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THE EARLY EVOLUTION OF THE LEGEND OF ARTHUR

The object of this article¹ is a reconsideration of those references to Arthur which are fairly certainly earlier than 1136, in which year Geoffrey of Monmouth published his *Historia Regum Britanniae*. I shall try to show the evolution which can be traced in the story of Arthur in the period before the great developments which can be seen in the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Chrétien de Troyes, and the host of romancers who followed them. I wish to stress that it is the pre-Geoffrey "legend of Arthur" which concerns me, not the ramifications of the later "Arthurian legend" in all its complexity.

The evidence for the existence of traditions and stories about Arthur in the period before 1136 is restricted to Welsh texts, and to a few Latin texts which are for the most part the work of Welshmen.² There are also two or three other texts in Irish and Latin which mention historical figures named Arthur, and these must be considered when we ask who exactly was the Arthur who became the central figure in so many stories. The evidence itself has not increased much in quantity for many years, but there have been many and various attempts to interpret it.

It is difficult to say anything precise about the Arthur of history.³ The idea that he was a mythological figure is no longer acceptable⁴. It seems to me that there is no reason to reject entirely the entries in the *Annales Cambriae* in MS. Harley 3859 (c. 1100) which refer to Arthur, and which are discussed below. This means that I accept the idea that there was a historical person of the name of Arthur early in the sixth century, who may have been one of the leaders of the Britons against their enemies, whoever they were, the Picts or Scots or Saxons, or any combination thereof. The name 'Arthur' seems to be a borrowing from the Latin *Artorius*.⁵ Our knowledge of Britain about the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth suggests that he

¹This article was first published in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, (abbreviated *B.B.C.S.* henceforth), Vol. XVII, part 4, May 1958, pp. 237-52, as "Datblygiadau Cynnar Chwedl Arthur." It has been translated by Gerald Morgan. The translator would like to acknowledge the help of Mrs. Rachel Bromwich, Professor Thomas Jones himself, and Professor Lewis Thorpe, in the preparation of this translation.

²The Latin documents are assembled in E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 1927, pp. 235-52. See also E. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne*, 1929, Vol. I, pp. 132-54, 220-2; Lewis Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend*, 1912, pp. 11-59; R. S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, 1956, pp. 178-220; J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain*, 1950, pp. 178-229.

³See however Kempe Malone, 'The Historicity of Arthur,' in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 23, 1924, pp. 463-91; R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, 2nd edn., 1937, pp. 320 *et sequ.*

⁴For the theory that Arthur was a mythological figure, see especially John Rhys, *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, 1891, pp. 8-24.

⁵See W. Nitze, 'Arthurian Names: Arthur' in *Publications of the Modern Languages Association*, Vol. 44, 1949, pp. 585-96.

came of a family with Roman connexions, and that he played some part in the task of defending and reorganizing the island in the troubled period when Britain had lost the protection of the Roman legions, and when it was both divided internally and suffering attacks from foreign enemies. I do not see that the evidence allows us to suggest more than that, but from time to time many theories have been proposed which have been argued so skilfully that there is a danger that we may forget that they are only theories.

It is natural to ask whether we have a single contemporary reference to Arthur. Gildas wrote his *De Excidio Britanniae* before the death of Maelgwn Gwynedd, and according to the *Annales Cambriae*, Maelgwn died about 547. Gildas says that the Saxons came to Britain first as mercenaries, at the invitation of a "proud tyrant" (*superbo tyranno*; probably Vortigern was meant), to help him in his struggle against the Picts and Scots.⁶ The hired soldiers turned against their hirers and plundered the island, but at last they were defeated in battle by Ambrosius Aurelianus, the *Emrys Wledig* of Welsh tradition. After that, says Gildas, sometimes the Britons would be victorious and sometimes the Saxons, over a period of time the close of which is noted in words which are rather ambiguous in their context and may be interpreted in more than one way:

... usque ad annum obsessionis Badonici montis novissimaeque ferme de furciferis non minimae stragis, quique quadragesimus quartus, ut novi, orditur annus, mense iam uno emenso, qui et meae nativitatis est.

Of the different interpretations of these words which have been put forward, it seems to me that the most convincing one is the following: "... until the year of the siege of Mount Badon⁷ and almost the last great massacre of the gallows-birds, and this year (i.e. the year in which Gildas is writing) begins the forty-fourth year (after that) and one month has already come after, as I know, since that year is also the year of my birth."⁸

It is frequently said that Gildas refers to Arthur, but that is not true. It is possible, however, that Arthur was the British leader in the victory of Mount Badon, just as Ambrosius Aurelianus (who was of Roman stock, *Romanae gentis*, says Gildas⁹), was the leader in the earlier victory over the Saxons recorded in *De Excidio Britanniae*. This possibility depends on whether or not the battle or siege of Mount Badon (*obsessio Badonici montis*) is the same as the battle of Badon (*Bellum Badonis*) recorded in the *Annales Cambriae*. Because of the difficulties of dating we cannot be sure that they are the same.

⁶ *De Excidio Britanniae* in Gildas, ed. Hugh Williams, 1899-1901, p. 52. MS. A (Avanches 162, C.XII) adds *Vortigerno* and MS. X (Cambridge Ff.1.27, C.XIII) reads *Gurthigerno Britannorum duce*.

⁷ In his article Professor Jones uses the standard Welsh form *Baddon*. Cf. J. Lloyd-Jones, *Geirfa Barddoniaeth Gynnar Gymraeg*, part 1, 1931, p. 49 (translator's note).

⁸ Cf. A. W. Wade-Evans, *Nennius's History of the Britons*, 1938, pp. 151-2; Sir Ifor Williams, 'Gildas' in *The Dictionary of Welsh National Biography*, 1959; K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, 1953, p. 199.

⁹ Hugh Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Since we do not know for certain the actual date of the 'first year' in the *Annales Cambriae*, it is difficult to determine the dates of its entries. Maelgwn Gwynedd died in 547 or 549. Supposing that Gildas was writing in 549, the date of the battle of Mount Badon would be 506.¹⁰ Yet the date of *Bellum Badonis* in the *Annales Cambriae* is 516 or 518. A common mistake in copying annals is to leave out or to add an 'x' in giving the dates. It is not unreasonable to suggest that *Bellum Badonis* has been dated ten years too late in the *Annales Cambriae*. At least, this suggestion would account for the discrepancy between Gildas's date and the date in the *Annales Cambriae*; taking for granted, though it cannot be proved, that they are the same battle, and that the entry in the *Annales Cambriae* is authentic and independent of other texts.

Here is the complete entry in the *Annales Cambriae*:

Bellum badonis in quo arthur portavit crucem domini nostri ihu xp'i. tribus diebus & tribus noctibus innumeros suos & brittones uictores fuerunt.¹¹

In one way this entry is very unlike the other early entries in the *Annales Cambriae*. Without exception the other entries are short and factual, and free of miraculous and fictional elements. The reference to Arthur carrying Christ's Cross on his shoulders in battle savours of a religious legend. Judging by the nature of the other early entries in the *Annales Cambriae* it may be suggested that the original form of the entry in the earliest source (if the whole thing is not an insertion under the influence of the reference to the battle of Badon in the *Historia Brittonum*), read as follows:

Bellum badonis & (or in quo) brittones uictores fuerunt.

The date of MS. B. M. Harley 3859 is c. 1100. Despite the internal evidence in favour of supposing that the *Annales Cambriae* was compiled about 955, it is not safe to conclude, as has been done much too readily, that the reference to Arthur carrying Christ's Cross on his shoulders is necessarily an early element. The picture of Arthur fighting with the Cross on his shoulders is not convincing either in a historical record or a legend. In some of the early entries in the *Annales Cambriae* there are signs of translation from Welsh¹² and it was suggested as early as the days of Thomas Price (Carnhuanawc, 1787-1848) that in *innumeros suos* (on his shoulders) was the result of a confusion between Old Welsh *scuit* 'shield' and Old Welsh *scuid* 'shoulder'.¹³ It would be easier to accept the idea, historical or legendary, that the picture of Christ's Cross was engraved on Arthur's shield. One important point must be noted,

¹⁰ *Annales Cambriae* record *Bellum Badonis secundo*, s.a. 665. It is likely that this is the same as the battle of *Biedan-heafod* mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 675; a difference of ten years in the date, it will be noticed.

¹¹ Egerton Phillimore, "The *Annales Cambriae* and Old Welsh Genealogies from Harleian MS. 3859," *Y Cymmrodor*, Vol. IX, 1888, p. 154.

¹² See Phillimore's notes, *ibid.*, *passim*.

¹³ Carnhuanawc, *Hanes Cymru*, 1842, p. 260; Thomas Stephens, *Literature of the Kymry*, 1849, p. 17 (= p. 9 in ed. of 1876).

however: if the clause *in quo arthur . . . inhumeros suos* is deleted as being an interpolation made between c. 955 and c. 1100, then there is no mention at all of Arthur in the remnant of the entry, and all we have is a reference to the battle of Badon and the British victory. That is all that Gildas himself tells us about Mount Badon. Perhaps the insertion derived from a slightly variant form of the legendary element connected with the battle of *Castle Guinnion* in the *Historia Brittonum* (see below). However, in the entry as it stands in the *Annales Cambriae*, we can see the Arthur of history beginning to turn into a figure of legend.

The second Arthurian entry in the *Annales Cambriae* is that which mentions the battle of Camlan:

(537 or 539) Gueith cam lann inqua arthur & medraut corruerunt.¹⁴

Perhaps this entry is the most authentic historical reference to Arthur which remains to us, and if we could locate Camlan definitely we might learn something more of the background of the battle, and decide to which area Arthur belongs. The best attempt, at least at first sight, is to understand Camlan as a later form of *Camboglanna*, the name of a fort on Hadrian's Wall, near where Birdoswald is now.¹⁵ However, we cannot accept this unhesitatingly: the form in the *Annales Cambriae* is *Camlann*, but from *Camboglanna* the form we should expect in Old Welsh is **Camglann*, cf. *Annales Cambriae*, s.a. 796, *Rudglann*, s.a. 807, *Arthgen*.¹⁶ We cannot infer anything from the entry about the relationship between Arthur and Medrod, and there is no suggestion of the treachery of Medrod described in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. Since the majority of early entries in the *Annales Cambriae* refer to events in the north of the island, and Camlan may have been in the north too if the above derivation is correct, it is fair to infer that Arthur belongs to the "men of the North," like Urien, Rhydderch Hael, Llywarch Hen, and a host of historical figures of the early period about whom heroic traditions grew up in Wales. It is not irrelevant to connect with this the fact that it is in the poetry connected with the Britons of the North that we get one of the earliest references, perhaps the very first, to Arthur in Welsh poetry, the reference in the *Gododdin* (see below, pp. 12-13).

Let us now turn to another question. Have there been preserved any early references in other historical documents to men called Arthur who could have fought in the battle of Badon, whether its true date be 506, 516, or 518, and in the battle of Camlan in 537 or 539?

In the *Vita Columbae*,¹⁷ written by Adamnán before 704, and in the *Annals of Tigernach*¹⁸ there are references to Arthur son of Aidán mac Gabráin, who belongs in a North British context. According to the *Annals of Ulster* and the

Annals of Tigernach, Aidán mac Gabráin died in 606, and according to the *Annals of Tigernach* his son Arthur was slain in battle in 594, nearly sixty years later than the date of the battle of Camlan given in the *Annales Cambriae*.

In another Irish text, *Tairired na nDéssi* (The Wanderings of the Déssi) or *Indarba inna nDéssi* (The Exile of the Déssi) attributed to the eighth century, and in the genealogies of MS. B. M. Harley 3859, there are references to another Arthur, a great-great-grandson of Gwerthefyr son of Aergol, and therefore a man of Dyfed.¹⁹ This Arthur, like Arthur son of Aidán, is much too late to have fought at Camlan; but the use of the name by a man of Dyfed and by Aidán's son in the North perhaps reflects the fame of an earlier historical Arthur.

We have seen that the only definite record of Arthur in the *Annales Cambriae* is that he fell with Medrod in the battle of Camlan, and that there is doubt as to the genuineness of the relative clause, mentioning Arthur's name, which is found in the entry about the battle of Badon. There is nothing dependable from other historical sources to add to this evidence. This brings us to what is said about Arthur in the *Historia Brittonum* as revised by Nennius, who refers to himself as a pupil of Elfoddw. According to the *Annales Cambriae* and to *Brut y Tywysogion*, Elfoddw died about 809. It is certain that Nennius was not the author of the whole of the *Historia Brittonum*, although what he says in his foreword shows that he wrote parts of it. It must be stressed again, as Sir Ifor Williams has done in showing that the story of Vortigern and the "Treachery of the Long Knives" is based on a Welsh legend,²⁰ that Nennius himself says that one of his sources is the "tradition of our ancestors." This must be remembered in trying to analyse what he says about Arthur in chapter 56:

In illo tempore Saxones invalescebant in multitudine et crescebant in Brittannia. Mortuo autem Hengisto, Octha filius eius, transivit de sinistrali parte Britanniae ad regnum Cantorum et de ipso orti sunt reges Cantorum. Tunc Arthur pugnabat contra illos in illis diebus cum regibus Brittonum, sed ipse dux erat bellorum. Primum bellum fuit in ostium fluminis quod dicitur Glein. Secundum et tertium et quartum et quintum bellum super flumen quod dicitur Dubglas et est in regione Linnuis. Sextum bellum super flumen quod vocatur Bassas. Septimum fuit bellum in silva Celidonis, id est *Cat Coit Celidon*. Octavum fuit bellum in castello Guinnion, in quo Arthur portavit imaginem sanctae Mariae perpetuae virginis super humeros suos et pagani versi sunt in fugam in illo die et caedes magna fuit super illos per virtutem domini nostri Iesu Christi et per virtutem sanctae Mariae virginis genetricis eius. Nonum bellum gestum est in urbe Legionis. Decimum gessit bellum in litore fluminis

¹⁴ Phillimore, *op. cit.*, p. 154. Gueith = action, battle (translator's note).

¹⁵ B.B.C.S., Vol. VII, 1935, pp. 273-4.

¹⁶ K. Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 437-8.

¹⁷ Ed. Fowler, 1920, pp. 24-5.

¹⁸ Ed. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, Vols. XVI-XVIII, 1895-7.

¹⁹ K. Meyer, 'The Expulsion of the Dessi' in *Y Cymmrodor*, Vol. XIV, 1901, pp. 112 et sequ., cf. *Ériu*, Vol. III, 1907, p. 136; and cf. *Feilscribhinn Torna*, ed. Seamus Pender, 1947, pp. 213 and 217. Arthur is not mentioned in the later versions edited by Vernam Hull in the *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, Vol. XXVII, 1958, pp. 14 et sequ.

²⁰ "Hen Chwedlau," *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1946-7, pp. 28-58; also published separately by the University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1949.

quod vocatur Tribruit. Undecimum factum est bellum in monte qui dicitur Agned. Duodecimum fuit bellum in monte Badonis, in quo corruerunt in uno die nongenti sexaginta viri de uno impetu Arthur, et nemo prostravit eos nisi ipse solus. Et in omnibus bellis victor extitit.²¹

Various points in the above quotation are worth noticing. This is the first time we are definitely told that Arthur fought the Saxons. There is no mention of the battle of Camlan. Why? Perhaps Nennius (or whoever wrote chapter 56), did not know any version of the early entries which were later included in the *Annales Cambriae*. Perhaps also the belief that Arthur had not died had already been developed, so that Nennius deliberately refrained from mentioning the battle of Camlan, even if he knew of a record similar to that in the *Annales Cambriae*. Was he, in the section on Arthur, giving preference to 'the tradition of our ancestors' about Arthur's victories, and keeping quiet about the battle where he was killed? These possibilities are at least worth mentioning.

Of the names of the places where the twelve battles were fought, only two can be identified with any confidence: Caerlleon is Chester, and Coed Celyddon must be somewhere in the south of Scotland. Possibly *Linnuis* is Lindsey. The locations of the others are not known with any certainty, though *Tryfrewyd* could be in Scotland, and Mount Badon somewhere in the mid-South of England. The geographical distribution of these five place-names (two certain and three uncertain), suggests that it is most unlikely that the historical Arthur fought in every one of the battles; and anyway, according to what we know, it is hard to believe that the Britons were fighting as far west as Chester and as far north as Southern Scotland in the last part of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth.²² This suggests the most important thing of all which ought to be mentioned in connection with Nennius's list of battles, namely that it should not be looked on as a list of battles in all of which the historical Arthur fought, even if he did so in one or several of them. This means that no theories about the historical Arthur can be based on the locations of these battles. We will return to this point later.

The battle of Mount Badon is named twelfth and last in the list, which recalls Gildas's description of the battle of *Mons Badonicus* as "almost the last great massacre of the gallows-birds." Perhaps this is only a coincidence, but perhaps also the cleric, Nennius or another, who wrote chapter 56, put the battle of Mount Badon last in the list as an echo of Gildas's words. The *Historia Brittonum* calls the battle *in monte Badonis* which suggests the influence of the *De Excidio Britanniae*. Again, according to Nennius, it was in the battle of *Guinnion* and not in the battle of Badon (as in *Annales Cambriae*) that Arthur carried the image of the Virgin Mary (not the Cross of Christ as

²¹ F. Lot, *Nennius et l'Historia Brittonum*, 1934, pp. 194-6.

²² On the battles in chapter 56 of *Historia Brittonum*, see K. Jackson, "Once again Arthur's Battles" in *Modern Philology*, Vol. XLIII, 1945, pp. 44 *et sequ.*; 'Arthur's Battle of Breguoin,' *Antiquity*, Vol. XXIII, 1949, pp. 45 ff. Henry of Huntingdon in his *Historia Anglorum* says that the place-names of the twelve battles of Arthur were unrecognizable in his day: *quae tamen omnia loca nostrae aetati incognita sunt*.

in the *Annales Cambriae*) on his shoulders. F. Lot suggested that it was the influence of Bede's description of the victory of Oswald over Cadwallon in the battle of Cant Ysgawl (= Hexham), through the help of the Virgin Mary, which is responsible for the mention of carrying Mary's image.²³ Whatever the truth of this suggestion, and whatever the details of the connexion between the mention of Christ's Cross in the *Annales Cambriae* and the mention of the image of Mary in the *Historia Brittonum*, it is obviously a legendary element of ecclesiastical origin.

Where did Nennius get his list of twelve battles? A. G. Brodeur conceived the idea that chapter 56 in the *Historia Brittonum* is based on a Latin poem, and he sought to show that there are traces of Commodian Latin hexameters in the piece.²⁴ In my opinion Brodeur failed to prove his case. However, it may be asked whether the list was based on an early Welsh poem which contained a list of famous battles attributed to Arthur, but in all of which he did not necessarily fight. In early Welsh poetry there are examples of this kind of list, and the earliest is the short list of battles in the poem to Cynan Garwyn fab Brochfael Ysgithrog of Powys, whose son Selyf ap Cynan was killed in the battle of Chester in 613.²⁵ It is a praise-poem, and part of the eulogy is the reference to Cynan's battles on the Wye, in Anglesey, in South-West Wales and in Brycheiniog:

Kynan kat diffret . . .
kat ar wy kyrchet . . .
kat ymon mawrdec . . .
kat yg cruc dymet . . .
kat ygwlat brachan . . .²⁶

In another poem the battles of Ulph and Urien Rheged are listed, but it appears from the internal evidence that part of the poem is later than Urien's time:

kat yn ryt alclut kat ymynuer
kat gellawr brewyn kat hireurur
kat ymprysc katleu kat yn aber ioed . . .
kat glutuein gweith pen coit.²⁷

Similarly in a poem which is difficult to date, but which is later than the time of Owain ab Urien, there is a list of battles in which Owain is said to have

²³ F. Lot, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁴ See Arthur G. Brodeur, 'Arthur, Dux Bellorum,' *University of California Publications in English*, Vol. III, no. 7, 1939, pp. 237-84.

²⁵ Cf. Rachel Bromwich in *Studies in Early British History* (ed. N. K. Chadwick, 1954), p. 124.

²⁶ Since Prof. Jones published this article originally, Taliesin's poems have been edited by Sir Ifor Williams, *Canu Taliesin*, 1960. For this quotation, see *Canu Taliesin* p. 1, lines 1, 9, 11, 13, 20: "Cynan host-protector . . . a battle was fought on the Wye . . . a battle in fair Anglesey . . . a battle in Crug Dyfed . . . a battle in the land of Brachan."

²⁷ *Canu Taliesin*, p. 7, lines 21-25, where the word-order varies slightly: "a battle in Dumbarton Ford, a battle in Mynfer, a battle at Brewyn (? Breguoin) Cells, a battle at Hir Eurer, a battle in Cadlew Copse, a battle in Aber Ioed (?) . . . a battle at Cludfein, the action of Pencoeid."

fought. The first line looks like a variant of the first line of the previous quotation:

kat yn ryt alchut. kat yn ygwen
kat yg gossulwyt abann udun.
kat rac rodawys eiwyn drych . . .
kat tuman llachar derlyw derlin . . .²⁸

It is significant that neither the second nor the third of the above quotations mentions the battle of Argoed Llwyfain, at which both Urien and his son Owain fought, according to a poem²⁹ which does seem to be a genuine work of Taliesin, nor is there mention of the battle of Gwen Ystrad.³⁰ Listing a chief's victorious battles was a fairly common feature of Welsh poems of praise from the earliest poets onwards. It was adopted by the vaticinatory poets in referring to the expected victories of the Prophesied Hero. There are traces of translation from Welsh in parts of the *Historia Brittonum*,³¹ and one should not overlook the possibility that a Welsh poem is at the root of the list of battles in chapter 56. We can even ask, hesitantly, if the names Dubglas / Bassas, and Celidon / Guinnion / Legion / Bregion / Badon reflect part of the original rhyme-scheme.

Some other details in chapter 56 must be considered. The phrase *tywyssawc cat* occurs in the early poetry,³² and its original meaning was probably 'leader of a host or army.' In this poetry, however, *cat* can mean 'battle' as well as 'host,' 'army.' Perhaps the phrase *dux bellorum* as a description of Arthur in the *Historia Brittonum* is a literal translation of *tywyssawc cadu*, with *cadu* understood as 'battles' rather than 'hosts, armies'; but before accepting this possibility, it should be remembered that the phrases *dux praelii* and *dux agminis* are used by Bede in describing the 'Hallelujah Victory.'³³

It is asserted in the *Historia Brittonum* that Arthur himself (ipse solus) slew 960 men in the battle of Mount Badon, a strange assertion in a prose text, but there are many examples of this kind of exaggeration in the Welsh eulogies and elegies. In the *Gododdin* it is said of Hyfaidd the Tall that 'five fifties' fell before his sword:

kwydei bym pymwent rac y lafnawr
o wyr Deiuyr a Bryneich dychiawr
ugein kant eu diuant en un awr.³⁴

²⁸ *The Book of Taliesin*, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1910, p. 38 (line 23 *et sequ.*) This is not a genuine Taliesin poem but from the 'Taliesin Story,' see *Canu Taliesin*, p. x. This passage is virtually untranslatable, but it is clearly a battle-list.

²⁹ *Canu Taliesin*, p. 6.

³⁰ *Canu Taliesin*, p. 2.

³¹ See J. Loth in *Revue Celtique*, Vol. XLIX, 1932, pp. 150-65, and Ifor Williams, *Hen Chwedlau*, pp. 30-1.

³² *Canu Llywarch Hen*, ed. Ifor Williams, 1935, p. 4, line 23, *Eurdorchawc tywyssawc cat*; cf. *ibid.*, line 20, *Eurdorchawc tywyssawc llu*. (*Eurdorchawc* = gold-torqued; *llu* = host).

³³ See Bede, H. E. iii, XX. *Dux belli* also occurs in the Vatican MS. 1964 (C. IX) of the *Historia Brittonum*, in the first sentence of chapter 56: *Tunc belliger Arthuri cum militibus Bryttaniae atque regibus contra illos pugnabat et licet multi ipso nobiliores essent, ipse tamen duodecies dux belli fuit victorque bellorum*. (Lot, *op. cit.*, p. 194).

³⁴ *Canu Aneirin*, ed. Ifor Williams, 1938, lines 49-51.

Compare this with what is said about the son of Nwython in the same poem:

em ladaut lu maur
iguert i adraut
ladaut map Nuithon
o eur dorchogyon
cant o deyrnet.³⁵

In a legendary poem, *Kat Goden* ('The Battle of the Trees')³⁶ Taliesin boasts that he has killed nine hundred men, *neu gorwyf gwaetlan. ar naw kant kynran*, 'I have made a massacre of nine hundred warriors.' Possibly it is some statement of this kind in a eulogy, not necessarily sung to the living Arthur, which is behind the assertion in the *Historia Brittonum* that Arthur slew 960 men. I do not wish to lay too much stress on the number 960³⁷ but it is worth noting that the corresponding form of the number in Welsh would be 'three three-hundreds and three-twenties,' a phrase which has affinities with the language and craftsmanship of the early poetry.³⁸

The evidence of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Historia Brittonum* so far discussed shows that in the tenth century there were traditions of Arthur as a leader and winner of victories against the Saxons. It is very doubtful whether any of these traditions, apart from that of the battle of Camlan, can be accepted as real history. Reference in other texts added to the *Historia Brittonum* in MS. B. M. Harley 3859 show that non-heroic stories had begun to gather round the heroic tradition of Arthur by the tenth century. In the *Mirabilia* attached to the *Historia* the following story occurs:

Est aliud mirabile in regione quae dicitur Buelt: est ibi cumulus lapidum et unus lapis superpositus super congestum cum vestigio canis in eo; quando venatus est porcum Troynt³⁹ impressit Cabal, qui erat canis Arthuri militis, vestigium in lapide et Arthur postea congregavit congestum lapidum sub lapide in quo erat vestigium canis sui, et vocatur *Carn Cabal*. Et veniunt homines et tollunt lapidem in manibus suis per spatium diei et noctis et in crastino die invenitur super congestum suum.⁴⁰

The stone which always returns to its own place no matter where it is carried is a recognized motif in folk-tales, and that is the nucleus of the above story; but it has been turned into an onomastic story to give a fictitious explanation of the place-name *Carn Cafall* near Rhaeadr in Radnorshire (*Corn Cafallt* on modern maps). Nennius or someone else may have blundered in speaking of

³⁵ *Canu Aneirin*, lines 1190-4.

³⁶ *The Book of Taliesin*, p. 27, line 2. See *Chwedl Taliesin*, by Sir Ifor Williams, 1957, p. 20.

³⁷ The number given by William of Malmesbury in the *Gesta Regum* is nine hundred: *nongentos hostium solus adversus incredibili caede profligavit*.

³⁸ 'Three three-hundreds' (*tri trychant*) occurs in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1910, p. 18, lines 9-10: *Ac vei vei paup tri trychant tauaud*.

³⁹ *Troynt* (variants read *troit*, Lot, *op. cit.*, p. 216) can represent *Troed* or *Troeth*, with the variant forms *Trwyd* and *Trwyth*, since *oe* can alternate with *wy*, cf. *moe* / *mwy*. The form in *Kulhwch and Olwen* is *Twrch Trwyth*, but the form *Twrch Trwyd* also occurs, see *Canu Aneirin*, line 1340 and note.

⁴⁰ Lot, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

Cafall as a dog's name. *Carn* is not the usual word for a dog's paw; it means the hoof of a horse. As an onomastic story purporting to explain the name Carn Cafall, it would be much more effective if *Cafall* had been given as the name of Arthur's horse, and not that of his hound. The word *cafall* may be derived from Latin *caballus*, or may be cognate with it, if *caballus* is a Latin borrowing from Celtic as has been suggested. In *Canu Aneirin* lines 1202-3, *cauall* occurs as a word for 'horse': *Oid girth oed cuall / ar geuin e gauall* ('He was strong, he was swift / on his horse's back'). In the part of *Kulhwch and Olwen* which describes the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, Cafall is the name of Arthur's hound, but Cafall also occurs as the name of a horse.⁴¹ Altogether, it is fairly certain that originally Cafall was the name of a horse.⁴²

The second passage of Arthurian interest in the *Mirabilia* is the following:

Est aliud miraculum in regione quae vocatur Ercing: habetur ibi supulcrum iuxta fontem qui cognominatur *Licat Anir*; et viri nomen qui sepultus est in tumulo sic vocabatur Anir: filius Arthuri militis erat et ipse occidit eum ibidem et sepelivit. Et veniunt homines ad mensurandum tumulum in longitudine aliquando sex pedes, aliquando novem, aliquando duodecim, aliquando quindecim; in qua mensura metieris eum in ista vice, iterum non invenies eum in una mensura, et ego solus probavi.⁴³

Llygad Amr (*al. amir, anir*) is the same as Gamber Head in Herefordshire today, cf. the *Book of Llandav*, ed. J. G. Evans and John Rhys, 1893, *usque ad amyr flumen*, p. 174: *super ripam amyr*, p. 200: *bet blain nant merthir. id est, amir*, p. 226. This is another onomastic story with a common folk-motif, that a grave (or some other object) varies in its measurements. Both stories in the *Mirabilia* show that the name of 'Arthur the soldier' was known in the tenth century in south-east Wales, and that it was attracting to it non-heroic stories. In one we see the name of a cairn turn into the name of his dog (or horse) and in the other the name of a stream becomes the name of his son. Possibly the same process of the accumulation of popular stories round the name of Arthur was going on elsewhere too, but there is no evidence outside Buellt and Eryng.

So much for the records of the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Historia Brittonum*, Latin texts from Welsh sources, in connexion with the story of Arthur. Let us now turn to early Welsh poetry. It is frequently said that the first reference to Arthur in Welsh goes back to the sixth century. This reference comes in the following lines in the *Gododdin*:—

godolei o heit meirch e gayaf
gochore brein du ar uur
caer ceni bei ef Arthur.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *White Book Mabinogion*, ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1907, col. 468, lines 22-23, cf. *idem*, col. 485, lines 16-17.

⁴² *Geirfa Barddoniaeth Gynnar Gymraeg*, under *cauall*.

⁴³ *Lot, op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁴⁴ *Canu Aneirin*, lines 1240-2.

If we take *gochore* as a copyist's mistake for *gochone*,⁴⁵ the meaning of the two last lines seems to be: 'He gluttoned black ravens on the fortress wall, although he (i.e. Gwawrddur, the hero celebrated in the stanza) was not Arthur,' the poet's way of saying that Gwawrddur was a good fighter. This reference presupposes that Arthur was a recognized model of courage when these lines were written. It cannot, however, be proved that this was a part of the original *Gododdin* and therefore as old as the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh. The text of the *Gododdin*, as we have it in a manuscript copied about 1250, contains some stanzas which cannot possibly be part of the original poem.⁴⁶ However, the orthography of the stanza in which the above lines occur suggests that the stanza existed in a written form in the ninth century; we cannot say positively that it is older than that.

All that can be said is that this reference to Arthur is as early as the ninth century, and *could* be as early as the year 600, if it is part of the original *Gododdin*. Whatever its date, the reference confirms the historicity of Arthur, because there are no references in early Welsh heroic poetry to legendary or unhistorical figures. The stanza definitely belongs to the poetry of the old North, and this offers some support for the belief that Arthur was a chieftain from the North.

This reference, and chapter 56 of Nennius, reflect the heroic tradition of Arthur as a valiant leader. There is no sign in them, as there is in the *Mirabilia*, of the accumulation of popular non-heroic stories around his name. We can, however, find evidence of this sort of development in a number of early poems. The great common difficulty with these poems is to date them, but their orthography, language, rhyme and technique show that they are earlier than 1100. For some of these poems, this date is supported by the opinion of Sir Ifor Williams.

By now it has been established that some of the poems in the *Book of Taliesin* (c. 1275) are monologues and dialogues belonging to two early forms of the 'Story of Taliesin'.⁴⁷ *Preiddeu Annwfn* ('The Spoils of the Underworld') is a poem of this kind (*The Book of Taliesin*, pp. 54-6), and Sir Ifor Williams gives his opinion that it is definitely pre-Norman.⁴⁸ It can be argued that it is a monologue spoken by Taliesin in one of the early forms of the story which gathered round his name. The speaker says in a series of stanzas that he went with Arthur in his ship *Prydwen* to various castles (*caer* = fortress, castle): Caer Siddi, Caer Feddwid, Caer Rigor (or Rygor), Caer Goludd, Caer Fandwy and Caer Ochren. At the end of each stanza is a kind of refrain, naming Arthur and his ship *Prydwen*:

Tri lloneit Prydwen yd aetham ni idi.
nam seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Sidi. (*Book of Taliesin*, p. 54, lines 23-4).

⁴⁵ *Canu Aneirin*, p. 343.

⁴⁶ *Canu Aneirin*, Introduction, pp. i-iii.

⁴⁷ Sir Ifor Williams, *Chwedl Taliesin*, 1957, *passim*.

⁴⁸ R. S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, p. 131 *et sequ.*

A phan aetham ni gan *Arthur* trafferth lechrit
namyn seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Vedwit. (*ibid.*, 55, 6-8).

Tri lloneit *Prytuen* yd aetham ni ar vor.
namyn seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Rigor. (*ibid.*, 55, 11-3).

Tri lloneit *Prytuen* yd aeth gan *Arthur*
namyn seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Golud. (*ibid.*, 55, 17-8).

A phan aetham ni gan *Arthur* auyrddl gofwy.
namyn seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Vandwy. (*ibid.*, 55, 23-5).

Pan aetham ni gan *Arthur* afyrdwl gynhen.
namyn seith ny dyrreith o Gaer Ochren. (*ibid.*, 56, 2-4).⁴⁹

There is also a reference to *Caer Wydr* ('the fortress of glass') beyond which 'they had not seen Arthur's valour,' and to *Caer Bedryfan* ('the four-cornered or four-peaked castle'). From Arthur's expedition or expeditions only seven returned, says the poem, and these presumably include the poet himself. It looks like something more than a coincidence that Taliesin's name appears in *Branwen Ferch Lyr*⁵⁰ as one of the seven men who escaped back to the Island of the Mighty after the great massacre of the Irish and Welsh in Ireland. Possibly the story of Bendigeidfran's expedition to Ireland, told in *Branwen*, is a rationalized form of an earlier story, told, though not in full, in *Preiddeu Annwfn*.

Significantly, the poem has a reference to the imprisonment of Gwein in *Caer Siddi* "according to the tale of Pwyll and Pryderi," a tale of which we have one form in the first and third branches of the "Four Branches of the Mabinogi." The poem also refers to the cauldron of the Chieftain of the Underworld (*Pen Annwfn*) and it will be remembered that the first branch of the Mabinogi says that Pwyll's title 'Prince of Dyfed' (*Pendefig Dyfed*) was changed to 'Chieftain of the Underworld' (*Pen Annwfn*) because of the hero's sojourn in the Underworld. Arthur plays no part in the Four Branches as such, but this poem shows that at least part of their basic material was connected with Arthur in an early form of the 'Story of Taliesin.' In other words, the heroic tradition of Arthur was becoming mixed with early legends and folk-lore. This process is taken a step further in *Preiddeu Annwfn*, though it cannot be traced in every

⁴⁹ "Three shiploads of Prydwen we went to it,
save seven, none returned from *Caer Siddi* . . .
And when we went with Arthur, (?) famed was the disaster,
save seven, none returned from *Caer Feddwid* . . .
Three shiploads of Prydwen we went on the sea.
save seven, none returned from *Caer Rigor* . . .
Three shiploads of Prydwen went with Arthur,
save seven, none returned from *Caer Goludd* . . .
And when we went with Arthur, calamitous the visitation,
save seven, none returned from *Caer Fandwy* . . .
When we went with Arthur, calamitous the contest,
save seven, none returned from *Caer Ochren*."

⁵⁰ *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, ed. Sir Ifor Williams, 1930, p. 44.

detail, and it seems that many traditions of every kind, heroic and legendary, accumulated round his name.

Two other poems which appear to belong in the first place to the Taliesin-story are *Kat Godden* ('The Battle of the Trees,' *Book of Taliesin*, pp. 23-9) and *Cadeir Teyrnnon* ('The Seat of Teyrnnon,' *ibid.*, 34-5). Arthur is named in both of these:

derwydon doethur darogenwch y *Arthur*. (*ibid.*, 27, lines 8-9).

treded dofyn doethur y vendigaw *Arthur*
Arthur vendigat (MS vendigan) ar gerd gyfaenat. (*ibid.*, 34, 21-3).⁵¹

A poem with a similar background is the *Marwnat Uthyr Pen* ('The Death-song of Uthyr the Chief,' *ibid.*, p. 71), where Arthur is named once again:

Neu vi a rannwys vy echlessur
nawuetran yg gwerhyt *Arthur*. (*ibid.*, 71, lines 15-6).⁵²

In the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (ed. J. Gwenogvryn Evans, 1910), there is material which is much more closely connected with elements which occur in later Arthurian stories. The manuscript belongs to the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth, but much of the contents is earlier than that. The *englynion* on pp. 71-3 form a soliloquy about Geraint ab Erbin, hero of the Welsh Arthurian romance *Geraint and Enid*, who corresponds to Erec in Chrétien de Troyes's poem *Erec et Enide*. In three *englynion*, each beginning *Rac Gereint* ('Before Geraint'), Geraint is praised as a brave warrior against his enemies. Then come nine *englynion*, each beginning *En Llongborth*, and then six *englynion* beginning *Oet re rereint* (read *reteint* = redeint), and concluding:

Ban aned Gereint oet agored
pirth new. rotei Crist a arched
prid mirein Prydein wogoned.⁵³

The heroic tradition of Geraint is connected with Devon, and it would seem that the Llongborth which is named in the poem is an old form of the name Langport on the bank of the Parret in Somerset. The reference to Arthur in the following stanza shows that whatever story of Geraint had been preserved, it had already come in contact with the story of Arthur:

En Llongborth y gueleise y *Arthur*
guir deur kymynint a dur
ameraudur llywiaudir llawur.⁵⁴

⁵¹ "Wise prophets, you prophesy of Arthur"
"One of three deeply (?) wise to bless Arthur,
Arthur blessed (?) in harmonious song."

⁵² "I have shared my refuge,
A ninth share in the valour of *Arthur*."

⁵³ "When Geraint was born, Heaven's gates were opened; Christ granted what was asked, a fair countenance, the glory of Britain."

⁵⁴ "At Llongborth I saw Arthur—brave men hewed with steel—emperor, battle-ruler."

The poem is part of an early form of a Geraint-legend. It is difficult to date exactly, but it is certainly earlier than 1100, and could be as early as the ninth or tenth century. It shows the heroic tradition of Devon already connected with Arthur before the days of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien.

Another poem in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (pp. 94-6), which must be discussed is the dialogue between Arthur and the Porter, Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr (lit. 'Brave-grey mighty-grasp'). It can be inferred from the dialogue that Arthur and his men are outside the house of which Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr is the porter:

- A. Pa gur yv y porthaur?
 G. Gleuluid Gauaeluaur.
 Pa gur ae gouin?
 A. Arthur a Chei Guin.
 G. Pa imda genhid?
 A. Guir gorev im bid.
 G. Ym ty ny doi
 onys guaredi.
 A. Mi ae guaredi
 a thi ae gueli.⁵⁵

Then Arthur names his followers; Cei, Mabon fab Modron ('Uther Pendragon's servant'), Cysteint fab Banon, Gwyn Godyfrion, Manawydan ap Llŷr ('profound was his counsel'), Mabon fab Mellit, Anwas the Winged, Llŵch Llawynnawg, and others. Cei's feats are praised beyond those of anyone else, and mention is made of Llacheu, who elsewhere (see below, p. 17) is called Arthur's son:

Kei Guin a Llacheu
 digonint we kadeu
 kin gloes glas vereu.⁵⁶

It will be remembered that the *Historia Brittonum* mentioned the seventh battle of Arthur as: *in litore fluminis quod vocatur Tribruit* (MS. H); *quod nos vocamus Trath Treuroit* (MS. M). *Tribruit* represents Tryfrwyd and *Trath Treuroit* represents Traeth ('shore, strand') Tryfrwyd. In the poem under consideration there are two references to Tryfrwyd by Arthur when relating the feats of his men:

Neus tuc Manauid
 eis tull o Trywruid. . . .

- ⁵⁵ A. What man is porter?
 G. Glewlwyd Mighty-grasp.
 A. What man asks it?
 A. Arthur and Cei Wyn.
 G. What company have you?
 A. The best men in the world.
 G. Into my house thou shalt not come
 Unless thou disclose them.
 A. I will disclose them,
 and thou shalt see them.

⁵⁶ "Kei Wyn and Llacheu waged battles before the pang of blue spears."

Pop cant id cuitin
 id cvitin pop cant
 rac Beduir Bedrydant
 ar traethev Trywruid
 in amvin (a) Garwluid.⁵⁷

There is also mentioned a fight with a hag in 'Afarnach's Hall,' which reminds us of Arthur's attack on the White Witch, daughter of the Black Witch, in the story of *Kulhwch and Olwen*. Certainly the reference to the porter Glewlwyd (though it is not said that he is Arthur's porter), the list of Arthur's followers and the citations of their abilities and feats connect the poem closely with *Kulhwch and Olwen*, a story which is older than Geoffrey of Monmouth. If only we knew more of the story which is the background of the dialogue! One suggestion may be made: if the meaning of *gwared* in the beginning of the dialogue is 'disclose, discover' as I think it is, it suggests that Arthur's followers, and perhaps Arthur himself, had become invisible for a time; and since Arthur promises to reveal them, perhaps one of his 'endowments' or magical gifts in the background story was the power to make men invisible, as does Menw fab Teirgwaedd in *Kulhwch and Olwen* (*White Book Mabinogion*, col. 472), and as does Arthur's own cloak in *Breudwyd Ronabwy* (*ibid.*, col. 212).

Also in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* are two *englynion* of Arthurian interest, referring to the graves of heroes. One of them comes in a series of *englynion* (*loc. cit.*, pp. 99-100), which form a monologue in which someone says, as part of a story, that he has been in the places where early heroes were slain, such as Gwenddolau ap Ceidiaw,⁵⁸ Brân ab Iwerydd, Meurig ap Careian, and Llacheu son of Arthur:

Mi a wum lle llas Llacheu
 mab Arthur uthir ig kerteu
 ban ryre[e]int brein ar crev.⁵⁹

Here is another reference to Llacheu son of Arthur, mentioned above in the dialogue "What man is porter?" All that the two references suggest is that he was a brave soldier killed in battle, and that he was known as a legendary figure rather than as a historical one.

The second *englyn* comes in the series *Englynion y Beddau* ('The Stanzas of the Graves'; *loc. cit.*, p. 67, lines 12-3):

Bet y March. bet y Guythur.
 bet y Gugaun Cletyfrut.
 anoeth bid bet y Arthur.

⁵⁷ "Manawydd brought a broken shield from Tryfrwyd. . . . By the hundred they fell, they fell by the hundred, before Bedwyr Bedrydant, on the shores of Tryfrwyd, defending (?) Garwlwyd."

⁵⁸ In the *Annales Cambriae* (MS. B) it is said that Gwenddolau ap Ceidio fell in the battle of Arfderydd (s.a. 573).

⁵⁹ "I have been where Llacheu son of Arthur was slain, marvellous (?) in songs (or crafts), when ravens croaked over blood."

The first two lines simply mean: 'there is a grave for March, a grave for Gwythur, a grave for Gwgawn of the Red Sword.' The third line is a crux; taken as it stands it can mean 'a wonder of the world is Arthur's grave.' Sir Ifor Williams has suggested that the word *braut* ('judgment') originally stood after *bid*, giving the meaning: 'A wonder till Judgment (Day) a grave for Arthur.'⁶⁰ This makes the line too long, however, unless we delete the *y* before *Arthur*, and since it already stands before the names March, Gwythur and Gwgawn, I believe the line should be left as it stands. The stanza as it is, is a regular *englyn milwr*, with seven syllables in each line. Since the word *anoethau*, plural of *anoeth*, is used in *Kulhwch and Olwen* for the difficult objects which Kulhwch must find before he may win Olwen as his wife, the word *anoeth* in this *englyn* may be taken as meaning 'something difficult to find,' with *bid* ('world') strengthening the meaning that nowhere can it be found.

I think it can be concluded from this that Arthur had attracted to himself the folk-motif of the Vanished Undying Hero. Other Welsh examples of this motif are Hiriell of Gwynedd,⁶¹ Owain Lawgoch and Owain Glyndŵr. Other references in the 'Stanzas of the Graves' reflect the existence of other stories about heroic and legendary characters who had become, in legend, followers of Arthur. It is significant that in the above *englyn* Arthur is mentioned together with March (Mark), the king in the Tristan-Esyllt legend, and with Gwythur (? son of Greidawl) and Gwgawn Red-Sword, who all figured in heroic tradition, so far as we can tell from the broken fragments which remain to us.⁶²

The existence of a host of stories which were being brought more and more into contact with Arthur is strongly suggested by the evidence of the earliest Triads. Apart from the 'Triads of the Horses' in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (pp. 27-8) which do not refer to Arthur at all, the oldest collection of the 'Historical Triads' is the one in Peniarth MS. 16.⁶³ The manuscript belongs to the thirteenth century, but the Triads in it are almost wholly free of the influence of the Norman romances, and they refer to stories which are much older than the date of the manuscript. In some of them Arthur himself is named, as well as other characters connected with him, e.g.:

Three Well-Endowed (?) Men of the Isle of Britain: Gwalchmei fab Gwyar and Llacheu fab Arthur and Rhiwallawn Broom-Hair.

Three Frivolous Bards (*overveird*) of the Isle of Britain: Arthur and Cadwallawn fab Cadfan and Rahaut *eil* (son of) Morgan.

⁶⁰ See not in *Canu Llywarch Hen*, p. 127, on *brawt*.

⁶¹ On Hiriell see *B.B.C.S.*, Vol. III, 1926, pp. 50-2.

⁶² In the *Book of Taliesin*, p. 48, lines 6-7, the horses of Gwythur and Arthur are mentioned: *a march Gwythur. A march Gwawrdur / a march Arthur ehofyn rodi cur* (march = 'horse'); and in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, p. 27, lines 9-10, *Bucheshum Seri*, the horse of Gwgawn Red-Sword is named.

⁶³ Text ed. by Rachel Bromwich, *B.B.C.S.*, Vol. XII, 1946, pp. 1-15. See now Rachel Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, 1961.

Three Red Ravagers (*ruduoawc*) of the Isle of Britain: Arthur and Rhun fab Beli and Morgan Mwynfawr.

Three Mighty Swineherds (*gwrddveichyat*) of the Isle of Britain: Tristan son of Tallwch, who kept the swine of March son of Meirchiawn while the swineherd went to ask Esyllt to come to speak with him. And Arthur sought one pig of them, either by deceit or force, (but) he did not get it . . .

When the evidence of the early poetry, the Triads and the *Mirabilia* is combined, we can see fairly clearly the process of connecting with Arthur folk-stories and heroic sagas which had once been independent of him. The process had begun in Wales at least as early as the ninth century, long before the days of Geoffrey of Monmouth and before any possible influence by Continental romance-writers. Those stories and sagas were recited orally, and only very few were written down.

The one Arthurian story in Welsh which is definitely earlier than Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* is *Kulhwch and Olwen*, and in it we see how the Arthurian legendary cycle was increasing steadily. In the surviving fragments of the saga of Heledd daughter of Cyndrwyn, believed to have been composed about 850, there is a reference to Kulhwch as a brave hero:

Kyndylan, *Kulhwch* gynnifiat llew,
Bleid dilin disgynnyat
Nyt atuer twrch tref y dat.⁶⁴

There is no way of knowing whether Kulhwch's story had already been connected with Arthur when the Heledd-saga was composed, but certainly by the time of Nennius another independent story, that of the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, had become part of the Arthurian legend, as we have already seen. In *Kulhwch and Olwen* the stories of Kulhwch, of Goreu son of Custennin, of the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, of Mabon son of Modron, of the Oldest Animals, and a host of other originally independent tales have been joined together.

There is a list of Arthur's warriors, reminiscent of the shorter list in the poem 'What man is porter?' in the *Black Book*. The list has developed in the process of bringing more and more figures who originally belonged to other Welsh and Irish sagas, to history, to legend and folk-lore, into the orbit of Arthur. Nennius' *dux bellorum*, the 'leader of battles' who fought with the Kings of Britain against the Saxons, has become the 'Chief of the Princes of this Island,' and has fought in Greater and Lesser India, in Africa, in Corsica, and in Greece. He has his wife *Gwenhwyfar*, 'chief of the Ladies of this Island,' his ship *Prydwen* (as in *Preiddau Annwfn*), his cloak (called *Gwen* in *Rhonabwy's Dream*), his spear *Rhongomyniad* (as in Geoffrey's *Historia*), his shield *Wyneb Gwrthucher*, his sword *Caledfwlch*, his knife *Carnwennan*, his dog

⁶⁴ *Canu Llywarch Hen*, p. 34. "Kynddylan, a lion-like warrior like Kulhwch, an attacker like a wolf in pursuit, the boar (i.e. Kynddylan) will not return to his father's home."

Cafall, his mare *Llamrei*, his hall *Ehangwen* which was built by his carpenter, and his bishop *Bedwini* to bless his food and drink. The magnanimous words of Arthur to his porter contain at least the seed of the courtly dignity of the Christian Emperor depicted in Geoffrey's *Historia* and the chivalrous society of the Round Table:

A shameful thing it is to leave in wind and rain a man such as you speak of. . . . We are noble men so long as we are resorted to. The greater the bounty we show, the greater will be our nobility and our fame and our glory.⁶⁵

Some of the warriors of Arthur's court who help *Kulhwch* in his quest for *Olwen* are *Cei*, *Bedwyr*, *Cynddylig* the Guide, who was as good a leader in a strange land as in his own country, *Gwrhyr* Interpreter of Tongues, who knew every language, including those of the birds and beasts, *Gwalchmei* son of *Gwyar*, who never returned home without accomplishing the mission on which he had departed, and *Menw* son of *Teirgwaedd*, the magician who cast a spell on men, so that they were not seen, but could themselves see everyone. All this, taken together, shows that Arthur had attracted to himself a wealth of stories, in which he remained the central figure.

The Arthurian legend was not confined to Wales. According to Hermann of Tournai in his *De Miraculis S. Mariae Laudunensis* (1146),⁶⁶ some canons of Laon, who were journeying from Exeter to Bodmin in 1113, were shown 'the throne and oven of that King Arthur who is famed in the stories of the Britons (*Britannorum*).' According to the same author, there was a squabble in Bodmin between the servants of one of the canons and a Cornishman who insisted that Arthur still lived, 'just,' says Hermann, 'as the Bretons (*Britones*) quarrel with the French about King Arthur.' In 1113, therefore, the Cornish as well as the Welsh knew popular tales about Arthur connected with special places, and the Cornish and the Bretons believed that the hero was not dead. The line *Anoeth bid bet y Arthur* in the *englyn* from the *Black Book* already discussed shows that this last belief was held among the Welsh. William of Malmesbury knew about the belief among the Bretons; in his *Gesta Regum* (1125) he says that 'vain stories of the Bretons (*nugae Britonum*) prate to this day' about Arthur, and that 'Arthur's grave is nowhere to be seen, with the result that old songs (*antiquitas naeniarum*) say that he will come again.'⁶⁷

Geoffrey of Monmouth was a contemporary of William of Malmesbury, and it is likely that they were acquainted. Since Geoffrey was of Breton descent and had been brought up in Wales, it is a fair supposition that he knew some of the stories told of Arthur by the Welsh, Bretons and Cornish. In his *Prophetia Merlini*, written in 1134-5 and published separately before being included in the *Historia* (1136), Merlin refers to Arthur as 'the boar of Cornwall,'

⁶⁵ *White Book Mabinogion*, col. 458, lines 19-30.

⁶⁶ The original Latin is quoted by E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, p. 249. See also R. S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 180-2.

⁶⁷ The Latin is quoted by Chambers, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-50.

prophesies his victories, and says that 'his end will be uncertain,' that 'his praises will be sung on the lips of the people,' and that 'his deeds will be food for story-tellers.' It is an entirely reasonable conclusion that the last phrase means that the deeds of Arthur were already 'food for story-tellers' when Geoffrey was writing the *Prophetia Merlini*, i.e. that oral tales about Arthur were being narrated by story-tellers.⁶⁸

I believe that the evidence dealt with so far shows, at least partly, how a historical figure, perhaps from North Britain, belonging to the late fifth or early sixth century, grew into a figure of heroic tradition, as did *Llywarch Hen*, *Urien* and his son *Owain*, and many another historical figure from the same period and place. This heroic figure, for some reason which may never be exactly explained, attracted to himself more and more sagas and popular legends, which were originally independent of him. The zenith of this development before Geoffrey's *Historia*, as far as the written evidence is concerned, is *Kulhwch and Olwen*. In discussing the evidence, I have not dealt with the Saints' lives; deliberately, since so little critical analysis of them has been done so far.⁶⁹ They too show the existence of stories about Arthur, principally in the *Life of Cadog* (c. 1090) by *Lifris* of *Llancarfan*, the *Life of Carannog* (c. 1100?), the *Life of Illtud* (c. 1100?), and the *Life of Padarn* (c. 1120), and if we remember the ethical purpose which motivated their composition, they support and strengthen the development we have described.

In my opinion, Geoffrey's *Historia* is not much indebted for its material to oral tales about Arthur, nor did the French romances grow from Geoffrey's book. The *Historia* and the Romances represent two further steps, each separate from the other, in the development of the stories about Arthur, but it is no part of my purpose to discuss those steps here.

THOMAS JONES

⁶⁸ One may refer here to the 'Dialogue between Arthur and the Eagle,' a dialogue between Arthur and his nephew *Eliwlad* in the shape of an eagle; see *B.B.C.S.*, Vol. II, 1925, pp. 269-86. Sir Ifor Williams dates the *englynion* c. 1150 (*ibid.*, p. 286) but there are no traces of Geoffrey's influence on the portrait of Arthur. Arthur is called 'chief of the hosts of Cornwall,' and 'prince of generous men.' In *Kulhwch and Olwen*, Arthur's court is at *Celliwig* in Cornwall. The *englynion* are the product of a native story-teller, and there must have been a story, now lost, as a background to them.

⁶⁹ The *Life of Cadog* is discussed by H. D. Emanuel, 'An Analysis of the *Vita Cadoci*' in the *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. VII, 1952, pp. 217-27. According to his analysis, the parts which mention Arthur belong to the original *Life* composed c. 1090.