father's land of which he was now enfeoffed.⁷²

There is no doubt that Wales became a very important area for the Vikings of Dublin whose services were used as late as 1139 and 1144, in both of which cases their payment may have been partly in captives.⁷³ Further, the Welsh evidence underlines how we should beware of too neat distinctions between warriors and merchants: Elgar who was taken and sold from Devonshire to Ireland⁷⁴ probably felt no great difference between those two categories of people. The importance of the slave trade finally seems to be stressed by the fact that early Welsh law codes imply some official regulation of the traffic.⁷⁵

We may conclude that Dublin's slave market was supplied not only by its own activities, but certainly also by Welsh kings, probably by the Irish hinterland and possibly also by Scottish kings. The market must have experienced a boom in the eleventh century, especially in the latter half, while a marked decline set in with the Norman conquest of England when William by c. 1080 had managed to secure the boundaries and coasts against the pirates. Bristol had been an outlet for English slaves since the borough began its expansion in the early eleventh century (a mint opened in 1020).⁷⁶ When the slave trade of Bristol was banned it must have meant a rapid decline of

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 149.

⁷¹ T. Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogion*, *Pennarh*, MS. 20 version (Cardiff 1952), s.a. 1124. Adam of Bremen gives Danish evidence that the Vikings too might resort to enslaving their countrymen (*Gesta Hammaburgensis*, iv 6).

⁷² *ibid.*, s.a. 1110.

⁷³ *Annales Gambiae* s.a. 1138; the two *Brut* versions diverge as to whether the payment of 1144 was 2,000 heads of cattle or *bondmen*.

⁷⁴ J. G. Evans (ed.), *Liber Landavensis* (Oxford 1893) 1.

⁷⁵ E. I. Bromberg, 'Wales and the medieval slave trade', *Speculum* 17 (1942) 264, 267.

⁷⁶ Bromberg, *op. cit.*, 265; A. Bugge, 'Norse settlements round the Bristol Channel', *Videnskabelskabet Skrift* II, Hist.-Filos. Kl. no 6 (Christiania 1900).

the Dublin market after c. 1100. Irish and Welsh supplies must still have been coming until c. 1120 after which time references to the taking of captives become very rare. In Wales and to some degree in Ireland, too, a new sort of territorial sovereignty was being built up which had to be strongly opposed to the anarchic effects of slave-raiding.⁷⁷

The confinement of the demand side of the market, which very likely began to be felt shortly after 1100, must also have been detrimental to Dublin merchants. We know, of course, next to nothing about actual market relations but Scandinavia is likely to have become an important market for slaves in the later tenth and eleventh centuries. King Cnut's sister was a renowned slave-dealer in England who provided aristocratic households in Denmark, not least with pretty concubines.⁷⁸ Scandinavian laws and sagas leave us in no doubt that slaves were a well-known phenomenon, but unfortunately they provide us with no means of assessing the actual imports of slaves.

From material remains we can have only a very crude idea of the degree of interaction between the Celtic areas and Scandinavia. As stated above, Celtic bronze objects in Norwegian graves belong to the ninth and early tenth centuries, representing the portable loot of early Viking raids. Except from the very limited number of Dublin pennies found in Scandinavia, we lack find-types to indicate the strength of relations. Half of the Norwegian coin hoards concealed c. 1000-1065 contain a very small number of Dublin pennies. Hiberno-Norse coins issued later than c. 1035 have not been found in Norway, however, and Norwegian coins of the late eleventh century have not been found in Ireland.⁷⁹ These facts have little bearing on our problem, unfortunately, as Hiberno-Norse coins generally played a very limited role outside Ireland, or indeed the Dublin market, and increasingly so after c. 1035 when the coins were extremely debased.⁸⁰ On the basis of her studies of Ringerike and Urnes style objects, Fuglesang has argued that some sort of contact was maintained until the opening of the twelfth century, and even reinforced in the second half of the eleventh century. She tentatively points to a possible influx to Dublin of dispossessed Scandinavian merchants after the Norman conquest of English towns with an appreciable number of Scandinavian inhabitants, amongst others. London which we know to have main-

⁷⁷ For the territorial character of the kingdom of the O'Connors, see D. O. Carrigan, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin 1972) 150-52.

⁷⁸ William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum Anglorum*, ed. W. Stubbs (London 1887), ii 200. 'quod dicebatur agmina mancipiorum, in Anglia coempta, Danemarchiam solere mittere, puellas praesertim quas decus et aetas pretiosiores facerent'.

⁷⁹ M. Dolley, *The Hiberno-Norse coins in the British Museum* (London 1966) 40, 60-61; K. Skaare, *op. cit.*, 56, on Danish finds, 63, 139, and Swedish finds, 64.

⁸⁰ M. Dolley, *op. cit.*, 128-29.

tained close contacts with Denmark in the first half of the century.⁸¹ This hypothesis seems to me to be well worth considering in further analyses. The most manifest evidence of continued contacts is the attempt of Magnus Barelegs in 1101–1104 to claim Norwegian rule over Norse settlements around the Irish Sea. His failure was accompanied by the build-up of Norwegian control over the Scottish Isles. Even though Dublin maintained continued relations with the Norse of Orkney and the Hebrides, it probably lost direct contact with Scandinavia and Iceland after Magnus's death.

On the basis of this evidence we must content ourselves with probabilities. It is most likely that the supply of slaves for the market slumped sometime in the early twelfth century, and that political circumstances had already for some time redirected the attention of both the Norwegian and Dublin rulers away from each other. In a Scandinavian context, it is of some interest to state the probability that after the eleventh century Norway and other countries received no Irish slaves.

The re-direction of Dublin interest was partly due to the fact that it found other and richer markets as well in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The poem of Garnier of Rouen c. 1020 relates the story of an Irish poet who was initially caught in Ireland, sold at the market of Corbridge in the north of England, then taken to northern Saxony, only to wind up at Rouen in Normandy where he redeemed his wife from her owner.⁸² The economic geography of this otherwise particularly untrustworthy poem has a ring of truth. We know that Dublin built up trade relations with Chester in the late tenth century on the road to Corbridge,⁸³ and it is likely that Rouen was an important slave market well into the middle of the eleventh century.⁸⁴ The only finds of foreign coin of this period in Ireland are two Norman *deniers* (one on Dalkey Island) which attest some relationship with Normandy⁸⁵ from where wine was imported.⁸⁶ Excavations in Dublin have shown that the contacts of the city came to concentrate heavily on Normandy and the Bristol area from the late eleventh century.⁸⁷ Initially markets for slaves, these cities grew in

⁸¹ S. Horn Fuglesang, *Some aspects of the Ringerike style* (Odense 1980) 77–78.

⁸² L. Musset, 'Le satiriste Garnier de Rouen et son milieu (début de XI^e siècle)', *Revue des Moyen Âge Latin* 10 (1954) 237–58.

⁸³ P. Wallace, 'The origins of Dublin', B. G. Scott (ed), *Studies on early Ireland* (Belfast 1982) 120–42; 136.

⁸⁴ L. Musset, 'La Seine normande et le commerce maritime du III^e au XI^e siècle', *Revue des Sociétés Savantes de Haute-Normandie* 53 (1969); cf. D. Pelletier, op. cit., 109.

⁸⁵ Doolley, *Hiberno-Norse coins*, 139.

⁸⁶ Ó Riordáin, 'The High Street excavations', B. Almqvist and D. Greene, *Proc. Seventh Viking Congress*, 139.

⁸⁷ P. Wallace, 'Anglo-Norman Dublin: continuity and change', D. O'Corráin (ed), *Irish antiquity* (Cork 1981) 253–58.

⁸⁸ A. Gwynn, 'Medieval Bristol and Dublin', *Ir Hist Stud* 5 (1947) 275–86.

importance as trade emphasized the import of wine and grain and the export of hides and beef in the twelfth century. Dublin was increasingly subject to Norman and Bristol interests which had effectively united and gained control of Irish Sea trade well before the Norman invasion of the Norse cities.⁸⁸

Slavery as such was not put an end to overnight, as we are well reminded by the synod of Armagh of 1170. Even as late as 1235, the mark of slavery was still felt by some people; in Waterford a man was known as Philippus Leysing, Philip the manumitted.⁸⁹ In 1959, D. A. Binchy stated that the Vikings had a 'profound, one might say shattering effect on Irish society'.⁹⁰ Critics have since pointed out that the Old Order had already collapsed before the Vikings arrived. The trend of recent scholarship has been to marginalize the Vikings and to analyze them as an integral part of the Irish social fabric rather than to talk of the Viking 'contribution'. However, I think it is evident that the Vikings did bring with them a practice of warfare that had a 'profound' effect on Irish society. Lucas has pointed out that Viking warfare presently changed Irish weaponry and introduced the use of longboats. I would add that they revived the practice of slavery in Ireland and that slavery came to play an important part in Irish military campaigns and social life in the eleventh century. The taking of slaves was conducive to the growth of Irish foreign trade and played an important role in the payment of armies and the build-up of royal power. The findings of Ch. Verlinden had already shown that the institution of slavery was a more widespread phenomenon in southern Europe than previous scholars have allowed. It may now also be seen that it had a somewhat belated and spectacular revival on the fringe of Western Europe in the eleventh century. Only the establishment of stable territorial powers in Scandinavia and the Celtic West brought an end to slavery in Northern Europe.

⁸⁹ A. Bugge, 'Bidrag til det sidste alstnit af nordboernes historie i Irland', *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie* 2/19 (1904) 276.

⁹⁰ D. A. Binchy, 'The passing of the old order', Brian Ó Cuív (ed), *Proc. International Congr. Celt. Stud. ... Dublin 1959* (Dublin 1962) 119–32.