What did they sing at Cashel in 1172?: Winchester, Sarum and Romano-Frankish Chant in Ireland

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Abstract

The Second Council of Cashel in 1172, at which many of the Irish bishops swore fealty to King Henry II, is usually credited with the introduction of English and in particular, Sarum liturgical and musical usage to Ireland. This article examines the historical, musical and liturgical context of the Cashel gathering, challenging traditional interpretations of this event. It demonstrates that the Council could not have decreed the introduction of Sarum usage to Ireland and that Cashel was not a watershed heralding the demise of the ‘Celtic rite’. Using the earliest complete surviving Irish plainchant source (GB-Ob Rawl. C. 892), it suggests that the twelfth-century Irish Church was already open to a wide range of musical and liturgical influences from England (principally Winchester) and continental Europe. The musical and liturgical evidence from notated and un-notated twelfth-century sources obliges us to re-formulate our ideas about this important time of development and transition in Irish musical and cultural life.

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Frank Lawrence is a doctoral student in Medieval Musicology at University College Dublin, working under the joint supervision of Prof. Harry White (UCD) and Prof. David Hiley (Regensburg). He is currently completing his dissertation entitled ‘An Irish Gradual of the Twelfth Century - Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. C. 892: A Palaeographical, Liturgical and Repertorial Study’. He has held a doctoral fellowship of the UCD Micheál Ó Cléirigh Institute and an IRHCSS postgraduate scholarship. He is an advisory editor and contributor to the Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland.
The extreme end of it may be taken as 1172, when the Synod of Cashel finally adopted the Anglo-Roman Rite. It is hardly necessary to assert here that the Sarum Rite is merely a local variety of the Roman, and that the influence of the Gallican Rite upon it is no greater than upon any other Roman variety, so that the deductions, which have recently been reasserted with great certainty by the Bishop of Chichester in his "Story of the English Prayerbook", are. There were Christians in Ireland before St. Patrick, but we have no information as to how they worshipped, and their existence is ignored by the "Catalogus Sanctorum Hiberniae", attributed to the seventy-century Tirechan. A Synod of Cashel followed in 1172. Christianus, papal legate and bishop of Lismore, presided. It marked the end of an independent Celtic Church. In 1366 the Statutes of Kilkenny introduced 'race laws' to preserve the identity and loyalty of the English in Ireland. The English settlers were forbidden to marry the 'Irish enemy', sell them horses or even play hurling! In the spirit of Christ's loving church, Irish Christians were excluded from English churches, though in practice, the laws proved difficult to enforce.