Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh
and
The Annals of Inisfallen

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Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh or The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill\(^1\) is an account of the struggle that took place between the native Irish and the Viking invaders in the ninth, tenth and early eleventh centuries. Three early transcripts of the work survive—the fragment in the Book of Loinster,\(^2\) which probably dates from the mid twelfth century, the Dublin manuscript written in the mid fourteenth century, and the Brussels manuscript, which was copied from a much earlier edition in the seventeenth century.\(^3\) Originally compiled probably at some time in the eleventh or twelfth century,\(^4\) its chronological confusion and its eulogy of Brian Boruma have tended to cause historians seeking source material for the period to regard the work as being less trustworthy than the annals.\(^5\)

It is the intention of this note to show that substantial fragments of annals no longer extant survive in certain chapters of CGG. To claim that the compiler of CGG used annals as one of his chief sources of material is not new. J. A. Goedheer\(^6\) concluded that much of CGG must have been copied from an annal similar to the Annals of Ulster. More recently, the Annals of Inisfallen, which Goedheer\(^7\) claimed were no more than an extract from a copy of the Annals of Ulster, have also been regarded as a possible source available to the compiler of CGG. In the addenda to his edition of these annals (Dublin, 1951), Seán Mac Airt wrote:\(^8\)

'It should have been remarked that A1 or its prototype was probably available to the author or redactor of Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh... The introductory matter, which prefaces the activities of the Dál gCais in Brian's reign, supposes the existence of a Munster Chronicle

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\(^1\) CGG—for full list of abbreviations see pp. 20-21.
\(^2\) Where possible, the extracts quoted have been taken from this fragment (a more complete version of this fragment was probably used by Keating, p. 187, where he refers to 'Slain and Gcilla Sails' as in LL). CGG, pp. 221-233.
\(^3\) CGG, pp. xiii-xiv.
\(^4\) CGG, pp. xi-xii; Goedheer, pp. 10-12; the most recently suggested date is about 1100, cf. Ryan, p. 358, fn. 6.
\(^5\) Sawyer, pp. 27-28.
\(^6\) Goedheer, pp. 32-37.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 27.
\(^8\) A1, p. 593.
more extensive than AI in its treatment of the earlier period. A correspondence of items between AI and CGG occurs at the following places: AI 968§2 = CGG 82; AI 970§3 = CGG 86-88; AI 983§4, AI 975§4 = CGG 44; AI 988§2, 993§2, 5, etc. = CGG 106-08; AI 1002§2 = CGG 132 (§78); AI 1002§4 = CGG 134 (§77); AI 1012§5 = CGG 140.

The remainder of this note will elaborate on the connection between these two works, which would seem to be much more extensive than Mac Airt realised. Many of the passages in CGG, which Goedheer\(^9\) paralleled with entries in the *Annals of Ulster*, will be shown to have a closer relationship to entries in AI.

It would seem that the author of CGG used several annals. On a number of occasions the same period of years is covered twice or more times by entirely different accounts. For instance, chapters IV, V, VI and VII as far as ‘Disert Tipraiti’ refer to events in Munster between 812 and 833, while the remainder of chapter VII covers events in Ulster taking place during the same period from 832 onwards. Dealing with tenth century events, chapters XXXVIII-IX cover the years 956 to 979, while chapters LV-LXVI present an entirely different account for the years 968 to 978.

One of the annals used dealt with Munster events, and would seem to have been similar to that used by the compiler of AI. Many of the Munster events referred to in chapters IV to VII (as far as ‘Disert Tipraiti’) are also mentioned in annals other than those of Inisfallen, but, where they are mentioned in both AI and CGG, the correspondence is far closer:

(824) CGG, Ch. V

—‘and Etgall of the Skellig was carried off by them into captivity, so that it was by a miracle he escaped from them and he died of hunger and thirst with them . . . .’

CGG, Ch. VI

—‘. . . another fleet . . . plundered Bangor of Uladh, and they broke the shrine of Comghall. They killed the bishop of the place, and his wise men and his clergy. They plundered Magh Bile . . . .’

AI 823

—‘The invasion of Bennchor by the heathens and the shrine of Comghall was broken by them, and its learned men and its bishops were put to the sword.’

AI 824

—‘Mag Bile and Bennchor plundered by the heathens . . . . Scealch was plundered by the heathens and Etgall was carried off into captivity, and he died of hunger on their hands.’

AU 823

—‘The Gentiles invaded Bennchair the Great.’

AU 824

—‘The plundering of Bennchair in the Ards, by foreigners, and the spoiling of its oratory; and the relics of Comghall were shaken out of their shrine . . . . Etgall of Skellig was carried off by Gentiles and died soon after of hunger and thirst.’\(^10\)

The above correspondence depends solely on the italicised phrases and is obviously far from conclusive. The order of events as related in AI is different from that in the other extracts, though this could easily be the result of careless copying, instances of which abound both in AI and CGG.

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\(^9\) Goedheer, pp. 32-37.

\(^{10}\) A similar account is to be found in the other annals—ACI, CS, AFM.
The next passage in CGG to bear a possible relationship to AI occurs in chapter XII and deals solely with Munster events. The only event which can be found in other works is the capture of Forannan:

CGG, Ch. XII
—'And the fleet of Luimneach plundered the Martini of Mumhain, and carried off with them Forannan, successor of Patrick, from Cluain Comharda to Luimnech, and they broke the shrine of Patrick.'

AI 845
—'Forannán, abbot of Ard Macha, was carried off by the heathens from Cluain Comardha, and the shrine of Patrick was broken and carried off by them.'

AU 845
—'Forindan, abbot of Ard Macha, was taken prisoner by Gentile in Cluain comardha, with his reliquaries and his family, and carried off by the ships of Luimnech.'

As with the previous extract, the relationship is possible rather than probable. Chapters XXIII-V refer mainly to Munster events, many of which are not to be found in any other source. Those which are mentioned elsewhere can be paralleled most closely in AI, though the number of such parallels is small.¹²

CGG, Ch. XXIV
—'It was in this year that Earl Tomar was killed by St. Brendan three days after he had plundered Cluain Ferta.'

AI 866
—'Tomar the Jarl plundered Cluain Ferta Brénainn, and Brénainn killed him on [the] third day after he had reached his camp.'

The only other reference to this incident is in TF where a very different account is given.¹³

CGG, Ch. XXV
—'There were plundered Leinster and the men of Munster by the fleet of the son of Amlaibh until they reached Carraigho so that they left not a cave without exploring it and they left not a thing without plundering it, and they burned Inlech of Ibar.'

AI 873
—'Barid with a great fleet from Ath Cliath went by sea westwards, and he plundered Carraigho Luachra under ground, i.e., the raiding of the caves.'

As in the case of the previous extract, another reference in TF gives a more different version.¹⁴

The next chapter—XXVI—relates to tenth century events in Munster, nearly all of which are to be found only in CGG. Chapters XXVII and the interpolation in chapter XXIX refer to ninth century events. Once again these are concerned mainly with Munster, and only two references are found elsewhere—in AI:

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¹¹ A similar account is to be found in the other annals—ACI, CS, AFM.
¹² This and the following parallel were noted by Mac Airt (AI 845, 860).
¹³ TF, pp. 162-7.
¹⁴ TF, pp. 193-7.
CGG, Ch. XXVII — 'Four years after this the foreigners left Erinn, and went to Alba under Sitrict, son of Imhar.'

AI 893 — 'The heathens departed from Ireland this year.'

CGG, Ch. XXIX — 'this was the year in which Amlaibh, son of the King of Lochlann, plundered Leas Mor.'

AI 807 — 'Amlaibh committed treachery against Les Mor, and Martan was liberated from him.'

It should also be noted that this interpolated passage came from a source very similar to that used for chapter XXIV.

Chapters XXXIII-IV relate the deeds of Tomar, son of Elge—'their conflicts are not fully in recollection and are not enumerated in books,' wrote the author of CGG. If this was so, then neither the *Annals of Ulster* nor those of *Clonmacnoise* were available to him; at least not in their present form, for both of these annals mention several of Tomar's deeds which are not to be found in CGG. The account in chapter XXXIV of CGG is more detailed than that given in AI under the year 922, but the order in which events are related is precisely the same:

CGG, Ch. XXXIV —
' a fleet on Loch Derg-derc . . .
plundered Inis Celtra . . .
. . . Muc-Inis . . .
the churches of Derg derc . . .
. . . Tir da Glas . . .
. . . Lothra . . .
. . . Cluain Ferta . . .
. . . Cluain míc naíois . . .
. . . Inis Clothraan . . .
. . . Inis bo-fíinne . . .
the churches of Loch Ribb . . .
the west of Midhe . . .
the south of Connacht.'

AI 922 —
'Tomrair . . . plundered
Inis Celtra and
Muicinis, and burned

Cluain Moccu Nóis; and he
went on to
Loch Rí and plundered all
its islands and he ravaged
Mide.'

In this instance it is surely probable rather than possible that the compiler of CGG used an annal very similar to that used by the redactor of AI.

An annalistic account is next resumed at chapter XXXVII. This, and chapters XXXVIII to XL, relate to a series of events that took place between 950 and 980, many of which are also mentioned in annals other than AI; since chapters XLIX-LXVI give a different account of the years 964 to 978, one which bears a marked resemblance to that in AI, it would seem that the annal used for chapters XXXVII-XL was not that used by the compiler of AI.

From chapter XLIX onwards, the compiler of CGG proceeds in chronological sequence from 954 to 1014—the year of the Battle of Clontarf. Much of these chapters is taken up with saga-type narrative and with material of little historical content—on
the other hand, a number of chapters continue to relate events with little elaboration, indicating that they have been copied more or less direct from an annal. Where these events can be paralleled with entries in AI, a close relationship between the two works is often apparent:

CGG, Ch. LVI

--- 'Mathgamhain in Mumhain. By him great spoils were taken from the Uí Ene, Aine, and there it was that Cathal, son of Feradach, the king-soldier of Eriana, was killed. . . . [six events not in AI] . . . the foreigners of Luirmeach . . . plundered Imlech and encamped two days there.'

AI 968

--- 'A raid by Mathgammain on Uí Enein, and Cathal son of Fogaertach was left there dead. . . . The plundering of Imlech Ibuir, and a camp [was pitched] there for two days.'

Further comparisons may be made between the two works at the following points:

| CGG, Ch. LVI | AI 969 |
| CGG, Ch. LXIX | AI 976* |
| CGG, Ch. LXIV | AI 977 (this is a possible comparison. Ivar's sons are not mentioned by name in AI. The other annals refer to 'Ola' and not 'Cuaillaith' as does CGG). |
| CGG, Ch. LXVI | AI 983* |
| CGG, Ch. LXX | AI 988* |
| CGG, Ch. LXXV | AI 983* |
| CGG, Ch. LXXX | AI 997 |
| CGG, Ch. LXXXVI | AI 1000 |
| CGG, Ch. LXXVII | AI 1002* |
| CGG, Ch. LXXX | AI 1004 |
| CGG, Ch. LXXVIII | AI 1012* |
| CGG, Ch. CXVIII | AI 1013* (AI, p. 183). |

Goedheer compared this last chapter, which lists those slain at Clontarf, with the corresponding entry in AU:

'The list [in AU] of those who fell on Brian's side also contains a few more names in Cogadh. Apart from these additions, the origin of which cannot be made out, it is evident that this section of Cogadh is based on the corresponding entry in the Annals of Ulster which must have been written shortly after the battle.'

It is instructive to compare the list of slain given in CGG with those in AI and AU.

| List of slain in CGG, Ch. CXVIII | Order in AI account | Order in AU account |
| Brian | 1 |
| Murchadh | 2 |
| Toirchelbhach | 3 |

17 As with the AI entry for 922, this may well illustrate how the entry in AI is a much reduced version of the original.
18 This and the following parallels marked * were noted by Mac Airt (AI, p. 553).
19 Goedheer, p. 30.
20 Remembering that Goedheer (p. 27) commented that 'a comparison [of AI] with AU shows that AI is an extract from a copy of the latter.'
The order of the slain in AI faithfully follows that given in CGG; that in AU on the other hand deviates from it at a number of points.

Thus it would seem probable that from chapter XLIX to the end of the work, the compiler of CGG, when he had recourse to an annal, used an annal similar to that used by the redactor of the *Annals of Inisfallen*. Since this annal apparently referred mainly to Munster events, and in the light of other evidence presented above, it would seem probable that this annal was also used for earlier sections of the work, and it is on this assumption that the following table is based.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CGG entry probably from AI type annal</th>
<th>—possibly from AI type annal</th>
<th>—no evidence of relationship to AI but dealing with Munster events</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>812-33</td>
<td>IV-VII</td>
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<tr>
<td>837</td>
<td></td>
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<td>XVIII</td>
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<td>845</td>
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<td>847</td>
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<td>853-66</td>
<td>XXIII-XXIV</td>
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<td>866-68</td>
<td>XXIX</td>
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<td>873-77</td>
<td>XXV</td>
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<td>880-94</td>
<td>XXVII</td>
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<td>915-17?</td>
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<td>922</td>
<td>XXXIII-XXXIV</td>
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<td>964-7</td>
<td>XLIX-LII</td>
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<tr>
<td>968-1014</td>
<td>LVI-CXVIII (with gaps)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Before examining some of the more important points which arise from the above conjecture, something should be said of the relationship that other sections of CGG may have to other annals. The difficulty here is that the other annals, unlike the AI, cannot be treated in isolation. The relationship of AI to AU must surely be far more remote than Godheer supposed, when, for instance, the entry for 1014 is considered; whereas there are many points at which a correspondence between AU and AFM, CS, ACI, AT, and ALC can be observed. For instance if the entries for 836 are examined it will be seen that the entries in CS are presented in the same order as those in AU, and that the AFM entries follow the same order as those in CS where there is a corresponding entry in AU; similarly many tenth-century entries in CS follow the same order as those in AC, e.g. 942, 948. The exact relationship between these works cannot be determined without deciding what is précis and what is interpolation—a task beyond the scope of this note.

Thus, in dealing with the annalistic sources of other sections of CGG, it may be necessary to refer simply to ‘the annals.’ The last part of chapter VII is one such passage—a series of events between 828 and 835 that is to be found, partly at least, in AU, AFM and CS. Similarly, correlation with ‘the annals’ enables part of chapter XVII (‘all Laighin . . .’) to be dated to either 842 or 845—in this list the events not mentioned by ‘the annals’ are all placed first and all lie farther south, except for Durrow which is placed at the end of the list after ‘Lorra, Clonmacnoise and Saighir.’ The annal from which this extract was taken may well bear some relationship to the surviving annals, but what form this might take is impossible to determine. A number of other shorter passages in the first twenty-one chapters, listed by Godheer in his comparison between CGG and AU, also fall into this category—though it must be remembered that some of these, discussed above, bear a closer resemblance to entries in AI. At a later point in CGG, chapters XXVII-XL give an account of the years 950-980 which can be found in all the annals except AI. From that date forward the only annal used by the author would seem to have been AI.

With varying degrees of probability, certain sections in CGG may be regarded as more complete fragments of annals which now exist only in a much abbreviated form; remembering that these fragments are themselves selections of material of interest to the compiler, several further suggestions may be made.

Mac Airt concluded that the present transcript of the early part of AI was made at Lismore in 1092 from Emly documents. An examination of those passages in CGG possibly taken from an older copy of AI substantiates this. Two important references to Norse attacks on Emly (CGG, chapters XX and LVI) are omitted in AI. The only reference to Lismore in CGG that is not included in AI is in chapter XXVII and, in fact, this could possibly be the event that is found in AI under the year 893. Moreover, if one regards chapters IV-VII as being a possible extract from this early part of AI, the only monasteries mentioned by the AI redactor of 1092 were Bangor, Movilla, .

21 It is worth noting that Keating probably used a more complete version of AT—the capture of Uaire in 978 by the foreigners of Ath Cliath is only referred to in AT and Keating.
22 Mac Ncoiull.
23 If the dating of this extract is accepted, the last part of Ch. XIX can be dated to 832.
24 Goedheer, pp. 32-37.
25 AI, p. xxx.
Lismore and Kilmolash. The first two are mentioned in all the annals; Kilmolash is only a few miles from Lismore and its plundering is not referred to in any of the other annals.\textsuperscript{26}

When Todd published his edition of C.G.G. in 1867 a scholarly translation of AI was not available—thus it is now possible to correct a number of the dates which he gave for events,\textsuperscript{27} e.g. all of chapter XXIV clearly belongs to 866—'Tomar' is not that Tomar who died in 848. In general, also, C.G.G. can tell us far more about the Limerick Vikings than 'the annals' can.

Historians should perhaps give more attention to C.G.G.\textsuperscript{28} It does contain a wealth of annalistic data not to be found elsewhere. Much of this came from a more complete version of AI; the other sources may never be recognised\textsuperscript{29} though future work on the relationship between the various annals, including the Three Fragments,\textsuperscript{30} may well throw more light on the subject.

\textbf{Acknowledgements}

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\textbf{ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT AND FOOTNOTES}

\begin{itemize}
  \item ACI : \textit{The Annals of Cionmacnoise}. Edited by Denis Murphy, S.J., Dublin 1869.
  \item AI : \textit{The Annals of Inisfallen}. Edited by Seán Mac Airt, Dublin 1951.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{26} Gwynn (pp. 27-33) argued that the earlier portion of AI was compiled at Killaloe, in the Dalcassian territory of Co. Clare; if one accepts the arguments set out above, Lismore seems more probable.

\textsuperscript{27} Some of these mistakes have been carried into secondary sources, e.g. Todd’s marginal note that Turges arrived in Ireland in 839 (from the text it is obviously meant to be 832) was adopted by Skelton (p. 50) and by Branns (p. 57).

\textsuperscript{28} One fact which might emerge from a closer study of C.G.G. is that in the first half of the ninth century the Norse systematically raided one part of Ireland at a time; the writer hopes to discuss this point more fully at a later date.

\textsuperscript{29} For example, there seems to be no indication at all from where the compiler obtained his information on Turges; he is certainly not the same Turges as mentioned by Keating (p. 223).

\textsuperscript{30} At many points TF appears to bear a relationship both to AI and C.G.G., and to AU, CS and AFM.


