

Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish

A semantic analysis of the Irish-Norse (language) contact situation

MA Thesis

Aukje Borkent

3360016

RMA Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Track Celtic

Supervisor: prof. dr. Peter Schrijver

Second reader: dr. Ranke de Vries

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Introduction

Ever since we found records of the coming of the Norsemen to Ireland, this topic has been a major area of interest within the fields of history, archaeology, literary studies and linguistics. As a result, much research on the Norse impact on Ireland has been done in the past, and already a large part of its mystery has been revealed. One of the aspects that has been researched in the past is the evidence of Old Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish. These studies often focussed on the phonetic developments of those borrowings, and although the borrowings have been catalogued and discussed according to their semantic value, no clear study exists on the semantic development from the source language (i.e. Old Norse) to its target language (i.e. Old and Middle Irish).

It is my objective to detect what the semantic development of Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish can tell us about the language and social contact situation of the Irish and the Norse raiders and settlers during the Viking Age. In order to obtain this objective I have created a database containing all Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish. These loanwords are then categorised according to their semantic specifics, semantic development and semantic similarities to Irish native lexicon. This database forms the foundation for my analysis.

In the first chapter I will discuss the general historical background, giving an overview of the historical impact of the Norsemen from the perspective of other academic fields. I will discuss matters like Irish society before the arrival of the Vikings, reasons for the Norse expansion towards Ireland, the development of the Norse from raiders to settlers, and the contact situation that arose in this period between the Irish and the Norsemen.

The second chapter comprises the main body of this thesis. In this chapter I will subdivide the loanwords into ten different semantic categories. Within each category I will discuss the loanwords separately and finish with an analysis of the category as a whole, focussing on what the semantic changes can tell us about the language and social contact situation between the Norse and the Irish.

Finally, I will combine the different analyses into a single conclusion that describes what loanwords can tell us about the social and linguistic impact of the Norsemen in Ireland.

Chapter one:

General historical overview of the contact between the Norse and the Irish

1. 1. Irish society before the arrival of the Vikings

1. 1. 1. Social structures and economy

The family constituted the centre of the Irish society. Binchy (1975) describes Irish society, beside ‘tribal, rural and hierarchical’, as ‘familiar’, in the sense that in the society ‘the family, not the individual, is the unit’.¹

The law tracts underline this crucial importance of the close kin-group, called the *fine*. It was the basic legal unit for purposes of inheritance, farming and protection. The term usually denotes all the male descendants of a given person down to the sixth generation.² The more specific term *derbfine*, ‘true kin’, is found in the laws to denote a family of four generations, a man, his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons.³ The major importance of the *derbfine* was that it owned the tribal territories.⁴ Each adult member of the *derbfine* inherited an equal share of the owned farmland, which was fenced and cultivated individually.⁵

Irish society had an agricultural economy, with cattle grazing on large patches of grassland and with crops being cultivated within fenced areas. The land was divided into three categories: arable and fenced land for agriculture, fenced grassland for pasture, and the land beyond which was used for the collecting of materials such as wood.⁶ Hunting and fishing were commonplace as well.⁷ The land and the products of the land were the main forms of property. This is reflected in the general unit of value, the *sét*, which is normally equal to a young heifer or half a milch-cow.⁸

¹ Daniel A. Binchy, ‘The Passing of the Old Order’, *The Impact of the Scandinavian Invasions on the Celtic-speaking Peoples c. 800-1100 A.D.*, ed. Brian Ó Cuív (Baile Átha Cliath 1975) 121.

² Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400 – 1200* (London 1995) 143.

³ Eoin Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin, London 1921) 117-118.

⁴ Donncha Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin 1972) 28.

⁵ Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 143-144.

⁶ *Ibid.* 85-86.

⁷ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 58-61.

⁸ Binchy, ‘The Passing of the Old Order’, 121.

Travelling was done both on land and by boat. Even though transport occurred within various territories, there was limited internal trade within Ireland during the eighth and ninth centuries. It is possible that monasteries took on the role of trading centres, as by 800 A.D. many of them had developed into monastic towns.⁹ The only other opportunity for the exchange of goods on a wider scale was provided by the *óenach*. This public assembly was held once a year by either a single tribe or a group of tribes whose rulers owed allegiance to a common over-king. Actual trade, however, was only one of the activities of the *óenach*.¹⁰ Apart from trade, the *óenach* was mainly an occasion for horseracing, music and storytelling, fulfilling many different societal functions, i.e. government, political discussion, entertainment, social intercourse and trade.¹¹

1. 1. 2. Kingship

According to the classical law tracts, there were three distinct grades of king:

- 1) *rí / rí túaithe*: the king of the local *túath* or petty tribal kingdom. The *túath* is described by Mac Neill (1921) as ‘a mere local association of people, occupying a definite district and bound together by common customs, by common interests, and by living under one ruler’.¹²
- 2) *ruiri*: great king, who in addition to being king of his own *túath*, was the personal overlord of a number of other tribal kings.
- 3) *rí ruirech*: ‘king of overkings’, who is identified with the king of a province.

No higher grade of king, such as a ‘high king’ or king of Ireland, is known to the classical law tracts.¹³ In reality however, Ó Corráin (1972) warns us that ‘the structure of subordination was much more complex than the threefold ascending scale of lordship indicated in the law tracts’.¹⁴

A person eligible to succeed to a kingship was called *rígdomna*, which literally means ‘material of a king’. This person had to belong to the same *derbfine* as a king who had already reigned. Among the persons thus lawfully eligible, the succession was determined by election.¹⁵ This meant that not only the sons of the king were considered candidates for the kingship, but also that grandsons and cousins of the king were eligible. Usually the king’s successor was chosen during the lifetime of the reigning king, in the hope of avoiding

⁹ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 67-72.

¹⁰ Binchy, ‘The Passing of the Old Order’, 121-122.

¹¹ Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin 2000) 360.

¹² Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland*, 154.

¹³ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 29.

¹⁵ Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 65-66.

struggles after the king's death. The so called *tánaise rí*, the 'expected king' or 'following king' was probably selected by agreement between the king and all the *ríghomnai* who were themselves eligible for the kingship, and was subsequently approved in the *airecht*, the 'assembly of notables'.¹⁶ Mac Neill (1921) noted that 'no instance of the term *ríghomna* has been found earlier than AD867, but from that date onward the term appears with great frequency in the annals'. He explains this in the following manner:

'Before this time a Norse kingdom had been established in Dublin, and Norse rulers had been set up in the Isle of Man and the Hebrides. In these early Norse communities lawful succession to the principedom appears to have been in general from father to son, and probably to the firstborn son [...] Possibly the contrast of this law or custom caused the Irish chroniclers to give express recognition to the potential right of succession in Irish dynasties'.¹⁷

The actual governmental rights of the Irish king were very limited. He was not a ruler of land, as the ownership of the hereditary tribal territories within the kingdom was vested in the free families, the *fini*.¹⁸ It was in the inter-tribal relations that the king played an important role, as he represented the tribal state in negotiations with neighbours. It was also possible that a king was bound by a hereditary tie of personal allegiance to a superior king.¹⁹ The relationship between a king and his suzerain was purely a personal one: the superior king did not have any authority over the land or subjects of his sub-kings. Even the highest grade of king only had authority over the *túath* to which he belonged. Connections between different tribal territories were mainly made to ensure peace, and in the case of an attack on one of the connected territories, the different tribal groups would provide military support for each other. The allegiance of the ordinary free tribesmen, however, was to their tribal king only. If any revolts occurred against the superior king, or if the sub-kings withheld their dues, the superior king could invade the defaulter's territory and seize livestock and other goods as compensation.²⁰

¹⁶ D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford 1970) 25-27.

¹⁷ Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland*, 117.

¹⁸ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 28.

¹⁹ Binchy, 'The Passing of the Old Order', 123.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 122-124.

1. 2. The early raids

The following short poem gives a great impression of how the Scandinavian attackers were viewed by the Irish during their initial contact. This Old Irish poem was found in the margin of the St. Gall copy of Priscian's Latin grammar, dated to the ninth century, and is one of the earliest references to the Vikings in Ireland:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Is acher in gáith innocht,</i> | Bitter is the wind to-night: |
| <i>fufuasna fairggae findfolt.</i> | it tosses the ocean's white hair: |
| <i>Ni ágor réimm mora minn</i> | I fear not the coursing of a clear sea |
| <i>dond láechraid lainn ua Lothlind</i> | by the fierce heroes from Lothlend. ²¹ |

The earliest recorded raid on Irish ground is found in the Annals of Ulster (AU), in the entry of the year 795 A.D.:

Loscadh Rechrainne o geinntib 7 Sci do [cho]scradh 7 do lomradh

'The burning of Rechru by the heathens, and Sci was overwhelmed and laid waste.'²²

There is still some discussion on the location of Rechru. Some scholars believe it to be on the island of Lambay (e.g. Ó Corráin (1972), Brøndsted (1960)²³), others more to the north, on Rathlin island (e.g. Ó Cróinín, 1995²⁴). Either way, whichever one of the two islands it may have been, the burning of Rechru marks the beginning of the Viking Age in Ireland.

The *genti* 'heathens' or *gail* 'foreigners', as the Vikings are mostly called in AU, had been raiding the Scottish coast and islands prior to this date, of which we also find evidence in AU: (794 A.D.) *Uastatio omnium insularum Britannię a gentilibus* 'Devastation of all the islands of Britain by the heathens'.²⁵ Already as early as the ninth century the Scandinavians are likely to have started colonizing Scottish islands such as the Orkneys and Shetlands.²⁶ It has been claimed by some scholars that these islands were used as bases for attacks on Ireland,

²¹ Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (ed.), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse*, part 2 (Cambridge 1903) 290.

²² Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, part 1 (Dublin 1983) 250-251.

²³ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 81.

Johannes Brøndsted, *The Vikings* (Harmondsworth 1960) 33.

²⁴ Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 238.

²⁵ *Annals of Ulster*, 250-251.

²⁶ Michael P. Barnes, *The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland* (Lerwick 1998) 2-3.

which seems plausible, but still lacks evidence.²⁷ The early raids in Ireland were targeted at monastic settlements, where most riches were to be found. The Scandinavians were skilled in the element of surprise; their method was to conduct a swift raid, which was made possible by their maneuverable boats, plundering the Irish, and then withdrawing as quickly as they could. This made it very difficult for the Irish communities to defend themselves, and they were most often left with many deaths and burned houses and churches. The Vikings were also keen on abducting people, taking them as prisoners and subsequently selling them as slaves. These slaves could be taken back to Norway by the Vikings, though there are no indications of any large-scale importations to Norway. Slaves captured abroad appear to have been generally sold abroad.²⁸

The Annals of Ulster form perhaps the most important source for Viking activity in Ireland. Not only do we find records of the heathens raiding the country, we also find entries in which the Irish are trying to fend off the invaders, and accounts of abductions and killings by Vikings. However, it is important to keep in mind that AU was written solely by clerics in monasteries, the main targets of the attacks. The picture of fear, loathing and constant chaos in Ireland expressed in AU may be a little less extreme in reality. Most raids seem to have occurred in the early ninth century, between circa 810 and 840 A.D. The first raids took place around the coastal area of Ireland only, as the Vikings used ships for their attacks. At a later stage the Vikings started to sail further inland by using the rivers.

It is interesting that we also find entries in AU where the Vikings were attacked by Irish warbands, considering the difficulty of anticipating the raids. We find, for instance, that in 811 A.D. the heathens were slaughtered by the Ulaid (*Strages gentilium apud Ultu*) and in 812 A.D. heathens were killed in Munster (*Ar gennte la Mumain*).²⁹

In 839 A.D. a new development took place, introducing a second stage of the attacks by the Scandinavians. In this year a Viking raiding party came to *Loch nEchach*, or Lough Neagh, in the northeast of Ireland. From this spot they conducted raids in the area, and as AU tells us, they were still there by the year 841: *Gennti for Loch Eachach béos*.³⁰ This also happened in Dublin: (842 A.D.) *Geinnti for Duiblinn beos* ‘The heathens still at *Duiblinn*’.³¹ These

²⁷ F. Donald Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 3rd ed. (New York, London 2013) 59.

²⁸ Knut Helle, ‘The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway’, *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. Howard B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin 1998) 253.

²⁹ *Annals of Ulster*, 266-269.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 269-299.

³¹ *Ibid.* 300-301.

developments show that the character of the raids changed: what started as plundering raids from the sea now ranged further inland as well, and saw the establishment of impermanent bases.³²

³²Kenneth H. Jackson, 'The Celtic Languages during the Viking Period', *The Impact of the Scandinavian Invasions on the Celtic-speaking Peoples c. 800-1100 A.D.*, ed. Brian Ó Cuív (Baile Átha Cliath 1975) 4.

1. 3. Identity of the Vikings

Our biggest problem in trying to unravel the history of the Viking Age is that our understanding of that time period is impaired by the fact that we have no contemporary documentary sources from the Scandinavian homelands.³³ The closest we get are the Scandinavian sagas, which do contain literary references to the endeavors of the Vikings, but they are a very uncertain source when it comes to analyzing the actual events that happened in the period from approximately the late eighth to the eleventh century. These sagas were written down at a much later stage, up to several hundred years after the historical events occurred. This creates difficulties when trying to separate historical fact from fiction. We are therefore dependent on sources from the places that the Vikings went to, like Ireland, to find out who the raiders and settlers were, where they came from, and what their motives could have been to leave their homeland in search of another life in the west.

1. 3. 1. The origin of the raiders

In the Irish sources we find a few hints as to where the ‘heathens’ came from. One of the most problematic words denoting the provenance of the Norsemen is *Lothlind*, *Laithlind*, and the later form *Lochlann*. At first glance, this word appears to mean ‘Norway’ or ‘Scandinavia’, but, as Greene (1976) justly concludes, the early forms do not necessarily conform to those places. The later form *Lochlann* has been connected to *Rogaland* by Marstrander (1915), a region in southwest Norway, but he has found no explanation for the earlier forms. Greene (1976) believes that the name *Lothlind* or *Laithlind* is more likely referring to a maritime centre of Viking power.³⁴ He points to the fact that ‘the ninth century Irish annalists were much given to describing Viking estuarine bases by the name of *lind* ‘pool’; *Duiblinn* ‘black pool’, ‘Dublin’, is, of course, the classic example’.³⁵ Other examples from AU would include *Linn Duachaill* (841 A.D.), *Linn Rois* and *Linn Sailech* (both 842 A.D.).³⁶ As to where the maritime centre of *Lothlind* might have been, Greene suggests that ‘it is at least possible that

³³ Colmán Etchingham, ‘Names for the Vikings in the Irish Annals’, *Celtic-Norse Relationships in the Irish Sea in the Middle Ages 800-1100*, ed. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Timothy Bolton (Leiden, Boston 2014) 23.

³⁴ David Greene, ‘The influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress : Dublin 15-21 August 1973*, ed. Bo Almquist and David Greene (Dublin 1976) 76.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 77.

³⁶ *Annals of Ulster*, 298-301.

the original *Lothlind* was a more distant base, perhaps in Gaelic-speaking Man or Western Scotland'. Greene (1976) follows Marstrander (1915) by connecting the early forms *Lothlind*, *Laithlind* to *Lochlann*, suggesting possible interference from *Rogaland*.³⁷ That the later form *Lochlann* came to be used in the meaning 'Norway' becomes clear from the AU entry of 1102 A.D where *Maghnus ri Lochlainni* is mentioned,³⁸ better known as Magnús Óláfsson or Magnús góði, king of Norway in the eleventh century.³⁹

Most scholars agree on a geographic origin of southwest Norway for the raiders coming to Ireland. This conclusion is often connected to the eighteenth and nineteenth century evidence of the extinct Scandinavian language of Norn, spoken on the Shetlands and Orkneys, the first islands the Scandinavians probably came across in their journey west towards Ireland. Brøgger (1929) connects the Norn language to the dialect of Rogaland and its vicinity.⁴⁰ Barnes (1998) considers it the 'safest, if most conservative, conclusion' that the settlers in the Shetlands and Orkneys came from all along the southern half of the Norwegian west coast: 'the area between present-day Nord-Trøndelag and Vest-Agder'.⁴¹

Another word connected to the geographic origin of the invaders is *Irua(i)th*, which is often connected to Hjørðaland, an area also located in southwest Norway, bordering the north of Rogaland. The suggestion that the name is derived from the Old Norse tribe name *Hjørðar* is questionable.⁴² Another problem is that *Irua(i)th* is never used to denote 'Norway' in historical texts, and is used only in literature where it is consistently presented as a land of romance and magic.⁴³ It seems therefore to have been a literary name for the Otherworld. As *Lochlann* came to be used from the twelfth century onwards to denote the Otherworld as well, it seems likely that *Irua(i)th* became a synonym for *Lochlann*, meaning both 'the Otherworld' and 'Norway' in later literature.⁴⁴ The earliest mention of *Irua(i)th* is found in the poem *Étsid in senchas sluagach*, which was dated by Thurneysen (1918) not earlier than the eleventh century.⁴⁵ Thus, in literature, the association with *Irua(i)th* and *Lochlann* for 'Norway' was

³⁷ Greene, 'The influence of Scandinavian on Irish', 77.

³⁸ *Annals of Ulster*, 538-539.

³⁹ Knut Helle, 'The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway', 257.

⁴⁰ A. W. Brøgger, *Ancient Emigrants : A History of the Norse Settlements of Scotland* (Oxford 1929) 69.

⁴¹ Barnes, *The Norn Language of Orkney and Shetland*, 4.

⁴² cf. Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Influence of the Vikings on Celtic Literature', *The Impact of the Scandinavian Invasions on the Celtic-speaking Peoples c. 800-1100 A.D.*, ed. Brian Ó Cuív (Baile Átha Cliath 1975) 87-93.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 89.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 89, 93.

⁴⁵ R. Thurneysen, 'Tuirill Bricrenn und seine Kinder', *Zeitschrift für Celtisches Philologie* XII (1918) 239.

very late. As for the historical sources, it seems that the Irish had no specific word for ‘Norway’ until we find *Lochlann* was used in that meaning in the early twelfth century.

1. 3. 2. Viking Age society

The society in Viking Age Norway seems to have been kin-based, in which kinship could be inherited through both the male and female line. The kin also provided protection, and made it possible for several families to be bound together into larger groups.⁴⁶ Most people were farmers, and therefore the typical housing was comprised of separate farms. This type of farm was called a *garðr*, and had permanent buildings for people and animals surrounded by a fenced or otherwise enclosed area for cultivation. The land beyond this enclosed area was used for grazing and provided wood and other materials. All the farms were given names; the most common names ended in *-staðr*, *-land*, *-setr* or *-þveit*. These types of names probably arose sometime in the late Iron Age. Names ending in *-staðr* were the commonest type of farm-name brought by Norwegians colonist to Iceland, and are also found on the Faeroes, Shetlands, Orkneys and the Isle of Man. Agriculture in various forms was the predominant economic activity, even though only a few percent of the total land mass of Norway was suitable for cultivation. People settled in these areas, namely in the less densely forested coastal areas and along the fjords and in the lower districts in the east where the largest patches of flat, arable land were to be found. In the areas along the coast agriculture was usually combined with fishing, the hunting of whales and seals, and collecting mussels and birds’ eggs.⁴⁷

The people of these separate settlements came into contact with each other either by sea journeys along the coast and fjords, or by travelling along the inland routes, which must have been challenging in a landscape with large mountain ranges, fjords and dense forests. These geographical factors were very important for creating something of a common ethnic awareness among the Norwegians, dividing them from the Swedes in the east and the Danes in the south. Interestingly enough, this division was mostly unnoticed by foreigners, as they did not seem to have a clear conception of the different homelands of the Scandinavian Vikings.⁴⁸ Along the routes within Norway trade emerged, and exchanges of goods were

⁴⁶ Helle, ‘The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway’, 251.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 245-247.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 244.

made between settlements. In doing so, social and cultural ties were formed as well. The growth of trade linked different economies of the country and also helped to forge links with economies overseas. The ship became a very important factor, as it made trading activities easier and facilitated the general expansion and the promotion of the common culture of the period. In this manner some settlements started to grow into small trade-centres, where trade and crafts became increasingly specialist occupations.⁴⁹

The groups of freeholding farmers were bound together according to social and economic standing into chiefdoms and petty kingdoms. The smaller farms often surrounded the large settlement of the greater landowners. Norse society was divided into three main groups according to social standing: *þrælar*, the ‘unfree’ or slaves, *leysingjar*, the free, and the aristocracy. Within these groups there were also differences, for instance between landless free men and great landowners, or between professional warriors and craftsmen.⁵⁰ Political leaders were part of the aristocracy and petty kings exerted power through tribal councils, the *þing* and by being leaders of battle forces. They controlled the settled areas, resource exploitation and production, and organised the exchange of goods, raids and defence. Wars, plundering expeditions and the taking of slaves were important sources of income for those in power, as political conditions were unstable with shifting alliances and struggles for power between persons and families within both the chiefdom and the petty kingdoms as well as externally among tribal areas.⁵¹

When we compare the social structure of the Irish and the Norse society it is difficult to point out clear differences. Both societies are hierarchical and tribal, with small kingdoms, shifting alliances and internal warfare. The main difference might be found in the dissimilarities between the Irish kings and the Norse leaders or kings. The latter had a significantly higher degree of control over his subjects than the Irish king had. In Ireland, the *rí túaithe* would determine certain aspects of society, but the kin group retained its own autonomy.

1. 3. 3. Leaving Norway

The following was stated by Donncha Ó Corráin (1972):

⁴⁹ Else Roesdahl and Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, ‘Viking Culture’, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge 1998) 122, 126.

⁵⁰ Ibid.126.

⁵¹ Bjørn Myhre ‘The Iron Age’, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge 1998) 76-77.

‘In purely historical terms, the sudden Viking irruptions may appear to be an unexpected and startling novelty, but it can be shown archaeologically that the age of the Vikings was preceded by a slow and gradual social, technological and economic development.’⁵²

The question then arises: what were these developments that made the Norse leave their homeland? We can detect several factors. From about the seventh century onwards, there was a steady expansion of population in north-western Europe. In Norway this gradually led to problems with cultivation, as attempts were made to use new, less favourable areas of land. Before any serious emigration took place from Norway, smaller parties started raiding along the coasts of western Europe, including Ireland. At a certain point, when food production in Norway failed to meet with the demands of the growing population, people would have been forced to emigrate.⁵³ Norse emigration is visible in Ireland from halfway into the ninth century onwards, when the Norse raiders started to settle and founded towns. This colonisation must have attracted other Norse people to find a better life abroad. The opportunity to settle on the islands in the west may have seemed preferable to exploiting more limited resources at home. With this came the success of trade that may have further contributed to emigration.⁵⁴ In the trading activities in the North Sea and the North Atlantic the Scandinavian peoples played a prominent role.⁵⁵ As the people in Norway were dependent on sea travel, the invention of the keel in c. 600 A.D. was an important factor, for it made long distance ocean travels possible.⁵⁶ With the trading activities came the knowledge of (overseas) trade routes, which facilitated the outward expansion.⁵⁷

Another factor for emigration could be the political efforts of Harald *hárfagri* ‘Finehair’, who probably lived around the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth. The victories of his battles left him in control of the areas of Hordaland and Rogaland in south-western Norway, trying to expand his kingdom further east and north. In later Norwegian and Icelandic sagas and chronicles he was considered the first king to rule over the whole of Norway.⁵⁸ According to Snorri Sturluson’s *Heimskringla*, Harald’s ambition resulted in the fleeing of many of the independent rulers from the land, in search of new lands to reign.⁵⁹ In

⁵² Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 80.

⁵³ Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 35.

⁵⁴ Helle, ‘The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway’, 250.

⁵⁵ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 80.

⁵⁶ Nora K. Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, *The Impact of the Scandinavian Invasions on the Celtic-speaking Peoples c. 800-1100 A.D.*, ed. Brian Ó Cuív (Baile Átha Cliath 1975) 17.

⁵⁷ Logan, *The Vikings in History*, 36.

⁵⁸ Helle, ‘The History of the Early Viking Age in Norway’, 253-254.

⁵⁹ Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, 17.

the *Færeyinga saga* we find: ‘There was a man called Grim Kamban. He was the first man to settle in the Faeroes – in the days of king Harald Finehair. At that time many people fled [Norway] because of the king’s tyranny. Some settled in the Faroe Islands and built farms there; others went to other uninhabited lands.’⁶⁰ It must be remembered, however, that literature in the form of the sagas cannot be blindly trusted as a historical source. It can, on the other hand, give an approximation of the historical events.

As the Norse expanded their travels more and more to the west, the occupation of the Scottish isles was a first important factor for establishing permanent bases in the west. Ó Corráin (1972) states: ‘That Ireland should be attacked was a natural continuation southwards of Norse settling and raiding’.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 61.

⁶¹ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 81.

1. 4. Scandinavian settlements

1. 4. 1. Early settlement

The establishment of the first permanent Viking naval base on Lough Neagh in the year 841 marks the beginning of Scandinavian settlement in Ireland. More of these bases were established from that year on, most famously the naval base on the banks of the pool created by the confluence of the rivers Liffey and Poddle: Dublin. This type of base was called a *longphort* by the Irish, literally a ‘boat spot’. At the earliest stage this was probably a very simple base camp where ships could lay anchor. They developed into small trading settlements, though they were still a long way from being urban centres or towns.⁶²

There is no indication of any large-scale invasion of Ireland by the Vikings.⁶³ We find too little records of raids to imply any sort of co-ordinated campaign. A possible explanation for this, as suggested by Binchy (1983), might be the manner in which the Irish divided and ruled the land.⁶⁴ Ireland was not a unity; the land was subdivided into numerous regions owned by the *fini*. Kings had no ownership of the land held by these *fini*; even if a Viking raiding party were to overthrow a *rí ruirech*, it was not in the king’s ability to surrender any of the land of his sub-kings to the attackers. The only way in which large-scale invasion was possible, therefore, was by seizing all the separate regions one by one, which must have been a conquest of too large proportions. Had there been larger and more coordinated kingdoms, like for instance in Anglo-Saxon England, it would have been much easier for the Vikings to overrun and conquer the country, but the unorganized and fragmented kingdoms of Ireland made this impossible. Perhaps for this reason large-scale immigration, as on the Scottish isles and Iceland, was virtually impossible. This caused the Norse immigrants to focus more on trade settlements. The settlements were established in strategic locations along the coast, in order to facilitate the trading activities by ship.⁶⁵ The trading centres raised by the Vikings

⁶² Howard B. Clarke, ‘Proto-Towns and Towns in Ireland and Britain in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. Howard B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin 1998) 341-342.

⁶³ Jackson, ‘The Celtic Languages during the Viking Period’, 4.

⁶⁴ Binchy, ‘The Passing of the Old Order’, 126-127.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 127.

were the first of their kind in Ireland, and it was from these centres that later towns developed.⁶⁶

1. 4. 2. Character of the settlements

The most important settlements of the Vikings were raised along the south-eastern coast of Ireland. One of the earliest naval bases was established in Dublin in 841 A.D., and in that same period other settlements were founded, for example Vikingaló (Wicklow), Veigsfjörðr (Wexford), Veðrafjörðr (Waterford), Cork and Hlymrekr (Limerick).⁶⁷ All these settlements were relatively equal in size and character, though politically Dublin was the most important.⁶⁸ The settlements were at some point fortified, and their trading activities focussed mainly on Scandinavian connections from overseas, and less on the Irish. The Vikings continued their raiding as well. It was considered a complementary activity to trading. This was not always accomplished by boat, as the Irish rivers could be too narrow and shallow for the Norse vessels. Therefore knowledge and control of the overland routes was also very important, and contributed to the successfulness of a permanent base. From around the first half of the ninth century the profits of war and the profits of trade overlapped.⁶⁹ One of the reasons that Dublin was seen as the chief settlement of the Vikings was that the Norse occupied a large area in the Dublin hinterland, known as *Fine Gall*, ‘foreign *fine*’, stretching south to Wicklow, west to Leixlip and northwards to the river Delvin.⁷⁰ In these hinterland areas of the Scandinavian settlements Norse farming communities arose.⁷¹ These farming communities formed the first step of Norse self-sufficient settlement in Ireland.

Because of the continuing raids and isolated trading activities, along with the fact that the Viking settlements were almost solely established along the coast, the Norsemen retained their status of ‘foreigners’ for a long period of time. They spoke their own language and maintained their own customs.⁷² The Norse settlers did become a recognised component of the Irish society, but they were not absorbed into Irish society until after the Anglo-Norman conquests in the twelfth and thirteenth century. That the Norsemen were an admitted part of

⁶⁶ Liam de Paor, ‘The Viking Towns of Ireland’, *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress : Dublin 15-21 August 1973*, ed. Bo Almqvist and David Greene (Dublin 1976) 30.

⁶⁷ Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, 23.

⁶⁸ De Paor, ‘The Viking Towns of Ireland’, 36.

⁶⁹ Clarke, ‘Proto-Towns and Towns in Ireland and Britain in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, 350, 363.

⁷⁰ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 104.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 105.

⁷² De Paor, ‘The Viking Towns of Ireland’, 33.

Irish society is visible in records of battles. Not only do we find records of conflict between Irish and Vikings⁷³, we also find evidence of Vikings forming alliances with Irish groups against other Irish formations.⁷⁴ We also find references of strife between the Scandinavian towns. There seems to have been a limited sense of common identity between the towns, and it is likely that they were considered independent establishments, as towns occasionally attacked one another. An example of this is found in AU in the year 1088, where the men of Dublin, Wexford and Waterford were driven off when trying to attack Cork:

Ar mor for Gallu Atha Cliath 7 Loch Garman 7 Puirt Lairgri ria nUib Eachach Muman isin lo ro midhratur Corgaigh do arcain

‘A great slaughter [was inflicted] on the foreigners of Áth Cliath and Loch Carman and Port Láirge by the Uí Echach of Mumu on the day they intended to plunder Corcach’.⁷⁵

Alliances of Irishmen often attacked Scandinavian settlements in order to break the Norse dominion.⁷⁶ Consequently the tenth and early eleventh century were characterized by many politically motivated battles and bloodshed.

The fact that the Norsemen were seen as ‘foreigners’ did not imply that there was a strict dichotomy between them and the Irish people, on the contrary; political relations, mixed marriages and trading activities were among the causes for the emergence of a mixed Norse-Irish population referred to as the *Gall-Goídil*, the ‘Foreign Irish’.⁷⁷ The early *longphuirt* that had been significantly ‘Viking’ developed into mixed population settlements often termed ‘Hiberno-Norse’, as they became heavily influenced by Irish people and Irish traditions. Clarke (1998) suggests the year 980 A.D to be an appropriate dividing point between the Viking and Hiberno-Norse phases of Dublin’s development.⁷⁸ It was in this later Hiberno-Norse phase in the tenth century that the trading settlements slowly started to urbanize, growing into port towns. One of the typical urban establishments is the minting of coins for the first time in Ireland by the end of the tenth century.⁷⁹

⁷³ cf. *Annals of Ulster* 812.8: ‘A slaughter of the heathens by the men of Umall. A slaughter of the Conmaicne by the heathens.’

⁷⁴ cf. *Annals of Ulster* 859.2: ‘Amláib [Oláfr] and Ímar [Ivarr] and Cernal [mac Dúnlainge] led a great army into Mide.’

⁷⁵ *Annals of Ulster*, 522-523.

⁷⁶ Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, part 1: An Introduction to the Viking History of Western Europe (Oslo 1940) 52.

⁷⁷ Jackson, ‘The Celtic Languages during the Viking Period’, 4.

⁷⁸ Clarke, ‘Proto-Towns and Towns in Ireland and Britain in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, 332.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 379.

1. 5. Irish-Norse contact situations

At this point in this chapter I would like to give a short overview of the implications and effects of the coming of the Norsemen to Ireland on a social, economic and political level. Binchy (1975) notes that if we accept the Irish law tracts as a valid representation of Irish society, a picture emerges in which this society remained virtually unaltered between the eighth and sixteenth centuries, and thus that it was unaffected by the Norse invasions.⁸⁰ However, it seems highly improbable that the Norse invasions left no impact on the Irish people. Binchy (1975) claimed that the Norse invaders brought about the collapse of the Irish social system.⁸¹ This view was criticized by Ó Cróinín (1995), as he, joined by most modern historians, believed it to be a too rigid and narrow interpretation of the laws. Ó Cróinín (1995) gives several reasons for this. First of all, even though the Vikings must have had a traumatic effect on their victims, their enterprises in Ireland were never so extensive or widespread that they can have brought about the collapse of the Irish social system. Secondly, by the time they started to settle, they were never isolated from Irish society.⁸² As the Vikings raids, though violent, were never prolonged and far-reaching throughout Ireland, and as they only settled in small parts of the country, the Scandinavian influence was most likely not as extensive in Ireland as for example on the Scottish Isles, where the Norsemen settled the whole area and Scandinavian place names are found all over.⁸³

When it comes to Norse influence on Ireland, we seem to be somewhere in the middle between the laws showing no influence whatsoever, and the complete collapse of a pre-Norse Irish society. This begs for a more detailed evaluation of the situation. The kind of influence the Norsemen must have had will be examined more closely below.

1. 5. 1. Economical

One of the most important economic developments were the *longphuirt* the Vikings introduced in Ireland. The larger Irish settlements had been monastic centres, but the Viking

⁸⁰ Binchy, 'The Passing of the Old Order', 121.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 261, 263.

⁸³ Jackson, 'The Celtic Languages during the Viking Period', 4. For more information on Scandinavian place names in Ireland cf. Magne Oftedal, 'Scandinavian Place-names in Ireland', *Proceedings of the Seventh Viking Congress : Dublin 15-21 August 1973*, ed. Bo Almqvist and David Greene (Dublin 1976) 125-133.

settlements were centred on trade. This was definitely new in Irish society; the closest they came to a form of trading centre was the *óenach*, the public assembly held once a year where trading goods was one of the activities. However, this was nothing in comparison to the Norse *markaðr*, taken over in Irish as *margad*, which was a permanent institution of trade.⁸⁴ Irish monastic centres eventually also grew into towns, based on the Scandinavian examples. The introduction of money was also Scandinavian; the first coinage was struck in Dublin by the Norse in A.D. 995. Subsequently, the *pingin* often replaced the *sét* as the unit of value in later legal commentaries.⁸⁵ Economic contact between the Norse and the Irish is for instance found in the fact that silver brooches and other object that had been comparatively rare in Ireland before the beginning of the Viking period, now became common.⁸⁶

1. 5. 2. Political

The primary political influence the Norsemen had on Ireland was probably one of disorder in the traditional division of land at the time of their arrival and settlement. By creating settlements they violated Irish law concerning landownership. This was a new phenomenon in Irish society as the Irish laws had until that time been the standard across the whole island.

1. 5. 3. Social

One of the most interesting aspects of the contact between the Norse and the Irish was the emergence of a mixed Norse-Irish population, the *Gall-Goídil*. Their first appearance in the written sources is relatively early. They are mentioned in four entries in AU from the years 856-858 A.D. When we examine the entries from AU, it seems that the *Gall-Goídil* were an independent army, fighting alongside the Irish against the Vikings in 856 A.D.:

Cocadh mor eter gennti 7 Mael Sechlainn co nGall-ghoidhelaib leis.

‘Great warfare between the heathens and Mael Sechnaill, supported by Norse-Irish.’⁸⁷

In the same year we find them being attacked by the Irish:

Roiniudh mor re nAedh m. Neill for Gallgaeidhelu i nGlenn Foichle co ralad leis ar dimhor diib.

⁸⁴ Binchy, ‘The Passing of the Old Order’, 122.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ De Paor, ‘The Viking Towns of Ireland’, 34.

⁸⁷ *Annals of Ulster*, 314-315.

‘Aed son of Niall inflicted a great rout on the Norse-Irish in Glenn Foichle and a vast number of them were slaughtered by him.’⁸⁸

Then, a year later, the *Gall-Goídil* fight independently against the Vikings:

Roiniudh re nImar 7 re nAmlaiph for Caittil Find cona Gallgaedhelaibh hi tiribh Muman.
‘Ímar and Amlaíb inflicted a rout on Caitil⁸⁹ the Fair and his Norse-Irish in the lands of Munster.’⁹⁰

It is remarkable to find the *Gall-Goídil* so prominent in such an early period, but they seem to have been a definite part of the internal wars in Ireland at that time. It is important to consider that the first Norsemen to settle in Ireland did so in the second half of the ninth century, around the same time that these annals describe. It is therefore questionable whether the *Gall-Goídil* in these annals were descended from Ireland, as they are described as an organized army.⁹¹ Marstrander (1915) points out that they appear in the annals only close to the early Norse bases.⁹² Perhaps it is more likely that the *Gall-Goídil* in the early entries of AU originated from the earlier Norse settlement in the Hebrides. Already in the ninth century, these islands were known as *Insi Gall*, the ‘islands of the foreigners’, where the Norse probably intermixed with the native Celtic population at an earlier stage.⁹³

The *Gall-Goídil* of Ireland were considered as distinct from both the Irish and Norse peoples. Precisely in what sense they were a mix – ethnic, cultural, or solely as a military alliance – is uncertain.⁹⁴ It has been suggested that the *Gall-Goídil* were the result of intermarriage and fosterage.⁹⁵ This becomes apparent when we look at DNA evidence from Iceland. Around the year 875 A. D. we can detect an emigration flow to Iceland. A large amount of these colonists came directly from Norway. The Norse colonies in the west were a departing point for emigration towards Iceland as well, like the Scottish isles, but also Ireland. Research on mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome variation of the peoples of Iceland suggests that approximately 80% of the original male settlers of Iceland were of Norse descent, while only 37,5% of female settlers were Scandinavian. The majority of female settlers appear to have

⁸⁸ *Annals of Ulster*, 314-315.

⁸⁹ It is interesting to see that this name *Caitil*, is in fact an Irish rendering of the Norse name *Ketill*.

⁹⁰ *Annals of Ulster*, 314-315.

⁹¹ Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, 26.

⁹² Carl Marstrander, *Bidrag til det Norske Sprogs Historie i Irland* (Kristiania 1915) 7.

⁹³ Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, 26.

⁹⁴ Etchingham, ‘Names for the Vikings in the Irish Annals’, 27.

⁹⁵ cf. Sommerfelt, ‘The Norse influence on Irish and Scottish Gaelic’, 74, and Chadwick, ‘The Vikings and the Western World’, 34.

come from Ireland and the Scottish isles. This corresponds to the idea that the Norse expansion during the Viking Age was dominated by men. The emergence of the *Gall-Goídil* seems to have been a result of Norse men taking Irish wives. Many of these people later became part of the Icelandic colonists.⁹⁶ A good indication of contact and mutual influence is the mixed Norse-Irish name evidence. We find a large number of Norse names taken over into Irish genealogies from the ninth and tenth centuries, for instance *Amlaíb* from ON *Oláfr*, *Ímar* from *Ívarr*, and *Sitriuc* from *Sigtryggr*. We also find Irish names taken over into Old Norse, for example *Dungaðr* from Irish *Donnchad*, and *Kormlǫð* from *Gormfhlaithe*.⁹⁷

As for arts and literature we can also detect some influence; particularly in the arts, where methods and motifs were borrowed from Scandinavian work. It has been stated that art was influenced to such an extent by the Norse that it stopped Irish art from moving towards European trends, and caused it to remain more ‘traditional’.⁹⁸ In Irish literature Scandinavian influence shows at a relatively late stage. As Ó Corráin (1972) noticed, the literary cycle that was dominant in the Irish schools when the Norse arrived, the Ulster cycle, shows no real trace of Norse influence, except in late and derivative tales which may be assigned to the eleventh century, compiled long after the Ulster cycle had passed its creative phase.⁹⁹ A possible reason for this is proposed by Mac Cana (1975), who states that the form and content of the Ulster cycle were already too well established and its antiquity too well respected. Also, he notes that most heroic literature from the eighth century onwards is focussed on past instead of contemporary heroes. This would exclude any introduction of Viking material.¹⁰⁰ Only in the later Finn cycle do we find references to the Vikings and their homeland; however, they are mostly mythical. There are some historical references found in the tales, but they are extremely vague. It seems, as Mac Cana (1975) suggests, that the Vikings entered the literature through the stories told by the ‘common people’ as opposed to the high register ‘aristocratically-conditioned tales’. This would explain why we only find traces of Viking elements in the later, more folkloristic literature, like the Finn cycle.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Agnar Helgason, et al., ‘mtDNA and the Islands of the North Atlantic: Estimating the Proportions of Norse and Gaelic Ancestry’, *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 68 (2001) 724, 732-735.

⁹⁷ Brian Ó Cuív, ‘Personal Names as an Indicator of Relations between Native Irish and Settlers in the Viking Period’, *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland: Studies Presented to F. X. Martin, o.s.a.*, ed. John Bradley (Kilkenny 1988) 79-80.

⁹⁸ Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 261, 264.

⁹⁹ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 108.

¹⁰⁰ Mac Cana, ‘The Influence of the Vikings on Celtic Literature’, 97-98.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 98-99.

1. 6. The language contact situation

When the Norsemen came to Ireland, they brought their language with them. This language, Norse, was significantly different from the language of the Irish, and we can assume that both languages were mutually incomprehensible. As the people speaking Irish or Norse came into contact with each other, we can speak of a language contact situation, as we can detect influence from one language into another (e.g. loanwords). Following Thomason and Kaufman (1988), there are two basic types of language interference: borrowing and language change through shift.¹⁰² Borrowing is a process in which certain features of a language (A) are incorporated into another language (B) by the speakers of language B. In other words, language B is maintained but changed by the incorporation of features from language A. In a borrowing situation the first elements to be taken over are lexical elements. More structural borrowing, like syntax and phonology, often requires more extensive bilingualism among borrowing-language speakers over a considerable period of time. With language change through shift the process of borrowing lexical elements and structural elements is generally the other way around; it usually begins with the incorporation of syntax and phonology, and only later words may be absorbed as well. Language change through shift occurs when speakers of language A shift to speaking language B (also called the *target language*), and in this process transfer linguistic features from their original language A into the target language. These features are then imitated by the native speakers of language B and subsequently become part of the target language.¹⁰³ As Thomason and Kaufman (1988) point out, it must be stressed that these types of language change as they characterise them are generalisations based on the evidence of language contact discussed in their research. In reality language interference is usually not so straightforward and language contact situations can be much more complex, as it is not always clear whether we are dealing with change through shift or borrowing.¹⁰⁴

In the situation of the Norsemen in Ireland, there were speakers of two languages living in the same area. The Norsemen spoke Old Norse, or Old West Scandinavian, which was separating itself from Old East Scandinavian by the time of the Viking period (c. 750-1050). It is

¹⁰² Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley, etc. 1988) 37.

¹⁰³ Thomason and Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, 37-39.

¹⁰⁴ cf. Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact : An Introduction* (Edinburgh 2001) 11.

important to consider that the Norse language underwent radical changes during this period, and at the time that the first Norsemen went to Ireland this language was at a much more archaic stage compared to the Norse that was spoken around 1050. West Scandinavian generally faced the Atlantic Ocean, East Scandinavian the Baltic Sea.¹⁰⁵ During the Viking period the Irish language was in a transitional stage from Old Irish into Middle Irish. The language is called 'Middle Irish' from about 900 A.D.

A major environment for language contact between the Irish and the Norse was trading. Language contact also occurred when people from one language group joined the people of the other language group, for instance through inter-marriage, or when captives were used and sold as slaves. Furthermore, when Irish and Norse armies allied with each other, we may deduce that they, or at least certain people, were capable of carrying out the necessary negotiations between the two languages.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, bilingualism must have arisen quickly in these circumstances. However, we have to keep in mind that the number of Norsemen in Ireland was relatively small, considering the small amount of Norse settlements that were exclusively found along the coast. We may expect bilingualism only in those small areas where the Norsemen settled and roamed.¹⁰⁷ In the historical sources we find references to what might be a language that was the direct result of the rise of the *Gall-Goídil*, namely a language called *gic-goc*. There has been considerable discussion on what this *gic-goc* language might have been. The name is first found in the early Middle Irish tale *Airec Menman Uraird mac Coisse*, in the phrase *nirbu gíc-goc Gallgaidhel* 'it was not the *gic-goc* of the Norse-Irish'. Chadwick (1975) believes this *gic-goc* may be a pidgin language,¹⁰⁸ and it is certainly a possibility that the text refers to a mixed language of the *Gall-Goídil*. Fergus Kelly (2007) suggests that it may refer to 'the harshly-accented Irish which they spoke'.¹⁰⁹ Ó Corráin (1972) describes the language as 'the haggling of the merchants' and the 'broken speech of the Norse dealers'.¹¹⁰ An etymology for the term *gic-goc* is given by Marstrander (1915), as he connects it with the Norse words *gigga* 'to stagger' and *gogga* 'to mumble'.¹¹¹ Kelly (2007) believes that *gic-goc* is more likely to be a native expression than a Norse loan. It may very well be that *gic-goc* was a pidgin spoken by the *Gall-Goídil*, but it cannot be

¹⁰⁵ Einar Haugen, *Scandinavian Language Structures : A Comparative Historical Survey* (Tübingen 1982) 9-11.

¹⁰⁶ Greene, 'The influence of Scandinavian on Irish', 76.

¹⁰⁷ Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 269-270.

¹⁰⁸ Chadwick, 'The Vikings and the Western World', 26.

¹⁰⁹ Fergus Kelly, 'Onomatopoeic Interjections in Early Irish', *Celtica XXV* (2007) 98-99.

¹¹⁰ Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, 106.

¹¹¹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 10-11.

ruled out that it was merely the crooked Irish used by Norse merchants. Without more written source material we will not be able to decide on this matter with complete certainty.

The intensity of the contact generally indicates how extensive the language influence is. Important for the situation in Ireland was that the Norsemen never completely fused with Irish society. There was of course contact between the two peoples, but it was probably never too intense. For instance, there was no large-scale social fusion, nor was there political fusion.¹¹² The Norsemen mostly remained a separate, independent society; they lived in individual Scandinavian settlements and followed their own laws, speaking their own language, until the beginning of the Norman invasion in the twelfth century.¹¹³ Thomason and Kaufman (1988) state that with a minimum of cultural pressure we expect only lexical borrowing.¹¹⁴

The language contact situation in Ireland between the Irish and the Norse invaders and settlers in the Viking Age will be the focus of the following chapters. I will focus in particular on what the evidence of Norse loanwords in Irish can tell us about the contact situation, and on how words were borrowed into Irish.

¹¹² Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Society* (Cork 1954) 18-19.

¹¹³ Chadwick, 'The Vikings and the Western World', 38.

¹¹⁴ Thomason and Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, 77.

Chapter two: Semantic analysis

In this chapter I will subdivide all Norse loanwords found in Old and Middle Irish into ten different semantic categories. These categories are:

1. Shipping
2. Animals
3. Food production and diet
4. Society
5. Commerce
6. Clothing and body
7. Housing
8. Geography
9. Warfare
10. Utensils

Within each category I will discuss the loanwords separately and finish with an analysis of the category as a whole, focussing on what the semantic changes can tell us about the language and social contact situation between the Norse and the Irish.

The loanwords discussed in this chapter have been gathered into a database (Appendix 1). The data in this table have been collected from several sources, the most important being Marstrander (1915), Vendryes (1959-1987), the *Dictionary of the Irish Language (DIL)* (1990), the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* (1989), Bugge (1912), Ó Muirthe (2009), Walsh (1922), de Vries (1977) and Matasović (2009).¹¹⁵ Loanwords were included in my database if they had at least one attestation in Old or Middle Irish.

¹¹⁵ For references cf. bibliography.

2. 1. Semantic category: Shipping

2. 1. 1. Pre-Viking shipping in Ireland

The most distinguished seamen in Ireland before the coming of the Norsemen must have been the Irish hermits. Their desire to find a secluded and solitary living space made them travel across the sea to desolate islands, such as Skellig Michael and Blasket Mór in Ireland, the Faroes, and Iceland. In order to reach these islands, they must have had a profound expertise regarding building, repairing and handling boats. Furthermore, awareness of the tides, meteorological indications and knowledge of sea fishing was also essential if they wanted to travel such large distances over open sea.¹¹⁶ Other Irish people to travel larger distances across the sea were merchants trading with foreign nations, and, with the coming of Christianity, Irish missionaries. As they crossed the sea not only towards the British isles, but also to the mainland of Europe, they must have been very skilled navigators as well.¹¹⁷ Greene (1976) points out that in our oldest sources the word *longas*, ‘shipping’, is usually connected with its secondary meaning, ‘exile’. He connects this to the conclusion that before contact with the Scandinavians the Irish seem to have been reluctant to go to sea.¹¹⁸ This conclusion seems to me somewhat speculative, although it can be argued that a long sea voyage was a one-way trip, without an intended return. The search for seclusion by the Irish hermits also ties in with this idea.

In daily life, mostly short distances were travelled in small boats, used for fishing and the transport of small groups of people and goods. The most extensively used boat was the *curach*, which was constructed of a keel and ribs of wood, with the hull between the ribs filled in with wickerwork. To ballast the boat large flat stones were placed in the bottom on top of the wicker. In order to make the boat waterproof, the whole contraption was then covered with hides that were sewn together. The *curach* could be up to twenty feet long and was equipped with a mast, which could reach a length of four feet, and a square sail. Paddles were used as an alternative way of propulsion.¹¹⁹ These boats were mainly used for river voyages, though they were possibly also the vessels used by monks to travel across the sea. The *curach* was sometimes used by small raiding parties; greater forces tended to use larger

¹¹⁶ John de Courcy Ireland, *Ireland and the Irish in Maritime History* (Dublin 1986) 33.

¹¹⁷ De Courcy Ireland, *Ireland and the Irish in Maritime History*, 35.

¹¹⁸ Greene, ‘The influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 79.

¹¹⁹ R. B. Nelson, *Warfleets of Antiquity* (Goring by Sea 1973) 46-47.

wooden vessels. It seems that this type of boat could be constructed slightly different according to its usage (i.e. inland- or sea-voyages). Another type of vessel that was used in Ireland was probably a type of dug-out canoe, which was used for inland waterways.¹²⁰

2. 1. 2. Norse shipping

The Norse had a strong tradition in shipping and were the leading authority at the time of the Viking Age when it came to building and sailing boats and ships.¹²¹ The difference between a ship and a boat in Viking terminology was solely one of size, without any definite line of distinction. The biggest vessel to be called a boat was one with no more than six pairs of oars. Any vessel containing more oars was considered a ship.¹²² All Norse vessels in general were either built for rowing, or for rowing and sailing. They were never built exclusively for sailing.¹²³ The ships were clinker built, which is a building technique where the hull planks overlap. They were made of wood, often oak or pine.¹²⁴ From archaeological findings we see that those ships were very large open boats, with floorboards over the bilge (the lowest compartment on a ship), but without a real deck or quarters below deck.¹²⁵ The size of vessel was defined by the number of rooms (the number of spaces between two cross-beams) or thwarts, the number of oars or the number of rowers. The size of smaller vessels was never given by rooms or thwarts; this was done only where the large ships were concerned. A vessel could for instance be called a ‘twenty-thwarter’, where each thwart was equal to one pair of oars; thus in the case of the ‘twenty-thwarter’ it had forty oars.¹²⁶

The basic term for a warship was a ‘longship’, as it was long and narrow in proportion, so that it became a fast-rowing vessel. However, there were various types of warships, all with their own characteristics.¹²⁷ In Snorri Sturluson’s account of Olaf Trygvason’s endeavours in *Heimskringla*, he gives a fairly precise classification of warships: the great ships, the twenty-thwarters and the smaller class.¹²⁸ When it came to warfare, it seems that ships of all kinds of

¹²⁰ de Courcy Ireland 44-45.

¹²¹ A. W. Brøgger, Haakon Shetelig, *The Viking Ships: Their Ancestry and Evolution* (London 1971) 183.

¹²² Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 126.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 180.

¹²⁴ Björn Landström, *Het Schip : De Geschiedenis van het Schip van Primitief Vlot tot Atoom-onderzeeboot met Reconstructies in Woord en Beeld*, transl. and rev. by W. van den Donker (Den Haag 1961) 56, 59.

¹²⁵ Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 125-126.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 129-130, 143.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 140.

¹²⁸ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla : History of the Kings of Norway*, translated with introduction and notes by Lee M. Hollander (Austin 1964) 227.

sizes were used. The smaller crafts were used as small warships on Norwegian lakes, having the enormous advantage that they could be drawn overland for long stretches, from lake to lake.¹²⁹ Warships could be very large, though it is likely that the grandest ships were kept in home waters and those that were used for raiding were smaller in size.¹³⁰

Merchant-ships and freighters were more sailed than rowed, and were higher-built than other ships, to increase transport capacity.¹³¹ They were also shorter and rounder in general than the longships. The stem and stern were probably straight and fitted with skegs.¹³² Because they were used for sailing, they usually had a fixed mast. They were deeper, and broader in proportion to their length when compared to warships. Other features were comparable to the warships, like a pointed stem and stern, a square sail and a side rudder. The whole middle part of the ship was used for placing cargo. On the fore- and aft deck it was possible to stand or sit. Also, it was the place where rowing was possible, as oar-holes were present here in the ship's side. Well-known types of trading ships were for example the *knorr* and the *byrdinger*.¹³³

Ships that were designed for ocean-travel were primarily sailing crafts, in order to cover large distances. Oars were present, in case they were necessary. These ships were broader and heavier than the vessels used for inland travel, but they were still light enough so that in cases of emergency they could be drawn over land for a short distance. At first these ocean-going vessels were not necessarily built as warships, as the Norsemen did not encounter great forces from foreign countries.¹³⁴ In Scotland and Ireland the Norsemen encountered no organised defence whatsoever in the early years of the Viking Age.

2. 1. 3. Norse shipping words in Old and Middle Irish

2. 1. 3. 1. Types of ships

We find quite a number of words denoting some sort of 'ship', 'boat' or 'vessel' in Irish that were taken from Old Norse. One issue when looking at the semantics of these words is the

¹²⁹ Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 145.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 136.

¹³¹ Ibid. 178.

¹³² Landström, *Het Schip*, 62, 64.

¹³³ Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 179-180.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 132.

general translation or meaning given in Old Irish for terms that are very specific in Old Norse. Almost all the words discussed below are glossed by the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (DIL) as having the meaning ‘boat’ or ‘ship’. There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that the Norse words were taken into Irish with a general definition, discarding the specific semantic qualities it had in Old Norse. This would imply that the Irish adopted the ON terminology without gaining specific knowledge about the types of ships that they were dealing with. The second explanation is that the Irish differentiated between types of ships just like the Norse did, but that we are unable to observe these distinctions from the text material. Especially when the word is only attested in a scarce amount of sources, it is very difficult to determine what the precise interpretation of the word should be.

- *bát* ‘boat’ < ON *bátr* ‘boat’

The word *bát* is generally thought to be derived from ON. However, it is important to consider the Old English (OE) form as well: *bát* ‘small boat’, which is either a representative of Proto-Germanic **baito-*, or an adoption from another language. The chief point to make is that the OE and ON words are not cognate, as the ON form corresponding to OE *bát* would have been **beitr*, while the OE form corresponding to ON *bátr* would have been **bét*, **bét*, giving modern English **beet*. Therefore, the word must have been adopted from one of these two languages into the other. The evidence seems to point towards an OE origin, as the ON form *beit* is found, but it is a rare form only found in early poetry.¹³⁵ The West-Germanic languages on the continent all lack forms that could be derived from **baito-*, but are adopted either from OE or ON.¹³⁶ In Irish this could have happened along the same lines; either the word *bát* was borrowed directly from OE into Irish, or it came via ON, which seems to have adopted it from OE first.

- *carb* ‘ship’ < ON *karfi* ‘swift-going ship, galley’

The Norse ship type *karfi* was taken over into Irish as *carb*. The Norse *karfi* was a smaller type of vessel that was predominantly a private boat owned by wealthier people, which they used for daytrips along the coast and on lakes. The intention was to be able to reach port each night where a tent would subsequently be raised ashore for the owners. It was not necessarily built for warfare, commerce or voyages on open sea, though it was occasionally used for those purposes. The vessel was designed for a smaller crew ranging from approximately six to

¹³⁵ *OED* s.v. *boat*

¹³⁶ J. Vendryes, *Lexique Étymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien* (Dublin 1959-1987) s.v. *bát*

twelve rowers.¹³⁷ This type of ship was also found in grave mounds; a famous example of a *karfi* is the Osenberg-ship.¹³⁸ In Irish, *carb* seems to denote ‘ship’ in a more general sense. Whether the Irish used the *carb* in the same manner as the Norse *karfi* is unclear, although a closer look at the attestations might yield more insight into the Irish usage. However, within the scope of this thesis, I will not investigate this in closer detail.

- *ciúil* ‘ship, barque’ < ON *kjóll* ‘ship’ (poetic)

ON *kjóll* is used regularly in Eddic poetry to denote ‘ship’.¹³⁹ However, further evidence of how a *kjóll* must have looked like or what it was used for is unclear. In Irish the word has the same general definition: ‘ship’. The translation ‘barque’ is based on a gloss in which *ciúil* is said to be a *barc*; see *cnaturbarc* below.

- *cnairr* ‘ship’ < ON *knorr* ‘ship’ (esp. ‘merchant-ship’)

The Norse *knorr* was the largest of the cargo- and merchant-ships. It was mostly used as a sea vessel for trading voyages to all Norse Atlantic islands and settlements, even as far as Greenland. The first Norse settlers of Iceland came there by *knorr*, demonstrating that it was used for exploring as well. Greenland was also discovered using this type of ship. Within the category of the *knorr* subtypes were to be found, built for the different waters in which they sailed. The *knorr* that was used for Baltic trade differed slightly from the type that traded with Iceland. A typical ship that sailed to Iceland had a crew of about fifteen to twenty men, which was comparatively small due to the fact that rowing was inessential. Despite the fact that the *knorr* was always distinguished from the longships, it was most likely used as a warship as well during the Viking Age.¹⁴⁰ The fact that it was used by the Norse for several different purposes may explain why the Irish *cnairr* simply indicated a ‘ship’ in the more general sense. Again, the scarce amount of attestations limits our precise understanding of this type of ship. It is of interest to note that OE *cnear*, also from ON *knorr*, does show a specific semantic load, namely ‘small trading-ship’.¹⁴¹

- *cnaplong* ‘studded ship’ < ON *knappr* ‘ball’ + OIr. *long* ‘ship’

¹³⁷ Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 129-131.

¹³⁸ Landström, *Het Schip*, 59.

¹³⁹ Judith Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age : The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge 2001) 136.

¹⁴⁰ Brøgger, *The Viking Ships*, 180.

¹⁴¹ Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 323.

According to Marstrander (1915) the designation ‘studded ship’ refers the stern of the ship, which he assumes was studded.¹⁴² It is not certain whether the Norse themselves had an equivalent term for this type of ship, as the Irish word seems to be a literal representation of what they saw. Still, the first part of the compound is a loan from ON. The second part is Irish, which makes it a bilingual word. This bilingual aspect might connect it to the *Gall-Goídil*, as they probably constituted a bilingual community. Perhaps *cnaplong* is an equivalent of *cnaturbarc*.

- *cnaturbarc* ‘name of a kind of ship’ < ON **knattar-barki* ‘sort of small, studded boat, launch’

The ON form is unattested. The first element of the compound is ON *knattar*, genitive of *knotttr* ‘ball’. The second element *barki* is found in ON where it denotes a type of small boat. In Irish however, the word is also found as *bárc* ‘ship’. This word predates the Viking invasions, as it is either a loanword from Latin *barca*¹⁴³, or a native Celtic word.¹⁴⁴ If the second element in *cnaturbarc* is Irish, then we can connect this word to *cnaplong*, as they are both bilingual and seem to have the same meaning.

- *coite* ‘boat, vessel’ < ON *kati* ‘small ship’

Although the possibility has been suggested that *coite* was a Latin loan from *cotta* or Vulgar Latin *cotia*, Vendryes (1959) states that it is more likely derived from ON.¹⁴⁵ The Irish seem to have adopted the word in a more general sense. However, we have too little knowledge of the *kati* to be able to compare it with the definition of a boat or vessel in general, and too little knowledge of the precise meaning of Irish *coite*.

- *laídeng* ‘boat, ship, vessel’ < ON *leiðangr* ‘levy (esp. by sea)’, ‘war contribution, war tax, naval forces’

The ON word *leiðangr* was used to indicate the manned maritime enforcements that the different provinces had to wage to the king. From this the more general meaning ‘naval forces’ came to be used as well. This type of *leiðangr*-ship usually consisted of twenty thwarts and was rowed by a crew of forty. The ships could reach a size of twenty-five to thirty

¹⁴² Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 133.

¹⁴³ *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *barki*

¹⁴⁴ *OED* s.v. *barque*

¹⁴⁵ *Lexique Étymologique* s.v. *coite*

thwarts. They were considered longships as they were used for warfare.¹⁴⁶ The Irish word in this case as well seems to be taken in with a more general sense.

- *scaeth* ‘ship, fleet’ < ON *skeið* ‘warship, galley’, ‘weaver’s reed, sley’, ‘sheath’

The Norse ship that was called a *skeið* was one of the largest warships, consisting of thirty or more thwarts. It was occasionally even mentioned as a *drakar*, the largest type of warship.¹⁴⁷ Because the *skeið* must have been a very long and narrow ship it is easy to imagine it might have gotten the name from the words for a ‘weaver’s reed, sley’ and ‘sheath’. These last definitions were not taken over into Irish, implying semantic narrowing. This might give an indication of the depth of knowledge that the Irish gained of the Old Norse language. It would seem that they only learned the words to describe what they encountered without learning other meanings of that particular foreign word. The Irish added the meaning ‘fleet’ to the word; perhaps these types of ship came to Ireland in fleets.

- *scib* ‘ship’ < ON *skip* ‘ship (of any kind)’

The word denotes a ‘ship’ in general in both languages. It is worth noting that other Germanic languages also have cognates for ON *skip*, for instance OE *scip* and Old Frisian (OFris.) *skip*, *schip*. The ultimate etymology is uncertain;¹⁴⁸ it is therefore impossible to determine with certainty from which language Irish adopted the word. However, considering the number of ON loanwords for some type of ‘ship’, it is very probable that Irish *scib* also came from ON.

- *scúta* ‘boat, ship’ < ON *skúta* ‘small craft, skiff’

Although this word is found in both North Germanic and West Germanic languages, de Vries (1977) considers it to be ON in view of its early attestation in that language.¹⁴⁹ Other than that it must have been a lightweight sailing boat, it is difficult to determine any further specifics. The Irish translation seems to be even broader.

At the beginning of this paragraph I presented two possibilities regarding the generalisation of ON words denoting types of ships. The first was that the Norse words were taken into Irish with a general definition, discarding the specific semantic qualities it had in Old Norse. The

¹⁴⁶ Landström, *Het Schip*, 64.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 64.

¹⁴⁸ OED s.v. *ship*

¹⁴⁹ *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *skúta*

second explanation was that the Irish differentiated between types of ships just like the Norse did, but that we are unable to observe these distinctions from the text material. When looking at the two possibilities, we can observe the following. If ON words for types of ships were taken into Irish with a more general meaning, two doubts have to be raised. Firstly, why would the Irish adopt several words from ON if they all meant the same thing to them? Furthermore, we may have evidence of words that are an innovation (*cnaplóng* and *cnaturbarc*). It would be improbable to create new terminology if all words in this category had the same general meaning ‘ship’, ‘boat’. Secondly, the Irish language already possessed words denoting ‘ship’, ‘boat’ and these words have also been found to describe Viking ships, for instance *long* and *bárc*. The evidence would suggest that the second possibility is more probable, namely that the Irish differentiated between types of ships just like the Norse did, but that we are unable to observe these specific distinctions from the text material. Further research into the different attestations combined with our knowledge of the ON origin might lead to additional evidence for this notion.

2. 1. 3. 2. Fixed ship parts

- *ábur* ‘oar-hole’ < ON *háborá* ‘rowlock’

There is no convincing semantic difference between ‘rowlock’ and ‘oar-hole’; therefore I consider these two definitions identical.

- *as* ‘?’ < ON *ass* ‘the pole to which the lower end of a sail was fastened during a fair wind’

This word is given as a borrowing from ON by both Marstrander (1915) and Walsh (1922), but neither of them give a translation of the Irish word.¹⁵⁰ I have not been able to find a satisfactory translation; therefore I cannot say for certain whether this is a borrowing into Irish.

- *beirling* ‘some part of a boat’ < ON *berling* ‘type of pole or beam on a ship’
(perh. ‘pole, board’)

¹⁵⁰ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 61. ; A. Walsh, *Scandinavian Relations with Ireland during the Viking Period* (Dublin 1922) 39.

The word *beirling* is often connected to ON *byrðingr*, a type of merchant-ship. However, as Marstrander (1915) points out, *beirling* cannot be linguistically derived from *byrðingr*. He connects it to ON *berling*,¹⁵¹ which also ties in with the Irish definition.

- *lipting, lifting* ‘taffrail of a ship, higher part of stern of ship’ < ON *lypting* ‘raised deck’

On a Norse ship this was the part of the deck in the utmost front and back of the boat, which was slightly raised into a small platform.¹⁵² In Irish it seems the definition was altered slightly, referring only to the stern of the boat. This might also be a translation issue, where modern shipping terminology influenced the perception of this term. Furthermore it can denote the taffrail, which is the outermost railing around the stern.

- *lunnta* ‘oar-handle’ < ON *hlummr* ‘handle of an oar’

The word *lunnta* is often thought to be derived from ON *hlunnr* ‘roller for launching or drawing up ships’. It is more likely however, that the word came from ON *hlummr* ‘handle of an oar’, which fits semantically. The ON words *hlunnr* and *hlummr* seem to have been confused at some point, causing the Irish form.¹⁵³

- *rúm* ‘room, interior space’ < ON *rúm* ‘room, space’, ‘place, seat’, ‘bed’, ‘room in a ship (one for each pair of rowers)’, ‘space of time’

The attestations for this word are, according to *DIL*, all associated with the hold or interior of a sailing vessel. We can therefore claim that semantic narrowing has taken place, and that this word was used as a specific nautical term.

- *sess* ‘bench of a boat’, ‘beam’, (fig.) ‘key position, battle-rank, row, rank’ < ON *sess* ‘seat, thwart’

Marstrander derives this word from ON.¹⁵⁴ However, it could also be a formation of the Irish verb *saidid* ‘sits’. The Irish word has a few derivations, all connected to shipping: *sessbéimm* ‘oarstroke, distance of an oarstroke’, *oenshess* ‘boat with one thwart’, *tresess* ‘boat with three

¹⁵¹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 21-22, 132.

¹⁵² Landström, *Het Schip*, 59.

¹⁵³ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 44.

thwarts' and *cóicsess* 'boat with five thwarts'. Especially the last three are interesting when we consider the fact that the Norse used the number of thwarts to determine the size of a vessel, which was done with the same word. The other Irish definition 'beam' could be related to the fact that the 'thwart' or 'room' was determined by the space between two crossbeams. The figurative definitions in Irish arose logically from the position that was taken in a boat or ship. It is interesting to note that I have not found a specific Irish word for this figurative denotation other than *sess*. This may point to Norse influence on Irish warfare.

- *stiúir* 'rudder, helm', guidance, control', 'guide, controller' < ON *stýri* 'helm, rudder'

In this case the ON meaning has been expanded by the Irish. Alongside the actual object it can also denote the principle of steering or even the person handling the object.

- *tile* 'board, plank', 'stern' < ON *pili* 'wainscot, panel, board-partition'

As with *stiúir*, this word also expands the meaning of the original ON word. The meaning 'board', 'plank' corresponds to the original, but 'stern' is a clear addition.

- *tophta, toghta* 'thwart' < ON *þopt(a)* 'rowing bench, thwart'

In this case, the ON and Irish definition is identical.

- *ub* 'hull (of a ship)', 'prow' < ON *húfr* 'hulk or hull (of a ship)'

Marstrander (1915) derives *ub* from ON *húfr* on account of its translation as 'hull of a ship'.¹⁵⁵ However, Vendryes (1959) convincingly argues that the meaning 'prow', the point of a ship, is more relevant here, and connects it with another meaning of Irish *ub*, namely 'point of a sword'.¹⁵⁶

- *undás* 'windlass' < ON *vindáss* 'winding-pole, windlass'

This word is unattested in the Old and Middle Irish sources, and found only in later texts. O'Rahilly (1942), however, suggests that this word may nevertheless be an early borrowing from ON alongside other shipping terminology.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 13.

¹⁵⁶ *Lexique Étymologique* s.v. *ub*

¹⁵⁷ T.F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes, mainly etymological', *Ériu* 13 (1942) 201.

When considering the evidence from the above-mentioned forms, it could be suggested that specific terminology was borrowed from ON, and was integrated into the Irish language. In some cases the meaning remained the same, but in other cases the meaning was elaborated upon. This would imply an active usage of these terms.

2. 1. 3. 3. *Unfixed ship parts*

- *accaire* ‘anchor’ < ON *akkeri* ‘anchor’

Although the two forms are semantically identical, there is an interesting observation to be made. Irish already had a word denoting ‘anchor’, namely *ingor*, which was a loan from Latin *ancora* ‘anchor’.¹⁵⁸ This *ancora* was later borrowed into ON where it developed into *akkeri*. With the coming of the Norsemen to Ireland, this *akkeri* was adopted into Irish, creating *accaire* alongside *ingor*, with identical meaning.

- *accarsóit* ‘anchorage’ < ON *akkerissát, akkerissæti* ‘anchorage’

These two forms are semantically identical.

- *achtam* ‘braces (of a sail)’ < ON *aktaumr* ‘braces (straps) of a sail’

These two forms are semantically identical.

- *eibil* ‘rope for hoisting a sail, clew-lines’ < ON *hefill* ‘a noose fastened to the edge of a sail to help in furling it’

These two forms are semantically identical.

- *scót* ‘sheet, sail’ < ON *skaut* ‘corner (of a square cloth)’, ‘corner of a sail or sheet’, ‘flap, skirt of a cloak’, ‘lap’, square piece of cloth, kerchief’, ‘lady’s hood’

In this case, only one of the definitions of ON *skaut* was taken over into Irish, namely the ‘square piece of cloth’. This was given a clear nautical connotation, indicating that the circumstances in which the word was borrowed were those of a shipping context. The other definitions were not taken over into Irish, implying semantic narrowing. It would seem here,

¹⁵⁸ Damian McManus, ‘A Chronology of the Latin Loan-Words in Early Irish’, *Ériu* 34 (1983) 60.

just as with *scaeth*, that they only learned these words to describe what they encountered without learning other meanings of that particular foreign word.

- *stag* ‘stay (of a ship)’ < ON *stag* ‘stay’ (esp. the rope from the mast to the stem)

These two forms are semantically identical.

2. 1. 3. 4. Verbs¹⁵⁹ connected to shipping

- *allsad* ‘clewing up, slackening a sail’ < ON *hálsa* ‘to embrace’, ‘to clew up (the sail)’

Here we find another case of semantic narrowing. Only one of the definitions of ON *hálsa* was taken over into Irish, namely the one with the nautical connotation.

- *lecaid* ‘lays out, sets, places, lowers (sail)’ < ON *leggja* ‘to lay, to place, to put, etc’

ON *leggja* is a verb with a large amount of definitions. It seems, however, that the Irish borrowed the verb mainly with its nautical connotation ‘to lower sail’.

- *scibaid* ‘fits out, equips a ship’ < ON *skipa* ‘to arrange, place’, to take up, occupy’, ‘to assign a thing to one’, ‘to man’, ‘to arrange, make ready for’, ‘to change’, ‘to draw up’, ‘to fit out a ship’

And finally, we find another case of semantic narrowing, where only the definition with a nautical connotation was adopted into Irish.

¹⁵⁹ Thomason and Kaufman (1988) note that it is often said that many languages cannot or will not borrow verbs. However, they convincingly argue that verbal borrowing does occur, but on a much smaller scale than the borrowing of nouns. We can observe the same in the case of ON loanwords in Irish. Thomason and Kaufman state that the predominance of nouns over verbs in loanword lists is probably of lexical-semantic, rather than a grammatical and structural nature. Cf. Thomason and Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*, 348-349.

2. 1. 4. Conclusion

We have seen that the different Irish words for types of ships borrowed from ON give rise to an ambiguous interpretation regarding their semantic specifics. The translations given in DIL are all very general, but it seems improbable to me that the Irish would borrow numerous different words denoting a ‘ship’ or ‘boat’ without connecting a specific type or aspect to it. The evidence suggests that the Irish differentiated between types of ships just like the Norse did, but that we are unable to observe these specific distinctions from the text material. This notion is supported by the other categories of shipping loanwords. Here we can observe that specific ON nautical terminology was adopted into Irish, without causing a generalisation of definition. A possible reason for the specific and extensive borrowing of nautical terminology could be that the Irish tried to assimilate the shipping technology of the Norsemen, as they were much more advanced in this area. This would imply that the words were not solely borrowed for making observations, but with the intention of using the nautical terms on a practical level. Possible evidence for this are the two words *lipting* and *tile*, which seem to show a development from the original ON meaning.

2. 2. Semantic category: Animals

Animals were very important to the Irish, as they provided a means for travel, (farm)work and food. The written sources give us plenty of information about different kinds of animals that were part of the Irish society. Most information concerns domesticated animals, such as livestock, horses and dogs, which were the most important animals in Irish society. Wild animals were obtained through hunting or fishing. They supplied a secondary proportion of the food that was eaten by the Irish, though there must obviously have been some fluctuation in the importance of wild food. For instance, a cattle-plague would have caused an increase in the hunting of wild game.¹⁶⁰ Marine mammals were also hunted; seals for instance were hunted for their meat and, especially the pups, for their hides and oil. Other marine animals that were hunted were the walrus (see below), and the porpoise, called *mucc mara* in Irish, ‘pig of the sea’, presumably on account of its blubbery but edible flesh. This name, *mucc mara*, was also used to denote the dolphin, though this animal is less likely to travel up the rivers and estuaries than the porpoise, and therefore would have been more difficult to hunt.¹⁶¹ In the *Annals of Ulster* we find an entry in the year 828 A.D. describing a great slaughter of porpoises by the Norsemen: *Mucar már di muccaibh mora i n-airer nArdde Ciannachta o Gallaibh* ‘A great slaughter of porpoises on the coast of Ard Cianachta by the foreigners’¹⁶². As the Norsemen were a sea people themselves and sailed great distances, they must have been very well acquainted with different types of sea animals and how to hunt them. According to Fergus Kelly (2000) there is no evidence that the Irish hunted whales, though stranded whales ‘were viewed with enthusiasm by those who lived near the coast’.¹⁶³ According to the laws, everybody in the community had a claim on a stranded whale. Also, the stranding of whales or other great marine animals was connected to the justice and virtues of a ruler. Perhaps we can deduct from this that whales were too large to be caught, although they were eaten when they were stranded. Furthermore, whalebone was used for various purposes as well.

Fishing in Ireland was done mostly by using weirs that were placed in rivers or estuaries. These weirs were most useful for catching migratory fish such as salmon and eels, which

¹⁶⁰ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 272.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 282-283.

¹⁶² *Annals of Ulster*, 284-285.

¹⁶³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 284.

were two of the most consumed fish by the Irish. Especially the salmon was of great importance to the Irish society, not only as a part of their diet, but it also carried a great symbolic value in their literature and culture. A weir was made entirely of stones, or entirely of stakes and wattling (a construction of poles intertwined with twigs, reeds or branches), or with a combination of these materials. Fish could also be caught using nets, presumably made of linen threads.¹⁶⁴ Another important fish for the Irish was the trout, which was caught by line and hook, called a *dubán*.¹⁶⁵ It can be stated that fishing was important in Ireland, as there were certain regulations when it came to fishing. Presumably, most fishing was carried out by local farmers who had the right to fish in particular places, though it was also possible for communities to have a shared fishing-spot. Furthermore, high penalties were given for stealing fish from weirs.¹⁶⁶ We find very few references in Irish sources on sea fishing.¹⁶⁷ It seems from written and archaeological evidence that the Irish society was mostly concentrated on agriculture, hunting wild animals and the catching of freshwater fish.

The Norsemen's attitude towards animals seems to have been largely the same as the Irish. They kept domesticated animals for the same purposes. The greatest difference is most likely the consumption of fish, which was a large part of the Norsemen's diet. Herring, in particular, was consumed a lot. They also hunted whales, seals and polar bears, and those that lived further away from the ocean but in areas that were well-forested, hunted animals such as elk, deer, wild boar and bears.¹⁶⁸

2. 2. 1 Norse words for animals in Old and Middle Irish

- *eobarr* 'boar' < ON *jǫfurr* 'wild boar', (poet.) 'king, chief, prince'

We can detect from the Irish sources that wild boar were hunted for eating. They were commonly pursued with hunting dogs, but could also be caught in traps or shot with an arrow.¹⁶⁹ In his *Topography of Ireland* Giraldus Cambrensis notes the Irish boar: 'We have

¹⁶⁴ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 287-289.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 290.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 286-287, 289.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 296.

¹⁶⁸ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 252.

¹⁶⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 281.

never seen anywhere such a supply of boars and wild pigs'.¹⁷⁰ The word *eobarr* 'boar' is uncommon in the Irish sources; the usual name for the wild boar was the native *torc allaid*. Marstrander (1915) believes the word *eobarr* was derived from ON *jǫfurr* with the same meaning,¹⁷¹ though it may also have come into Irish via OE *eofer*, *eofor* 'wild boar'.¹⁷² In ON the word was also used poetically to denote a king, chief or prince. If the word was taken into Irish from ON, this particular definition was not adopted.

- *est* 'horse' < ON *hestr* 'stallion, horse'

The horse was an important animal in Irish society, usually associated with men of high rank. Horses were used for riding, farm work and in warfare.¹⁷³ This word, *est*, is only found in one attestation, where it is explained that *est* means 'horse'.¹⁷⁴ We can assume that *est* was not a very common word in Old and Middle Irish, and that native words such as *ech* and *capall* were the generic terms for 'horse'.

- *gadar* (<*gagar*) 'hunting-dog, beagle' < ON *gagarr* 'dog'

Dogs were used and bred for all kinds of purposes, such as guarding, hunting, herding or purely for keeping as pets. Hunting dogs were used mainly for hunting deer, wild boar and hares.¹⁷⁵ According to Marstrander (1915), the word *gadar*, from *gagar*, was derived from ON *gagarr*.¹⁷⁶ There are however a few difficulties for this derivation. Kelly (2000) finds many attestations of Irish *gadar* 'hunting-dog' in Old Irish law-texts, suggesting the word was in the language before the Viking incursions of the ninth and tenth centuries. No other Norse loan is found in a law-text.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the word *gagarr* is rare in Old Norse. Finally, there is literary and historical evidence that dogs were exported from Ireland to the Norse countries. For example, in the *Brennu-Njáls Saga* an Irish dog called Sámur is given to Gunnarr á Hlíðarenda.¹⁷⁸ It seems therefore that *gadar* was not a loan from ON; it may even be the other way around.

¹⁷⁰ Giraldus Cambrensis, *The First Version of the Topography of Ireland*, transl. by John J. O'Meara (Dundalk 1951) 28.

¹⁷¹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 28.

¹⁷² OED s.v. *eber*

¹⁷³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 88-89.

¹⁷⁴ *est* .i. *ech*

¹⁷⁵ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 114, 117.

¹⁷⁶ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 112.

¹⁷⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 118.

¹⁷⁸ *Ek vil gefa þér þrjá gripi: [...] ok hund, er mér var gefinn á Irlandi* 'I want to give you three gifts: [...] and a dog, that was given to me in Ireland', cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Brennu-Njáls Saga* (Reykjavík 1954) 173.

- *langa* ‘ling’ < ON *langa* ‘ling’

In this case the two forms are semantically identical. It is interesting to note that this is a saltwater fish, and the Irish mainly caught freshwater fish. The Norse were presumably more accomplished in ocean fishing, and the Irish adopted names for certain saltwater fish, like the ling, as well as adopting their fishing-techniques. This can be derived from another Norse loan into Irish *doruba* ‘fishing line’ from ON *dorg*, which will be discussed in the semantic category ‘utensils’.

- *rosualt* ‘walrus’ < ON *hrosshvalr* ‘walrus’

To find this animal attested so early in Irish is interesting, as it is an animal that at present is only found in the northern arctic region, far beyond Irish waters. However, at the time of the Vikings, the walrus also swam in more southern waters, as far south as northern Scotland, and especially around Shetland. In the Yellow Book of Lecan version of Cormac’s Glossary the animal is described as a type of seal.¹⁷⁹ Still, the Norse must have been much more familiar with the walrus than the Irish were, thus bringing the name for this animal into the Irish language. For example, the Norse were experienced sailors, also of northern seas. Furthermore, their homeland stretched far more north, all the way into the Arctic.

- *scarbh* ‘cormorant’ < ON *skarfr* ‘cormorant’

This word is found in one attestation, and is now the common Modern Irish name for the cormorant. It is also found in Scots Gaelic: *sgarbh* ‘cormorant’.

- *scatán* ‘herring’ < ON *skata* ‘skate’

The Irish *scatán* is often believed to be derived from ON. However, this is semantically problematic, as the skate and the herring are quite dissimilar types of fish. Kelly (2000) proposes that the Irish word was derived from OE *scead* ‘shad’, which is a larger relative of the herring.¹⁸⁰ From this OE word the Welsh *ysgadan* ‘herring’ is probably also derived. Kelly (2000) also states that herring-fishing was practised by the inhabitants of the eastern and northern ports in Ireland in the early thirteenth century, who were mainly *Gall-Goídil* in descent: ‘The *Annals of Loch Cé* record that in the year 1217 all the herring-fishermen (*scatánaig*) of Ireland from Waterford to Derry went to the Isle of Man to fish. They

¹⁷⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 283.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 297.

committed acts of violence there, and were consequently put to death'.¹⁸¹ The fact that the *Gall-Goídil* practised extensive herring fishing is most likely the result of the influence of their Norse ancestors, seeing that herring was a prominent part of the Norse diet.¹⁸²

- *sitrech* 'a neighing, act of neighing, braying', 'a sneezing' < ON *þytr* 'noise, whistling sound'

Lexique Étymologique says that this word appears to be an onomatopoeia, but mentions nothing about a potential borrowing from ON. If we take it to be a loan from *þytr* it is striking to see that the general semantic load was taken over in a specific animal-related meaning, especially, when considering that the ON had a specific word for the neighing of a horse: *hneggja*. However, if we consider the variant spelling of *sitrech*, namely *sitir*, it does seem to be a convincing loan, despite its more challenging semantic development.

- *tros* 'codfish' < ON *þorskr* 'cod, codfish'

The cod is another saltwater fish that was probably introduced into the Irish diet by the Norsemen.

2. 2. 2. Conclusion

In this semantic category we see that the main influence from ON concerns marine animals. The Irish themselves were well acquainted with sea mammals, such as seals, porpoises, dolphins and whales, most of which were caught at sea. Fishing, however, was most likely solely done inland in fresh water. The Norsemen, being more advanced in sea-fishing techniques, introduced several names of types of saltwater fish and other marine animals into Irish. With these names, the sea-fishing techniques must have been introduced as well. This can be connected to the major influence the Norsemen had on shipping in Ireland.

¹⁸¹ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 297.

¹⁸² Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 252.

2. 3. Semantic category: Food production and diet

2. 3. 1. Irish food production and diet

The typical medieval Irish meal consisted of bread and milk. Other foods that could be included in an Irish meal were vegetables, such as cabbage, root-vegetables, onions and leeks. A more prosperous farm often had an enclosed garden near the farmhouse where these vegetables were cultivated. Herbs were also grown in such gardens. Watercress, sorrel, wild garlic, seaweed and different types of nuts were gathered from the wild. Vegetables were often eaten raw, or cooked in a soup or broth. Fruit was also eaten, such as apples and plums.¹⁸³

Dairy-products such as milk, cheese and butter provided a large part of the medieval Irish diet. Hard cheese could be preserved for a longer time, and was therefore highly valued.¹⁸⁴ Meat was a good supplemental source for proteins next to dairy products. Animals that were eaten included cows, pigs, poultry, and from the wild, deer, wild boar and fish. Sheep and goats were occasionally eaten, though they were more valued for their milk and, in the case of sheep, wool.¹⁸⁵ Salted meat from the pig was most popular, as it could be preserved the longest. Another manner in which meat was prepared was by boiling it. This was often done by filling a hole in the ground with water and boiling the meat by putting hot stones in the water. Meat could also be prepared by simply roasting it on a spit over an open fire. Fish was cooked in this manner as well. Additionally, suet (raw animal fat) was eaten, as well as offal, i.e. intestines, head, heart, liver, kidney and tail. Sausages were for instance made from animals' intestines, though it is unclear what exactly the stuffing was made of.¹⁸⁶ It is assumed that the higher a person's rank, the more meat was present in a person's diet. This also goes for the degree of variety in the diet of a person.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 250, 316, 339.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 318.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 72-73, 78-79.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 336-339.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 318-319.

Honey was eaten with bread, or provided the key ingredient for making mead, which was a well-drunk beverage next to milk and beer. Wine was a drink for the wealthy, as it had to be imported from abroad.¹⁸⁸

Cereals formed the largest part of the Irish diet, typically in the form of bread or porridge. Another grain product was made by soaking the husks of bran from oats or barley for a few days so that a slight fermentation took place. This could subsequently be drunk, after it was strained, or be made into a jelly by boiling it.¹⁸⁹ The most favourable, but also the most luxurious of cereals was wheat. Due to the relatively wet climate in Ireland wheat was not a largely grown type of grain, as it was quite sensitive to fungal infections. Other types of cereal that were grown include rye, spelt, barley and oats, most of which were sturdier. However, storms and mildew were not the only potential dangers for grains; they were also occasionally eaten by cattle, wild deer or mice. Humans could form a problem as well, as legal texts reveal that large fines were to be paid by people who cut off an ear of corn from its stem, or gathered a fistful of ears of corn while walking on a path by a cornfield.¹⁹⁰

Overall the Irish had a healthy and varied diet, though it seems unlikely it was this varied all year round and among all ranks of people. Other matters could influence their diet as well. Severe destruction or failure of harvests could bring about famine, and this could also be the case if cattle were struck by diseases.¹⁹¹ In these cases more food was hunted and gathered from the wild, though this was not always sufficient to avert famine.

2. 3. 2. Norse food production and diet

The Norse had roughly the same diet as the Irish. The most important part of it was provided by grains as well, in the shape of bread and porridge. Especially the lower classes ate a lot of porridge, which was made from water and coarse-ground flour. This was also what the food on board Viking ships consisted of, so mainly flour and butter were brought. Rye flour could be sweetened and made into a paste called *varí* that could be mixed with water. Barley and rye were the predominantly cultivated grains, alongside wheat and oats. These grains were

¹⁸⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 319.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 330-332.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 220, 235-236.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 219.

often cultivated next to each other in the same field, and were harvested somewhat earlier than nowadays, so that the seeds would not fall to the ground.¹⁹²

Food preservation was key during the Viking Age; the Norse used salt, just like the Irish did, which they obtained either from seawater or from burnt seaweed. They also used ice to preserve food, or dried it, which was done with meat as well as fish. Other foods that could be preserved longer like (whey) cheese were eaten abundantly. Fish was probably eaten much more by the Norse than the Irish, and other marine animals were regularly eaten as well, such as whales and seals. Besides these animals sheep, goats, oxen, pigs and horses were eaten. Wild animals that were hunted for meat include elk, deer, wild boars, bears, and game birds. Meat seems to have been boiled more than roasted, or it was made into a broth. All this was combined with foods like butter, cream, vegetables, apples, berries and nuts. However, in Scandinavia famine could strike as well, and in those times the meals could consist of seaweed, bark and lichen.¹⁹³

2. 3. 3. Norse words for food in Old and Middle Irish

- *beóir* ‘beer’ < ON *bjórr* ‘beer’

Beer was an important drink in Ireland in medieval times. As milk and vegetables were scarcer during the winter, beer could provide additional nutrients to the diet.¹⁹⁴ The most common words for ‘beer’ were the native *linn* and *cuirm*. The word *beóir* was most probably adopted from ON *bjórr*, which in turn is thought to have come from OE *béor* ‘beer’. Marstrander (1915) mentions that in Irish folk tradition beer is often connected with the Norsemen.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps the reason for borrowing this word from ON can be found in a difference in the brewing process or ingredients.

- *broth* ‘beard or corn, ear of corn, corn, fruit, produce’ < ON *brauð* ‘bread’

¹⁹² Hannele Klemettilä, *The Medieval Kitchen : A Social History with Recipes* (London 2012) 41-42.

¹⁹³ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 252.

¹⁹⁴ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 333.

¹⁹⁵ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 117.

The suggestion that this word is a borrowing from ON *brauð* is unlikely. The evidence for this borrowing in the early attestation seems to be a later addition by a glossator.¹⁹⁶ A borrowing from OE *broþ* ‘broth’ seems more likely. It could be reasoned that the ears of corn were used in something like a broth or porridge.

- *bulbing* ‘loaf of bread’ < ON *bylmingr* ‘a sort of bread’

In the Irish sources we find different types of loaves. A standard type of loaf is called a *bairgen inraic*; a loaf for a woman was half the size, a *bairgen banfuini*. Another type of small loaf was called a *tortíne*, which is a diminutive of *tort* ‘loaf’ or ‘cake’, from Latin *torta* ‘loaf’. We also find the *srúbán*, which was about one eighth in size of a standard loaf. The name, ‘small snout’, most likely referred to its shape.¹⁹⁷ In the dictionary we find *bulbing* to simply mean a ‘loaf of bread’. However, it is most probable that this was also a specific type of loaf, most likely one that was traditionally Norse. What shape and size this loaf was is unclear.

- *mar* ‘sausage’ < ON *morr* ‘suet’

Marstrander (1915) takes *mar* to be a borrowing from ON.¹⁹⁸ It can be imagined that this was a specific type of sausage introduced by the Norse, which had suet as one of the ingredients.

- *póna(i)r* ‘bean-plant, beans’ < ON *baun* ‘bean’, *baunir* (pl.) ‘beans’

In Irish no native word for ‘bean’ is attested. However, as stated by Kelly (2000), this does not necessarily prove that beans were unknown in Ireland before Christian times.¹⁹⁹ The word for ‘bean’ before the coming of the Norsemen was *seib*, from Latin *faba* ‘bean’. Around the tenth century this word had been completely replaced by the ON loan *pónair*, and became the common word for ‘bean’ or ‘beans’ in the whole Gaelic-speaking area as well, giving Scots Gaelic *pònair* and Manx *poanrey*. Kelly (2000) explains this with the suggestion that the Norse colonists may have introduced an improved type of bean, or that beans were an especially important crop in their economy. If the latter is the case, this would provide new information, as the most common vegetables that were eaten by the Norse are considered to be cabbages and onions.²⁰⁰ In any case, the Norsemen did control good agricultural land

¹⁹⁶ *Lexique Étymologique s.v. broth*

¹⁹⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 330.

¹⁹⁸ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 74.

¹⁹⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 249.

²⁰⁰ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 252.

around the east coast towns of Ireland for a number of centuries. It makes good sense, therefore, that the Norse had an agricultural influence on the Irish as well.

- *pun(n)ann* ‘sheaf’ < ON *bundin* ‘sheaf (of corn)’

This is another loan from ON that demonstrates the agricultural influence on Irish society. There is evidence to be found that the Irish, due to the size of the reaping sickle, cut the grain very high up, close to the ear. The ears of the corn were then put straight into a reaping basket.²⁰¹ The Norse loan *punnann* was perhaps taken into the language because the practise of cutting the stalks near the ground and binding them into sheaves was introduced by the Norse settlers. However, Kelly (2000) found a reference to a corn-rick in an Old Irish law-text from about the eighth century, which is a stack of reaped grains that can only be made from several sheaves.²⁰²

- *staca* ‘stack (of corn)’ < ON *stakkr* ‘cape, short cloak’, ‘stack of hay’

This word is another example of agricultural terminology taken over from the Norse. The semantic narrowing shows that the word was borrowed solely as an agricultural term. The meaning ‘cape’ or ‘short cloak’ was not taken over into Irish.

- *staíc* ‘steak, piece of meat’ < ON *steik* ‘steak’

These two forms are semantically identical. Why this word was borrowed from ON is unclear; the Irish language had several words for pieces or cuts of meat. Perhaps the Norse cut the meat differently from the Irish; thus, the *staíc* might have represented a specific kind of (Norse) cut. It can also be imagined that this piece of meat was prepared in a way that was unfamiliar to the Irish.

²⁰¹ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 238.

²⁰² *Ibid.* 239.

2. 3. 4. Conclusion

Many of the borrowings in this category are foods connected to cereals and their production process. The Norsemen controlled good agricultural land around the east coast of Ireland, which could have led to a significant influence on Irish agriculture. The specific nature of *punnann* and *staca* suggest an influence not only on kinds of produce but also an influence on the production process in Irish agriculture. The other loanwords seem to designate specific Norse foods, which could also have come to Ireland through trade.

2. 4. Semantic category: Society

Irish society was centred on small communities, mainly consisting of kin groups. Within these kin groups social ranks were clear and hierarchically ordered. Social status was dependant either on political power and wealth (for example kings or lords), or on particular knowledge and skill (for example clerics, lawyers or poets). Profession and rank was not a purely social matter, but also determined one's legal standing. It was therefore important to have an unblemished reputation, as social ridicule had a severe impact on legal rights. Most feared in Irish society was a poet's satire, which could damage one's reputation to such an extent that it could even dethrone kings. Every person in the land had a place in this hierarchical system, from slaves to kings, and had legal rights accordingly.²⁰³

2. 4. 1. Norse words connected to society in Old and Middle Irish

2. 4. 1. 1. Professions

- *ármann* 'officer, official' < ON *ármaðr* 'steward (esp. of a king's or bishop's estates)'

In this case we can detect semantic widening. Irish already had several words denoting a steward, such as *rechtaire* and *maer*. Therefore, it was perhaps not necessary to borrow this word in that specific function. It may also be that the duties of an *ármaðr* were different from those of the *rechtaire*, which could explain why the word was borrowed with a broader semantic load.

- *búanna* 'professional soldier, fighting-man, farmer, esp. hired, billeted soldier, mercenary, permanent soldier' < ON *búandi, bóndi* 'husbandman, peasant, landowner', 'master, head of a household', 'husband'

Whether this word was indeed a borrowing from ON is uncertain. *Lexique Étymologique* sees it as a derivative of Irish *buan* 'permanent, lasting', with *dae* 'human being'. The semantic

²⁰³ Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin 1988), 8.

difference between *búandi* and *búanna* is significant, but the combination of ‘permanent’ and ‘human being’ does not form a clear semantic origin for a ‘professional soldier’ either. The Norse word was borrowed into OE as *bōnda* or *būnda* in the same sense as ON.

- *callaire* ‘herald, crier’ < ON *kallari* ‘herald, crier’

These two forms are semantically identical. It is unclear to me why this would be borrowed into Irish, as it already had words denoting this specific profession, like *airfócarthid* and *erdonál*. The *callaire* might have been a different profession than the Norse *kallari* where it concerns the connected duties. It may also be evidence for a significant Norse societal and cultural influence in Ireland, where ON words coexisted with or maybe even replaced their Irish synonyms.

- *fithir* ‘teacher’ < ON *vitr* ‘wise’

Marstrander (1915) considers *fithir* to be a borrowing from ON *vitr* ‘wise’ in the sense of ‘foster father’.²⁰⁴ However, Old Irish *ro-fitir* ‘knows’ also comes to mind, and perhaps it could simply be a derivative from this verb.

- *íarla, erell* ‘earl’, ‘ruler, lord (general)’ < ON *jarl* ‘a highborn, noble man or warrior (poet.)’, ‘earl (in dignity next to the king)’

The OE word *eorl* is found as a cognate to ON *jarl*, making it difficult to state with certainty if Irish *íarla* came from ON. It is unclear whether the Irish adopted the word for their own hierarchical terminology, or merely used the word to indicate a foreign ruler or lord.

- *mangaire* ‘hawker, pedlar’ < ON *mangari* ‘monger, higgler’

There is doubt as to whether this word was borrowed from ON or from OE. Greene (1976) takes it to be a loan from Middle English *monger*.²⁰⁵ We find only two attestations of this word, which are both late, and therefore Greene’s view is plausible. OE *mancgere* or *mangere* is considered to be borrowed into ON as *mangari*,²⁰⁶ and can subsequently have come into Irish earlier on. However, we find no attestations of this.

- *scingtóir* ‘worker in skins, furrier’ < ON *skinnari* ‘skinner, tanner’

²⁰⁴ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 123.

²⁰⁵ Greene, ‘The Influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 79.

²⁰⁶ *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *mangari*

These two forms are semantically identical. I have not found a specific Irish word for this, except for the lexical construction *fear leasaighthe leathair*. It seems unlikely that the Irish did not work with skins before the Norsemen, but perhaps it was not seen as a profession as such.

- *stiúrusmann* ‘steersman, helmsman’ < ON *stýrimaðr* ‘steersman, skipper, captain’

This is semantically a borrowing from ON, connected to the Norse influence on shipping in Ireland. Regarding the form *stiúrusmann* it is mentioned in *Lexique Étymologique* that we have to assume a form with -s-, most likely OE *stéoresmann* to have been the source of the Irish form. The OE word was likewise borrowed from ON, so the Irish word *stiúrusmann* may have come into the language via OE.

- *tráill* ‘slave, thrall’ < ON *þræll* ‘thrall, slave’, ‘wretch’ (fig.), ‘scoundrel’ (fig.)

This word was most likely borrowed from ON and not from OE *þræl*, as the OE word was also a borrowing from ON.²⁰⁷

2. 4. 1. 2. People

- *cairling* ‘hag’ < ON *kerling* ‘woman, wife’, ‘old woman’

This word is only found in one attestation, probably poetic.²⁰⁸ The probability that this word was used on a regular basis is slight.

- *cuiniu* ‘woman’ < *kvinna* ‘woman’

This borrowing is found in only a few attestations. It is generally thought to have come from ON, though the OE *cwene*, *cwyne* ‘woman’ is a cognate to the Norse. The OE word is not to be confused with the early form of Mod. English *queen*. This word was later given a negative connotation; probably due to *portkona* ‘harlot’, see below.

- *danar* ‘Dane, man from Denmark’, ‘Viking in general’, ‘stranger within a territory’ < ON *Danir* ‘the Danes’

²⁰⁷ OED s.v. *thrall*, n.1 and adj.1

²⁰⁸ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 62.

foreigner in general’, ‘Englishmen (often)’,
‘in depreciatory sense a cruel and ferocious
foreigner or barbarian, robber, pirate, bandit’

In the case of this word we see a development where the name of a specific ethnic group is used to indicate a broader category of people. It gives a clear indication of how the Danes were viewed by the Irish, in the sense of cruel strangers.

- *portchaine* ‘harlot’ < ON *portkona* ‘harlot’

Just as we have seen with *cuiniu*, there is uncertainty whether *portchaine* is a borrowing from ON or from OE *portcwene*. The word is a compound of *port* ‘harbour’ and *cuiniu* ‘woman’. In the *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* it is stated that ON borrowed the word from OE, but that Irish on its turn adopted it from ON.²⁰⁹ Bugge (1912) claims that ON *portkona* was formed in the ports of western Europe, probably in the ninth century.²¹⁰

- *ucing* ‘Viking, sea-rover, pirate’, ‘fleet’ < ON *vikingr* ‘freebooter, sea-rover, pirate, Viking’, *viking* ‘freebooting voyage’

The word *ucing* in the sense ‘Viking, sea-rover, pirate’ came from ON *vikingr* (masculine), while the denotation ‘fleet’ must have come from ON *viking* (feminine). In Irish the two borrowings overlapped. Greene (1976) argues that as no certain example of *ucing* in the meaning ‘a Viking’ is attested before the twelfth century, the feminine *viking* must have been taken into the language earlier.²¹¹

2. 4. 1. 3. Satire

Satire was an important social phenomenon in Irish society. A poet was able to verbally assault a person with this kind of poem. The result of such a satire would be the damaging of the honour value of the victim, which affected his legal standing. A poet was therefore a powerful social factor, as verbal assaults on a person were regarded with the utmost

²⁰⁹ *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *portkona*

²¹⁰ Alexander Bugge, ‘Norse Loanwords in Irish’, *Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer by some of his Friends and Pupils on the Occasion of his Appointment to the Chair of Celtic Philology in the University of Berlin*, ed. Osborn Bergin and Carl Marstrand (Halle 1912) 303.

²¹¹ Greene, ‘The Influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 78.

seriousness.²¹² Clunies Ross (2005) gives satire, or *níðvísur*, as a subgenre of skaldic poetry from the ninth until the thirteenth century.²¹³ According to her, these satirical poems are mostly found in Iceland. It is unclear whether we are dealing with a possible Irish influence on the Icelandic literary tradition here, as the workings of this specific Icelandic skaldic subgenre closely resembles the Irish social institution of satire. Clunies Ross (2005) does not discuss a possible Irish origin of this subgenre, but she does state that the subgenre was not used very often in the courts of the kings, but more often in a variety of personal and public contexts recorded for Icelandic society.²¹⁴ If there was any Irish influence on Icelandic literary traditions, the more personal and public contexts might have been exactly where such an influence would manifest, perhaps brought to Iceland by the *Gall-Goídel*. There is, however, no substantial research into this matter and I am unable, within the scope of this thesis, to delve into the issue further. The Norse loanwords connected to satire are the following:

- *clamar* ‘satire’ < ON *klám* ‘obscene, filthy language’ + *orð* ‘word, reputé’

This word was taken to be a compound of ON *klám* + *orð*, i.e. ‘satire’. However, *Lexique Étymologique* argues that the word *clám* is perhaps a variant of Irish *glám* ‘satire’. The only problem with this hypothesis is that the etymology of *glám* is unclear.

- *gróma* ‘satire’ < ON *grómr* ‘blot, dirty spot’

Only one attestation of this word is found. The ON word does not seem to mean ‘satire’, which raises the question of how a word meaning ‘blot, dirty spot’ was borrowed into a language as a name for a well-established cultural phenomenon, for which the Irish had native words.

- *lés* ‘light, radiance’, ‘window or opening to admit light’, ‘flush, blush or burning spot on a person's face caused by being satirized’ < ON *ljós* ‘a burning light’, ‘light (of the sun)’

²¹² Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 43, 137.

²¹³ Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge 2005) 40.

²¹⁴ Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 40.

This is another example of an ON word that was borrowed into Irish with a meaning connected to satire.²¹⁵ In this case the connection with satire was added to the original meaning that was preserved.

- *sniding* ‘worthless fellow, wretch’ < ON *níðingr* ‘villain, scoundrel, vile wretch’, ‘apostate’

This word is found in one attestation, and therefore unlikely to be a commonly used word in Irish. The Norse word *níð* was the word that was used in ON to denote a satirical poem. The victim of such a poem would be called a *níðingr*.²¹⁶

2. 4. 1. 4. Other words connected to society

- *mál* ‘tribute’ < ON *máli* ‘contract, agreement’, ‘wages, soldier’s pay’

In *Lexique Étymologique* this word is not considered to be a loan from ON, but rather a loan from either Welsh *mal* ‘currency, money’ or Welsh *mael* ‘profit’. Bugge (1912) on the other hand, considers it to be from ON.²¹⁷ Both possibilities seem plausible to me.

- *ras* ‘racing, running contest’ < ON *rás* ‘race, running’, ‘course, channel’, ‘company, host’

This word could be a borrowing from ON, but could also be from the OE cognate *ræs*. It is poorly attested, and semantic narrowing occurs within this loan.

- *rún* ‘something hidden or occult, a mystery’, ‘secret’, ‘secret thoughts or wishes, intention, purpose, design’, ‘full consciousness, knowledge’ < ON *rúnar* (pl.) ‘secret, hidden lore, wisdom’, ‘written characters, runes’, ‘magical characters or signs’

Although *Lexique Étymologique* gives a Celtic origin for this word,²¹⁸ the form *rún* is a borrowing from a Germanic language. The ON semantic load has been generally taken over into Irish.

²¹⁵ *DIL* s.v. *lés*

²¹⁶ Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 40

²¹⁷ Bugge, ‘Norse Loanwords in Irish’, 303.

- *ustaing* ‘?’ < ON *húsping* ‘council, meeting (to which a king or chief summoned his people or guardsmen)’

Lexique Étymologique raises doubt as to the veracity of Irish *ustaing*. It is only found in a glossary without its source being mentioned. The glossator claims it is from *tong* ‘to swear’ and *uas* ‘high, noble’, but Marstrander (1915) suggests that it is a loan from *húsping*.²¹⁹ The meaning in Irish is unclear.

2. 4. 2. Conclusion

The main issue in this category is that it is often difficult to differentiate between an ON and OE origin of the borrowing in Irish.²²⁰ We know of early OE borrowings into Irish, for instance *sebac* or *seboc* ‘hawk’ < OE *heafoc* ‘hawk’, which was found in the St. Gall glosses.²²¹ Thus, there must have been early contact between the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish, and it is often impossible to state whether a borrowing was derived from ON or OE if these two languages had cognate words.

Furthermore, we see that words relating to skill-based professions are relatively more abundant than power-based professions. We can also observe that non-profession loanwords under the heading ‘people’ are of a negative and low status connotation. Perhaps this shows how the settling Norsemen were viewed within the Irish society, namely, mainly of low status, except when it came to specific professions. Another possibility is that they could be related to satire. The borrowings connected with satire are an interesting aspect. As satire was a well-established Irish cultural phenomenon, we would not expect to find Norse loanwords in this area. There might, however, be a link between the emergence of satirical poetry in the Icelandic skaldic tradition and Irish literary influence, perhaps by means of the *Gall-Goídel*. If this would be the case, then it might be argued that the tradition of satire was transferred into ON, creating new words or using already existing ones to replace or exist alongside their Irish equivalents. The existence of a possible bilingual word (i.e. if we would accept LE *clamar* from Irish *glám* and ON *orð*) would support this idea. Although this raises interesting

²¹⁸ Welsh *rhin* ‘mystery, secret’ and *cyfrin* ‘secret, mysterious’, Middle Breton *rin* ‘secret’.

²¹⁹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 81.

²²⁰ For a list of all the borrowing with a possible OE origin, see appendix 1, column ‘possible alternative origin’.

²²¹ *DIL* s.v. *sebac*, *seboc*

questions, the lack of substantial research on this subject limits the possibilities to state anything with certainty on this topic. Within the scope of this thesis I am therefore forced to leave the matter as it is now.

2. 5. Semantic category: Commerce

One of the greatest Norse influences in Irish society was the introduction of markets. All kinds of products must have been traded here, as is described in an eleventh-century poem on the *Óenach Carmuin*, the ‘fair of Carmun’, where three types of market are described: one for food, one for livestock, and one for gold and fine raiment.²²² Therefore, many of the words I describe in the other categories must have come into the Irish language via these markets. Before the establishment of markets, trade in Ireland was very limited and people within a *túath* were self-sufficient.²²³ The markets stimulated trade both locally as well as internationally, which must have had an impact on language contact as well.

2. 5. 1. Norse words connected to commerce in Old and Middle Irish

- *marg(g)* ‘mark’ < ON *mǫrk* ‘mark’

These two forms are semantically identical. The mark was a measure of weight: eight ounces, in silver or gold. Not only was it borrowed into Irish, but also in other European languages, for instance in OE *mearc* and Latin *marca*.

- *marg(g)ad* ‘market’, ‘market-place’, ‘bargain, contract(?)’ < ON *markaðr* ‘market’

The ON *markaðr* was most likely a borrowing from Latin *mercatus* ‘(annual) market, trade’. The Latin word was borrowed by most Germanic languages, but most likely came to Ireland via ON, as we find the word in OE relatively late. The Irish meaning ‘bargain, contract’ is found in one attestation, and may be erroneous an expansion of *marg-* for *margáil* ‘chaffering, trafficking’. Other than that the words are semantically identical.

- *penning, pinginn* ‘a coin of small value’ < ON *penningr* ‘a piece of property, ‘coin, money’, penny’

²²² E. J. Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas*, part 3 (Dublin 1913-1941) 24.

²²³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 319.

The Norse *penningr* was a borrowing from OE *pæning*, which was a coin with the value of one twelfth of a shilling. As the Irish borrowed coinage terms from ON, it is most probable that in this case the word was not derived directly from OE, but came into Irish via ON.²²⁴

- *scilling, scillic* ‘shilling’ < ON *skillingr* ‘money’, ‘shilling, shekel’

In this case we still find some disagreement as to the source language of Irish *scilling, scillic*. Greene (1976), for instance, takes it to be borrowed from ON,²²⁵ but in *DIL* it is stated to come from OE *scilling*. The ON and OE words are cognates, which makes it very difficult to rule out either of the languages out as a source language for the Irish word.

2. 5. 2. Conclusion

The greatest influence the Norsemen had on the Irish economy, next to founding market places, was the introduction of coins as a fixed trade value. The fact that we do not find many words in this category is mainly due to my own classification of the loanwords. Many of the trade goods that are also specific to this category, like types of food, clothing, jewellery, animals and specific professions, are grouped separately. The fact that we can detect borrowings in most categories that can also be connected to commerce only goes to show that the Norsemen had a large impact on the Irish economy, introducing trade on a national and international scale. Another consequence of this development was perhaps that the necessity of the small communities to be self-sufficient lessened. This possibly resulted in a situation where tasks that were formerly fulfilled within the community could now be professionalised through these markets (e.g. the *scingetóir* ‘skinner’).

²²⁴ *Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* s.v. *pengr, penningr*

²²⁵ Greene, ‘The Influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 79.

2. 6. Semantic category: Clothing and body

It is difficult to determine the exact difference between the clothing of the Norsemen and the Irish. As Mallory (1992) indicates, given the perishable nature of cloth and clothing, the archaeologist find it nearly impossible to provide accurate dates of changes in clothing styles. We have very little in the way of textile remains.²²⁶ There must have been differences in specific fashions and style, but as we have not found material evidence for this, we are forced to rely on depictions, for instance in manuscripts, and linguistic evidence.

2. 6. 1. Norse words for clothing and body ornaments in Old and Middle Irish

- *allsmann* ‘necklet’ < ON *hálsmen* ‘necklace’

The two words are semantically identical. It must be mentioned that the Irish already had several words denoting a necklace, such as *torc*, *basc*, and *muince*. It is likely that all these different words for a necklace denoted different types of necklaces. The *allsmann* must have been a specific style necklace that was introduced by the Norse, and was perhaps a common item in the Norse-speaking areas of Ireland. Marstrander (1915) believes it may have been made of a number of beads of stone or glass, as this type of necklace has been found on archaeological sites connected to the Viking Age.²²⁷

- *att* ‘head-covering, hat, hood, helmet’ < ON *hattr* ‘hat’

This word was most likely taken into Irish in the sense of a ‘helmet’. Irish did not yet have a word for ‘helmet’, and the word is often found as a compound connected to warfare, such as *clocat* ‘helmet’ (literally ‘bell-hat’), *maelat* ‘hood of a coat of mail worn under a helmet’ and *Gall at* ‘foreign helmet’. The Norse word is a cognate of OE *hæt*; therefore, we cannot say with certainty that this borrowing came from ON.

²²⁶ J. P. Mallory, ‘The World of Cú Chulainn: The Archaeology of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*’, *Aspects of the Táin*, ed. J. P. Mallory (Belfast 1992) 141.

²²⁷ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 28.

- *blái* ‘covering, sheet’, ‘garment (one covering the breast)’ < ON *blæja* ‘fine coloured cloth’, ‘cover of a bed’, ‘burial sheet’, ‘cover of an altar table’

Even though limited attestation prevents us from understanding the all the usages of the *blái* in Ireland, these two words seem to be semantically identical.

- *bossán* ‘purse, wallet’ < ON *posi* ‘bag’

It is uncertain whether this loan was borrowed from ON or from OE *posa(n)* ‘bag’, as they are cognates. The Norse word denoted a purse as well – probably a small bag that was worn on the belt – but it seems to have had a broader semantic load. The semantic narrowing that occurred in Irish might be due to the connection with the ON introduction of coinage in Ireland (i.e. ON coins carried in a small ON bag).

- *bróc* ‘shoe’, ‘leggings’ (pl.), ‘breeches’(?) < ON *brók* ‘one leg of a pair of breeches’, ‘breeches’ (the pl. *brækr* is more common)

The Irish word may be borrowed from OE *brōc*, as the OE and ON words were cognates. However, it has been argued that ON is the more probable origin, because of the Irish compound *berrbróc* ‘short trousers, (open) shoes’ which is also found in ON, *berbrokr* ‘short breeches’. The Irish subsequently added the meaning ‘shoe’ to *bróc*; perhaps they took the meaning ‘covering for the legs’ in the broadest sense, thus including the feet.

- *cába* ‘cape, cloak’ < ON *kápa* ‘cloak made with a cowl or hood’

Whether an Irish cloak or cape had a hood or not is too difficult to determine; therefore I take these two words to be semantically identical.

- *cantarchapa* ‘choir-cape’ < ON *kantarakápa* ‘priest’s or bishop’s gown’

It seems strange that the Irish would adopt a religious word into their language, as one would expect this to happen the other way around. There are very few attestations of this word. Perhaps this word came into Irish together with *cába* from *kápa*.

- *cnap* ‘knob’, ‘button’ < ON *knappr* ‘knob’, ‘stud, button’

It may be a borrowing from OE *cnæpp* ‘top, summit of a hill’, as this is possibly a cognate of the ON form. However, the meaning ‘button’ is not attested in OE. See *cnaplong*.

- *eobrat* ‘head-dress’ < ON **jǫfurhattr* ‘wild boar-hat’?

It has been suggested that *eobrat* was a borrowing from OE **eoforhæt*. The word is a compound of *jǫfurr* ‘wild boar’ and *hattr* ‘hat’. The forms in both ON and OE are unattested.

- *mat(t)al* ‘cloak’ < ON *mǫttull* ‘mantle’

This word goes back to Latin *mantellum*, but probably came to Ireland via Germanic, where the Latin word was borrowed early. The Irish form seems to have been borrowed from ON rather than from OE *mentel*, as this form shows raising of the initial vowel. Bugge (1905) mentions that the prominence of the word in Middle Irish was due to the fact that Irish nobles gave mantles to their king as tribute.²²⁸

- *scing* ‘covering, garment, clothes, cloak’ < ON *skinn* ‘skin’

The word *scing* is clearly connected to the *scingetóir* ‘skinner’, which was borrowed from ON as well. The product of the skinner (i.e. worked skin) developed semantically into a piece of clothing. According to Marstrander (1915) the development ON *-nn-* to Irish *-ng-* is regular.²²⁹ Therefore it is interesting to note the ON word *skingr* ‘kind of cloak’. This might point to a loan from Irish into ON.

- *scuirid* ‘shirt, tunic, cloak’ < ON *skyrta* ‘shirt, (a kind of) kirtle’

These two forms are semantically identical.

²²⁸ Alexander Bugge, ‘Vesterlandenes Indflydelse paa Nordboernes og særlig Nordændenes ydre Kultur, Levesæt og Samfundsforhold i Vikingetiden (med 89 Textfigurer)’, *Skrifter udgivene af Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania 2, Historisk-filosofisk Klasse* (1915) 185.

²²⁹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 141.

2. 6. 2. Norse words connected to the body in Old and Middle Irish

- *crap* ‘cramp’, ‘act of cramping, contracting’ < ON *krappr* ‘straight, narrow’,
tight’

In this case semantic change has occurred; the general adjective was borrowed into Irish as a noun or verbal noun with a specific body connotation. It is often found in compounds, for instance *crap-lám* ‘cramped hand’ and *crap-gluinighi* ‘bent-kneed’.²³⁰

- *ós* ‘mouth’ (poet.) < ON *óss* ‘mouth or outlet of a river or lake’

This word is considered by Bugge (1912) to be borrowed from ON.²³¹ However, this view has been criticized on account of Latin *ōs* ‘mouth’. Only a few attestations are found in Irish, all of which occur in poetry. It is unclear whether Latin or ON was the donor language, as those words are cognates. However, semantically a loan from Latin would be more probable.

- *scallach* ‘bald’ < ON *skalli* ‘a bald head’

This word is only mentioned in the Scandinavian loanwords dictionary by Ó Muirthe (2010).²³² However, I have found no attestations in Old and Middle Irish supporting this borrowing.

- *scréch* ‘cry, shout, scream’ < ON *skrækr* ‘shriek, scream’

The two words are semantically identical.

2. 6. 3. Conclusion

We can see clear influence by the Norse on Irish clothing. It would appear that many specific Norse types of clothing were introduced in Ireland. The major platform for this development must have been the markets where these items were imported and traded. One of the three

²³⁰ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 138.

²³¹ Bugge, ‘Norse Loanwords in Irish’, 305.

²³² Diarmaid Ó Muirthe, *From the Viking Word-Hoard : A Dictionary of Scandinavian Words in the Languages of Britain and Ireland* (Dublin 2010) 156.

types of market described in the poem on the *Óenach Carmuin* was indeed one of fine raiment. Two-way traffic of the market is perhaps visible through the Irish word *scing* that was possibly borrowed into ON as *skingr*, even though Irish *scing* was itself a borrowing from ON *skinnr*.

Norse words connected to the body are very random and few in numbers; therefore, they seem to be haphazard borrowings, unconnected with a specific area of Norse influence.

2. 7. Semantic category: Housing

2. 7. 1. Irish houses

Before the Norsemen started to settle, there seem to have been few concentrations of population. It is characteristic that the *óenach*, the largest assembly for political matters, trading, entertainment such as music and horseracing, and social contact, was often situated on a low hill, and not in a town. The largest concentrations of population in pre-Viking Ireland were found in and around the major monasteries. However, most people lived in farmsteads scattered across the fertile parts of the country, surrounded by large uncultivated areas of mountain, woodland and marsh.²³³

The archaeological evidence indicates that the houses of the early Christian period were generally circular.²³⁴ The size of an Irish house was dependant on the rank of a person. A considerably prosperous person would be expected to live in a house with a diameter of twenty-seven feet (about eight meters). The house of a lower class person had a diameter of nineteen feet (close to six meters), where half of the inside of the house was taken up by the bed-cubicle. It seems that the style of houses was generally the same for all classes of people. The most significant difference between the house of a lord and that of a commoner was the presence of defensive earthworks. The house of a king was considerably larger, with a diameter of thirty-seven feet (over eleven meters), in which twelve bed-cubicles could fit. A double system of earthworks protected it on all sides. The houses were constructed of wattling, often with insulating material in between two rows of wattling. They seem to have had thatched roofs, probably made of reeds. The floor was strewn with rushes.²³⁵

2. 7. 2. Norse houses

In Scandinavia several types of houses were constructed, depending on location and the availability of building materials. In areas with large forests houses were made of wood. They were built either in a stave-construction (with walls formed of vertically-set staves or planks)

²³³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 360.

²³⁴ Nancy Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland* (Hoboken 2013) 22-27.

²³⁵ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 360-363.

or of horizontal logs that jointed and overlapped in the corners.²³⁶ In regions with less trees stone, clay and turf were used, sometimes in combination with timber. The houses were rectangular. Houses for chieftains could be as large as fifty-five by twenty-three feet (seventeen by seven meters) or even up to eighty by fifty-five feet (twenty-four by seventeen meters). It is generally thought that the Norsemen brought their house-building styles with them to the west, though wood was probably not used as much anymore, and materials such as stone and turf were often relied on instead.²³⁷

In Ireland, from about A.D. 800, there is also evidence of rectangular houses.²³⁸ It can be imagined that this was a result of Norse influence, perhaps from the Scottish isles, seeing that the date is quite early. The Norsemen had already settled the Scottish isles around this time. Bugge (1912) claims that before the Norsemen arrived, the Irish houses were inferior to those on the continent, as they were made of clay or framework. Due to the Scandinavians, actual towns were founded and houses were built with other materials such as stone or wood.²³⁹

2. 7. 3. Norse words connected to housing in Old and Middle Irish

- *ba(i)lc* ‘stop, balk’ < ON *bjálki* ‘balk, beam’

This word is mentioned as a borrowing from ON by Walsh (1922) and Ó Muirthe (2010).²⁴⁰ However, *DIL* gives no attestations of this form, and thus it is uncertain if we can consider this word a loan into Middle Irish. On the other hand, the word *balc* ‘balk, beam’ is found in Modern Irish.

- *bord* ‘edge, side, border brink (of vessel, land)’, ‘board, table’ < ON *borð* ‘board, plank’, ‘side of a ship’, the innermargin of a vessel between the rim and the liquid’, ‘board, table’,

²³⁶ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 231, 235.

²³⁷ Ibid. 231, 234-235.

²³⁸ Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland*, 22-27.

²³⁹ Bugge, *Norse Loanwords in Irish*, 295.

²⁴⁰ Ó Muirthe, *From the Viking Word-Hoard* s.v. *balc* ; Walsh, *Scandinavian Relations with Ireland during the Viking Period*, 41.

‘board, food, maintenance
at table’, ‘chess-board’

The Norse word is cognate to OE *bord*. This makes it hard to determine whether ON or OE was the source language for this loan. However, there seems to be a general consensus that the word was borrowed into Irish from OE. Marstrander (1915) suggests that the frequent use of the word during the Viking Age was due to Norse influence, even though he argues for an OE origin as well.²⁴¹ Perhaps the denotation ‘side of a vessel’ strengthened the use of the word.

- *borg* ‘fort, (fortified) town, city, castle’ < ON *borg* ‘small dome shaped hill’, ‘stronghold, fortification, castle’, ‘fortified town, city’

It has been suggested that the Irish word is more likely a borrowing from Latin *burga* ‘castle, fort’. However, the Latin word was a borrowing from Germanic. Therefore, the Irish borrowing could have come via ON as well.

- *fuindeóc* ‘window’ < ON *vindauga* ‘window’

These two forms are semantically identical. It seems that the window must have been an invention from Scandinavia. Norse houses made of stone, earth or turf most likely did not have any windows, and it has been suggested therefore that the first windows were made in wooden houses and were only small holes protected by inside shutters.²⁴²

- *garrda* ‘plot, yard, enclosure, court, garden’ < ON *garðr* ‘fence, wall’, ‘enclosed space, yard’, ‘court-yard, court’, ‘house, dwelling’, ‘stronghold, castle’

This word was perhaps borrowed as a part of the agricultural influence of the Norsemen. The semantic narrowing that occurs here validates this idea.

- *(h)alla* ‘hall’ < ON *holl* (gen. *hallar*) ‘large house, hall (esp. of a king or earl)’

²⁴¹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 43.

²⁴² Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 237-238.

In this case we find some hesitation for claiming that ON was the source language. For the earliest attested form *alla* the meaning is unclear, though an early borrowing from ON is not excluded. According to *DIL* the later attestations of the word are a borrowing from English or Romance. The words in ON and OE are cognates.

- *lota* ‘loft, upper storey, platform’ < ON *lopt* ‘air, atmosphere, sky’, ‘loft, upper room’, balcony’

In this case we see semantic narrowing taking place, as only the denotation connected with building was taken over into Irish. This word seems to have been used specifically as an architectonic term.

- *púr* ‘store-house(?), privy(?)’ < ON *búr* ‘women's apartment’, ‘pantry’, ‘storehouse’

This word is found in only one attestation, which makes it difficult to determine the precise meaning. However, the word shows close resemblance to ON *búr*.

- *scál(án)* ‘hut, bothy, tent’ < ON *skali* ‘hut, shed (put up for temporary use)’, ‘hall, room, esp. sleeping-hall’

In a Norse long-house, the central long room was called the *skáli* ‘hall’, which served as living-, dining-, bedroom and kitchen all at once. This house could accommodate a large number of people for feasts. Later the plan of the long-house was extended by adding rooms to the *skáli* for different purposes such as a kitchen or scullery.²⁴³ We find very few attestations of *scál*, which makes it difficult to determine the exact meaning. Its diminutive, *scálán*, is used more frequently, with the translation ‘hut, bothy, tent’, clearly denoting a smaller version of a house or hall.

- *sparr, sparra, spairre* ‘spar, beam, rafter’, < ON *sparri* ‘rafter, spar, beam’
‘stake, spike, nail’, ‘gate of
a town or city, fortification’

In this case we see semantic widening. We can assume that the word was taken into Irish as ‘spar’, ‘beam’ or ‘rafter’, as these denotations are identical to ON. The other denotations were added in a later stage.

²⁴³ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 236.

- *sráit* ‘(stone-paved) street’ < ON *stræti* ‘street’

This word originally came from Latin *strāta* ‘road, street’. The Irish word could perhaps have been adopted straight from Latin, but an origin via ON is not unfeasible. In case of the latter, we also have to consider OE *stræte* as a possible source. It seems to be an urban innovation.

2. 7. 4. Conclusion

On the basis of the loanwords connected to housing we can observe a clear Norse influence on Irish architecture. Specific terminology was borrowed with the introduction of new building concepts. This may be connected to a possible switch from circular to rectangular shaped houses. Signs of urbanisation under Norse influence can possibly be seen in borrowings like *sráit* and *borg*.

2. 8. Semantic category: Geography

2. 8. 1. The Irish landscape

The land in Ireland is mainly flat in the middle, with mountains forming much of the perimeter. In the middle part of the country drainage is problematic, which caused the forming of lakes, marshes and bogs in this area. The most habitable land was in the east, where it is relatively drier. This is also the area where the Vikings eventually settled, providing them with fertile and good, arable land. In spite of its relatively small size Ireland is geologically quite varied, with a diversity of land-types.²⁴⁴

In medieval times the Irish divided the land into three categories. The first was arable, fenced infield for growing crops; the second was fenced outfield grassland for animal grazing; and the third was commonage, i.e. woodland, mountain upland, bog and wasteland.²⁴⁵

2. 8. 2. Norse geographical words in Old and Middle Irish

- *ab, ob* ‘creek, river’ < ON *hóp* ‘a small land-locked bay or inlet (connected with the sea)’

In this case we can detect semantic shift, as the semantic load changes from ‘bay’ to ‘river’.

- *grunda* ‘ground, basis’ < ON *grunnr* ‘bottom (of sea or water)’

This word is found in only one attestation. It is difficult to determine the source language, as OE *grund* is a cognate of ON.

- *í* ‘island’ < ON *ey* ‘island’

The two forms are semantically identical. It should be mentioned that this word is found in few attestations, mainly as a part of certain place-names. The widespread word for ‘island’ in Irish was *inis*. Perhaps *í* had the connotation of an island related to the Norsemen.

²⁴⁴ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 1.

²⁴⁵ Ó Crónín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 86.

- *marg(g)* ‘march, boundary’ < ON *mǫrk* ‘forest’, ‘march-land, border-land’

We know from the sources that boundaries could either be natural, like forests or rivers, or manmade, like ditches or fences.²⁴⁶ In this case, both languages seem to have used the word to denote only the natural boundaries.

- *nes(s)* ‘island’ < ON *nes* ‘ness, headland’

This word is only found in a few attestations, where it seems to denote both an island as well as a headland. The Irish borrowing may have come from OE *næs*, as it is a cognate of ON.

- *sceillec* ‘small piece of rock’, ‘steep rock, crag’, ‘precious stone’ < ON *sker* ‘rock in the sea, skerry’

This word was probably taken over into Irish firstly as ‘rock (in the sea)’, e.g. *Scellic Mhíchil*. The broader semantic load most likely developed later on.

- *ú(i)r* ‘mould, earth, clay, soil, ground’ < ON *aurr* ‘moist earth, clay, mud’

This word has no convincing phonetic etymology, though semantically it is closest to ON *aurr* or OE *éar*.

2. 8. 3. Conclusion

The main problem with this category is that we find very few attestations, which makes it difficult to be certain about the exact semantic load. Geographical borrowing from ON certainly existed, but the influence of ON in this area seems to have been relatively scarce.

²⁴⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 409.

2. 9. Semantic category: Warfare

2. 9. 1. Irish weapons

Archaeological findings have shown that Irish weapons in pre-Viking times were inferior when compared with the weapons of any other European country. They were smaller, lighter and based on very early types of weapons. This is most likely the result of the fact that Ireland was a remote island in the Atlantic, and it remained aloof from the troubles of the continent for a long time.²⁴⁷ Major wars were almost unknown in Ireland, and the only battles they fought were between themselves; often in the nature of duels between opposing rulers, and therefore immediately ended once the leader on either side was slain.²⁴⁸ It would seem, therefore, as the Irish never faced superior weapons, that their weapons never developed along the same lines of the weapons on the continent.²⁴⁹

The early Irish swords were short (averaged thirty-eight cm.) and were primarily thrusting weapons. Prior to the coming of the Vikings, these swords developed into slightly larger weapons, often with wider blades suggestive of slashing rather than thrusting. The hilts were made of either bone or wood.²⁵⁰ Spears were used as well. Other military weapons such as the axe or bow and arrow were not used in pre-Viking times. The only defensive armour the Irish seem to have used was a shield.

2. 9. 2. Norse weapons

At the time of the Viking Age, the Norsemen were fairly advanced in weaponry. The weapons they used were sword, axe, spear, bow and arrow, and they often carried a small dagger.²⁵¹ The principle weapon was the sword: a long, usually broad, two-edged iron sword. The hilt consisted of a guard nearest to the blade (commonly straight, but curved also occurred), a flat grip that narrowed away from the blade, another crosspiece, and a triangular or semi-circular pommel. Archaeologists have been able to identify over twenty different categories of swords.

²⁴⁷ Etienne Rynne, 'The Impact of the Vikings on Irish Weapons', *Atti Del VI Congresso Internazionale delle Scienze Preistoriche e Protostoriche*, part 3 (Roma 1966) 181-182.

²⁴⁸ J. Ryan, *Ireland from the Earliest Times to A.D. 800* (Dublin 1927) 85.

²⁴⁹ Rynne, 'The Impact of the Vikings on Irish Weapons', 182.

²⁵⁰ J. P. Mallory, 'The World of Cú Chulainn', 131-132.

²⁵¹ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 119, 123.

The earlier ones were constructed in a simpler fashion; later swords often had longer guards and were more richly decorated. Different types of Scandinavian swords have been found in Ireland as well. It seems that swords were both home-produced and imported. As it was a complicated product, the various parts may well have been made by different specialists.²⁵² The axe was also a very important weapon, and was characteristically Scandinavian. In other parts of Europe the usage of an axe as a weapon had died out by the time the Viking Age began, but at this point its usage was revived in Scandinavia. We find two types of axes: the *skeggøx* 'beard-axe', which was an inheritance from the eighth century, and the *breiðøx* 'broad-axe', which had a symmetrically curved, wide blade. The latter type achieved popularity around 1000 A.D. The spear was most commonly used by the lower class. In combat they were often used for throwing. The Norsemen defended themselves in battle using a round, flat shield, which was reinforced by a round iron boss at the centre, and was often painted. An iron mail coat, and leather or iron helmet were only worn by higher-class warriors and nobles.²⁵³

2. 9. 3. Viking Influence of Irish weaponry

In the second half of the ninth century we can detect a change in Irish weaponry that is visible in archaeological findings. The Irish seem to have started forging types of weapons similar to those of the Vikings.²⁵⁴ At this time the Norsemen started to settle in Ireland, so this influence is most likely contact-induced. As a result, there are no longer many distinctive Irish types of swords that can be identified, and there are few spearheads that do not show Viking features. The axe seems to have been adopted by the Irish as a weapon, though, as far as we know from archaeological evidence, the bow and arrow and types of armour were probably not borrowed. That the Irish copied the weaponry of the Norsemen is supported by the fact that these types of swords were discovered on non-Viking, Irish sites. We do detect differences between the copies made by the Irish and their Norse originals. Spears were far less decorated and fastened to the shaft in a simpler manner, axe heads lacked characteristic feature such as the typical Viking thickness and cutting-edge of the blade, and swords were often slightly smaller or with the hilt made of a different material.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Ibid. 119-120.

²⁵³ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 122-123.

²⁵⁴ Rynne, 'The Impact of the Vikings on Irish Weapons', 182.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. 183-184.

2. 9. 4. Norse word connected to warfare in Old and Middle Irish

- *boga* ‘bow’ (weapon), ‘bow, curve’ < ON *bogi* ‘bow’, ‘arch (of a bridge), vault’, ‘gush, jet’

According to *Lexique Étymologique* this word was a borrowing from ON rather than from OE *boga*.²⁵⁶ However, as these words are cognates, we cannot rule out either possibility. The semantic narrowing that occurred does imply that this word was borrowed in a specific context, namely as a weapon.

- *brostaid, brostaid* ‘urges, incites, stirs up’ < ON **brost*, related to ON *broddr* ‘spike, goad’

O’Rahilly (1942) connects **brost*, of which we do not find attestations, with *brot* ‘spike, goad’ which he derives from ON *broddr* (see *brot*).²⁵⁷

- *brot* ‘spike, goad’ < ON *broddr* ‘spike, goad’

These two words are semantically identical.

- *búaile* ‘some part (gen. of metal) on a shield’ < ON *bóla* ‘boss of a shield’, ‘botch’

In Irish it is uncertain whether the metal part that is referred to is the boss or the rim of the shield; for the (few) attestations, both translations are found. As the Irish probably adopted a specific type of Norse shield, it is most likely that the meaning ‘boss of a shield’ was transferred to Irish as well. If the word denoted the rim of a shield, it would be a case of semantic shift. Perhaps one can consider that both the boss as well as the rim could be made of metal, and thus shift occurred. Furthermore, pre-Viking shields have been found to include iron bosses,²⁵⁸ and as the Irish language already had words denoting a ‘shield-boss’, it may be that *búaile* was used to denote another iron part of the shield.

- *ces* ‘spear’ < ON *kesja* ‘(a kind of) halberd’

²⁵⁶ *LE* s.v. *boga*

²⁵⁷ O’Rahilly, ‘Notes, mainly etymological’, 169.

²⁵⁸ Rynne, ‘The Impact of the Vikings on Irish Weapons’, 184.

In this case we are probably dealing with another specific weapon that was introduced by the Norsemen. As a halberd is a cross between a spear and an axe, a semantic shift to ‘spear’ is feasible. Perhaps the fact that the Irish did not employ axes in battle contributed to this shift.

- *ecg* ‘edge’ < ON *egg* ‘edge’

We find only one attestation of this word in Irish, and one possible attestation of the word *ecgach*, with supposedly has the same meaning. Marstrander (1915) connects this to ON,²⁵⁹ but an OE borrowing is also possible through *ecg* ‘a cutting edge’.

- *elta* ‘the guard between the hilt and the blade’, < ON *hjalt* ‘the boss or knob (at the end of a sword hilt)’, ‘the guard (between the hilt and blade)’

In ON, the plural *hjolt* is used in reference to the two ‘guards’; below (i.e. the pommel) and above (i.e. the guard) the hand. The pommel was an innovation in Ireland introduced by the Norse.²⁶⁰ The Irish word is only found in the plural, where it is used to denote the guard in at least one attestation; other attestations give no clew regarding the location of the *elta*; according to *DIL* the pommel may be distinguished by the word *mul* ‘lump’.²⁶¹

- *fraig* ‘shield (poetic), dagger(?)’ < ON *frakka* ‘spear, lance’

Most of the attestations point towards a meaning ‘shield’; or, according to Marstrander (1915), the word in Irish denotes a part of the shield.²⁶² However, the word has been translated with many different designations by different scholars, ranging from ‘some part of a heroes armour’ to ‘iron spear’.

- *gunnfund* ‘banner’ < ON *gunnfáni* ‘war banner, processional banner’

The Norse form developed from Germanic and is a cognate of OE *gúðfana*, making it difficult to identify the source language. The ON word is a compound of *gunnr* ‘war, battle’ and *fani* ‘banner, flag’.

²⁵⁹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 123.

²⁶⁰ Mallory, ‘The World of Cú Chulainn’, 132.

²⁶¹ *DIL* s.v. 2 *elta*

²⁶² Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 123.

- *idús* ‘turret built for military operations’ (above a ship, raft or defending wall) < ON **viðahús* ‘deck-house(?)’

The etymology of this word is very unclear. Marstrander (1915) connects *id-ús* to an ON compound *viða* ‘mast, high deck, bridge’ and *hús* ‘house’. He considers the Irish word to denote a wooden scaffolding, which was built either on a defending wall or on the high part of a ship. From this scaffolding a person was able to shoot arrows or throw stones during combat. The Norse word denotes a wooden scaffolding placed middeck behind the mast.²⁶³ If this were the case, the Irish would have most likely borrowed it in a shipping context, and subsequently extended the usage by building it on defending walls as well. The only problem with this idea is that the word is unattested in ON.

- *meirge* ‘battle-standard’, especially ‘banner, flag’ < ON *merki* ‘boundary’, ‘banner, standard’, ‘mark, token, sign’, ‘remains, traces’

In this case we see semantic narrowing, where the word was borrowed strictly in a ‘war’ context. Other Norse designations for the word were not taken over. This is another example of the significant influence the Norse must have had on Irish warfare.

- *rannsaigid* ‘searches, investigates’ < ON *rannsaka* ‘to ransack, to search’

Following the attestations, these two words are semantically identical.

- *scell* ‘shield’ < ON *skjoldr* ‘shield’

These two forms are semantically identical. Even though OE *scild*, *sceld* is a cognate of ON, it may be more probable that Irish *scell* was a borrowing from ON, considering the many specifically war-related borrowings we find from ON.

- *scellbolg* ‘a wall or roof of shields’, ‘testudo’ < ON *skjaldborg* ‘wall of shields’

Here we find another specifically war-related borrowing. Again, it may be a borrowing from OE *scioldburg*, cognate to ON. The words are semantically identical.

²⁶³ Mastrander, *Bidrag*, 16.

- *slagbrann* ‘name of a heavy bar or post used to propel missiles’ < ON *slagbrandr* ‘bolt, bar’, ‘war engine’

This word seems to denote a very specific part of a shooting device. The words seem to be semantically identical. It is most likely an innovation from the Norsemen.

- *(s)targa* ‘targe, shield’ < ON *targa* ‘target, small round shield’

These words are semantically identical.

2. 9. 5. Conclusion

Almost all words from this category seem to be innovations in Irish weaponry. These words are very specific items and remain semantically identical once borrowed into Irish. It is clear that the Norsemen had a large material influence on Irish warfare. In this category it is often difficult to determine whether the Irish word was borrowed from ON or OE, as cognate forms occur frequently.

2. 10. Semantic category: Utensils

2. 10. 1. Craftsmanship

Wood seems to have been the chief material for the building and crafting of most utensils and tools in Ireland. The *sáer* ‘wright, builder, carpenter, etc.’, a craftsman who worked mainly with wood, was seen as one of the most prominent and high-ranking craftsmen, as he had many skills. Another important craftsman was the blacksmith. He was slightly lower-ranked than the wright, but was responsible for forging many important items, such as plough-irons, spades and weapons. Other lower-ranked craftsmen were the silversmith, coppersmith, chariot-builder, leather-worker and comb-maker.²⁶⁴

The Norsemen were skilled craftsmen as well. This is, of course, visible in their shipbuilding, but it can also be seen when looking at the items that were used in other fields, such as agriculture and house building, as well as when viewing the kitchen tools and weapons that they manufactured themselves. The blacksmith was considered the most important craftsman. At least one of the crafts of the Norsemen was an innovation in Ireland, namely the minting of coins. It has been established that the Scandinavian countries were minting coins as far back as the ninth century.²⁶⁵

2. 10. 2. Norse words for utensils in Old and Middle Irish

- *adastar* ‘halter’ < ON *hestr* ‘stallion’, ‘horse’

The connection made between *adastar* and *hestr* is unfounded. *Lexique Étymologique* states it has been wrongly attributed to *hestr*, and argues for a native origin.²⁶⁶

- *bara* ‘barrow’ < ON *barar* ‘hand-barrow, stretcher’, ‘funeral bier’

We find only few attestations of this word, making it very difficult to say something about the precise shape, size or usage of the Irish *bara*. The Norse *barar* was apparently used for

²⁶⁴ Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, 61-63.

²⁶⁵ Brøndsted, *The Vikings*, 125-127.

²⁶⁶ *LE* s.v. *adastar*

several purposes. We do find words in Irish for a ‘stretcher’ or ‘bier’, for instance *árach*, *eiletrum* and *fúat*. Perhaps something connected with the design of a wheelbarrow was introduced by the Norse.

- *cadla* ‘rope, cord’, ‘the small guts’ < ON *kaðall* ‘cable, rope’

This word was most likely borrowed in a maritime context, i.e. a rope on board a ship or boat. The meaning ‘the small guts’ must have been added at a later stage.

- *dorú* (< *dorgha*)²⁶⁷ ‘measuring-line’, ‘fishing-line’ < ON *dorg* ‘trailing-line’

This word was borrowed at least as fishing equipment, and must have been an innovation for the Irish. Perhaps a connection can be made with the notion that the Irish most likely used to fish solely on freshwater fish, catching them with nets or weirs. The Norse were more experienced sea-fishers, and the *dorú* may well be specific fishing equipment for catching saltwater fish. Another Norse function of the *dorg* was as some sort of securing line, having one end fastened to a rowlock on a boat, and the other to an oar to prevent loss of the oar. This usage may very well be adopted by the Irish as well. The precise usage of the ‘measuring line’ is uncertain to me; it seems to be a later function of the *dorú*.

- *fál* ‘spade’ < ON *páll* ‘a kind of hoe or spade’

The Norse word has a cognate in OE, namely *pal* ‘stave, stick’. However, the semantic load of *fál* would suggest that it was a borrowing from ON *pall*.

- *locar* ‘(carpenter’s) plane’ < ON *lokarr* ‘plane’

These two words are semantically identical. The *locar* is the only word we find in Old Irish with a clear meaning ‘plane’. It may therefore very well be that the carpenter’s plane was an innovation brought to Ireland by the Norse.

- *pétar* ‘pewter’ < ON *piátr* ‘pewter’

Meyer (1891) claims that this was a borrowing from ON.²⁶⁸ Marstrander (1915)²⁶⁹ states that the Norse word was derived from Middle English. The Middle English form, in turn, came

²⁶⁷ Greene, ‘The Influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 79.

²⁶⁸ Kuno Meyer, ‘Loanwords in Early Irish’, *Revue Celtique* 12 (1891) 461.

²⁶⁹ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 125.

into the language via the Anglo-Normans. This would indicate that this loan could not have come into Irish during the Viking Age.

- *sab* ‘shaft, pole, stake’, ‘support, upholder, < ON *stafr* ‘staff, post’, ‘stave’, ‘staff, champion, leader’ (fig.) stick’, ‘written letter, stave’, (pl.) ‘lore, wisdom’

This word is considered an ON loan by Ó Muirthe (2010).²⁷⁰ However, Irish *sab* goes back to IE **stabo* ‘shaft, pole’,²⁷¹ and can consequently be compared to Germanic words, like ON *stafr*. The Irish word is not a borrowing, but a cognate of the ON word.

- *sadall* ‘horse-saddle’, ‘caparison’ < ON *sǫðull* ‘saddle’

Lexique Étymologique considers Irish *sadall* to be a borrowing from ON.²⁷² However, we have to consider that ON *sǫðull* was cognate to OE *sadol*, *sadal*; therefore, we cannot state with certainty that the Irish word is a borrowing from ON.

- *scacaid* ‘strains, filters, sifts, purifies’ < ON *skaka* ‘to shake’

In this verb we see a specialisation in the semantic load from a general ‘to shake’ to sifting or purifying by shaking. Greene (1976) suggests that the semantic link is the act of shaking the container to speed up the separation process.²⁷³ The Irish borrowing could also be derived from OE *scacan* as this form is a cognate of ON *skaka*.

- *slípaid* ‘smoothes, polishes, whets’ < ON *slípa* ‘to whet, to sharpen’

These two form are semantically identical. This verb was probably connected to the Norse influence on weaponry in Ireland, such as the introduction of the Scandinavian battle axe and the Scandinavian sword.

- *sreng* ‘string, cord’, ‘bowstring’, ‘act of pulling, dragging’ (as verb. noun of *srengaid*) < ON *strengr* ‘string, cord, rope’, ‘anchor-cable’, ‘bowstring’, ‘string of an instrument’, ‘narrow

²⁷⁰ Ó Muirthe, *Dictionary of Scandinavian Words* s.v. *sab*

²⁷¹ Matasović, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic*, 353.

²⁷² *LÉ* s.v. *sadall*

²⁷³ Greene, ‘The Influence of Scandinavian on Irish’, 80.

channel of water, swift
current'

Marstrander (1915) considers *sreng* to be a borrowing from ON.²⁷⁴ This idea could be supported by the fact that this word is also found in Manx *streng* 'rope'. It may indeed have been borrowed as part of Norse weaponry, along with Irish *boga* < ON *bogi*. *Lexique Étymologique*, on the other hand, suggests that it is simply a derivation of the Irish verbal root *sreng*- 'drag, draw'.²⁷⁵

- *stáb* 'cup, drinking vessel, stoup' < ON *staup* 'knobby lump', 'beaker, stoup'

Irish already possessed several words for denoting some sort of cup or drinking vessel. The borrowing from ON must therefore have been taken over to mean a specific type of cup. Whether it was used for different purposes than other stoups is uncertain; perhaps the Irish differentiated on the basis of its design. The Norse meaning 'knobby lump' was not taken over into Irish.

- *stól* 'stool' < ON *stóll* 'stool, chair', 'bishop's see or residence', 'a king's throne or residence', (pl.) 'a class of angels'

In *Lexique Étymologique* this word is considered to be a borrowing from Middle English *stol*, like Welsh *ystol* 'stool'.²⁷⁶ However, ON *stóll* and OE *stól* are cognates; the Irish word could have been borrowed from ON as well as from OE.

2. 10. 3. Conclusion

Again, we find a number of words of which it is difficult to say whether they were borrowed from ON or OE. The borrowings reflect a transferral of specific tools and terminology that were introduced by the Norse in Ireland. We can observe three major areas of influence in the borrowings in this category, namely shipping, agriculture and warfare. If a word belongs to one of these three areas, the ON origin of the word becomes more probable. This could help in determining whether the word was borrowed from ON or OE.

²⁷⁴ Marstrander, *Bidrag*, 22.

²⁷⁵ *LÉ* s.v. *sreng*

²⁷⁶ *LÉ* s.v. *stól*

Conclusion

The Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish are a valuable source for studying both the language contact situation as well as the social contact situation of the Norse invaders and settlers in Ireland and the Irish in the period from approximately the eighth to the beginning of the twelfth century.

When we consider the Norse loanwords in Old and Middle Irish it becomes clear that we can distinguish three types of words that were borrowed:

- (1) Innovations
- (2) Specific Norse variants
- (3) Random, non-specific words

(1) Innovations

Words of this type denote items or phenomena that were previously unknown in Ireland and in Irish. They describe innovations brought to Ireland by the Norse, and show that the Norse were more advanced in certain areas compared to the Irish.

These innovation-words are found most extensively in the loanword material that we have. Certain semantic categories are comprised almost solely of this type of words. The largest semantic category with the most innovation-words is shipping. Here we find several words denoting different types of ships (e.g. *carb*, *cnairr*, *laídeng*), parts of a ship (e.g. *ábur* ‘oar-hole’, *accaire* ‘anchor’), and verbs connected to shipping (e.g. *scibaid* ‘equips a ship’). The notion that the Norse must have had a major influence on shipping and sea-related issues is also detectable from other maritime-related words such as maritime animals (e.g. *rosuallt* ‘walrus’, *trosc* ‘codfish’) and utensils (e.g. *cadla* ‘rope’, *doruba* ‘fishing-line’).

The words of this category are not solely found in a nautical context. It becomes clear that the Norse were also profoundly innovative in the areas of housing (e.g. *fuindeóc* ‘window’, *lota* ‘loft’), agriculture (e.g. *punnann* ‘sheaf’, *staca* ‘stack (of corn)’) and commerce (e.g. *marggad* ‘market’, *marg* ‘mark’). The new form of trade that was introduced by the Norsemen changed the Irish economy. Instead of the Irish periodically organised *óenach* the Norsemen

introduced trade on a national and international scale, through the *margad*. This must have caused the small Irish communities to be less self-sufficient, and perhaps more focused on how trade could provide the necessary income. This gave rise to new professions, like the *mangaire* ‘hawker, pedlar’ and *scingetóir* ‘skinner, furrier’. Finally we see a significant Norse influence in Irish warfare, especially on a material level (e.g. *ces* ‘spear’, *elta* ‘guard between the hilt and the blade’).

The loanwords in this category imply a target-oriented contact between the Norse and the Irish. The Irish wanted to attain the same level of innovation as the Norse, so they borrowed only the specific words needed for this innovation. The words denote specific innovations and many underwent semantic narrowing when they were taken over into Irish. An example of this is the Irish *rúm*, which denotes a room or interior space of a sailing vessel, where the Norse word has a much broader semantic load, and was used to denote a room or interior in general.

This specific borrowing also implies that the Irish were not bilingual, as they learned words in their specific contexts, rather than learning the entire width of the Norse meaning. This points to social contact between two separate language entities.

(2) Specific Norse variants

Words of this type denote items or phenomena that already existed in Irish, but constituted a specific Norse variant. We find them in categories like food and diet (e.g. *beóir* ‘beer’, *bulbing* ‘loaf of bread’), clothing (e.g. *cába* ‘cape, cloak’, *scuird* ‘tunic, shirt’) and utensils (e.g. *stáb* ‘cup, drinking vessel’, *sadall* ‘saddle’). A significant factor in the borrowing of this type of words must have been the Norse introduction of the market. We find many Norse loanwords for specific trade goods in Old and Middle Irish, like types of food, clothing, jewellery and coins. The introduction of coins as a value in Ireland was definitely an innovation, as the Norse were the first to produce coins on Irish ground.

These words clearly imply social contact through trade. Instead of the one-sided contact we see in category (1), this must have been a two-sided contact situation. The Norse were the founders of the trading settlements and these settlements were the place where the Irish could buy foreign, imported goods. Norse words were borrowed alongside the foreign trade goods.

Similar to category (1) this contact situation implies separate linguistic entities with specific contact, as the market place seems to have been the primary area of language contact.

(3) Random, non-specific words

Words of this type denote items or phenomena that already existed in Irish. The words of this category are different from categories (1) and (2) in the sense that these words portray no sign of innovation or specific Norse variants. The reason for borrowing is often unclear for words of this category. We can for instance consider words like *crap* ‘cramp’ and *scréach* ‘scream, cry’, or geographical terms like *í* ‘island’ and *ab* ‘creek, river’. We also find society-related words in this category (e.g. *cuiniu* ‘woman’, *ras* ‘racing, running contest’). Words of this category can even be found in connection to the well-known Irish institution of satire (e.g. *clamar*, *gróma*).

This category may indicate a certain degree of integration, as no specific reason for borrowing can be determined. This borrowing could have occurred when a number of Norsemen settled into Irish society and thus learned Irish. A small number of their native words might have been preserved by them and later spread throughout Irish. The communities where the Norse and Irish mixed may well have been those of the *Gall-Goídil*. These people may be the key to the borrowing of many Norse words into Irish, as they were most probably bilingual.

When we combine the results of these three loanword categories, the following can be concluded. The largest number of Norse loanwords in Irish can be placed in category (1), as we find mostly innovation-words. The second category also comprises a relatively high number of borrowings. Together they show that the main language contact was of a specific nature centred on innovation and trade. This implies that the Norse and the Irish lived side by side as socially separate communities, with contact only in specific circumstances. However, the small amount of words in category (3) indicates that some social integration must have taken place, albeit on a relatively small scale. It is important to note that the absence of substantial evidence for thorough integration does not necessarily imply that the two societies were socially completely separate. The absence of loanwords that would serve as evidence might be explained by later developments in Ireland (e.g. the beginning of Anglo-Norman invasions).

By looking at loanwords in the context of their semantic change, we can find evidence of the types of social contact between the Irish and the Norse invaders and settlers. It has become clear that despite the social boundaries between the two peoples, the innovative influence of the Norse left a profound mark on Irish and Irish society.

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Appendix 1: The database