

University of Guelph
Department of History

Major Paper Presentation



Student: Nick Vanexan	Date: Tues., Apr. 25/17
Time: 1:00 pm	Place: MCKN 132

Title:	Dispute Resolution in Early Medieval Ireland: Insights from <i>Bricriu's Feast</i> and <i>The Tale of Macc Da Thó's Pig</i>
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Abstract:
<p>The study of early medieval Irish legal history has conventionally relied upon the use of monastic law tracts written between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Historians have traditionally accepted these tracts at face value, and neglected to examine how they were applied to medieval Irish law in practice. The monasteries produced many different types of material, including a number of literary sagas. These sagas were traditional Irish oral legends and stories that were recorded by the monasteries of Ireland. These sagas have been examined from a literary standpoint, but have yet to be investigated to determine their historical value to Irish legal history. This paper will attempt to provide an interdisciplinary insight into the historical value of these sagas. Two sagas from the Ulster cycle, <i>Bricriu's Feast</i> and <i>The Tale of Macc Da Thó's Pig</i> will be utilized to examine dispute resolution within the sagas. This consists of three stages; negotiation, violence and third party arbitration. Each stage will be examined as it develops within the context of the stories. The law tracts of medieval Ireland only address dispute resolution if it were to reach the stage of arbitration, which the sagas reflect as being a rare event. Disputes were most often settled by the parties involved themselves. This paper will help form connections between what was recorded in the sagas and how disputes were settled in medieval Ireland.</p>

Advisor: Dr. James E. Fraser	Chair: Dr. Elizabeth Ewan
Committee: Dr. Christine Ekholst	