The Origins of the Arthurian Legend

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After prolonged debate, the search for the 'historical Arthur' remains inconclusive, because of the nature of the evidence which historians take into account. Possibilities arise, however, from evidence of another kind. Literary inquiry can lead towards historical insight and identify an Arthur-figure who has been noticed at various times, but not adequately considered. (GA)

To the question 'Did Arthur exist?' a straight yes-or-no answer cannot be given. More is involved here than historical doubt. With, say, Robin Hood, the straight answer is likewise excluded, but solely by insufficiency of data. A new find might some day make it possible. With Arthur the difficulty cuts deeper. For any ordinary inquirer, the answer 'yes' implies the reality of the Arthur of romance, the idealized medieval monarch, at the centre of a sort of montage that includes Guinevere and Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table. Since Arthur in that sense is a literary creation and didn't exist, the answer 'yes' is wrong. But the answer 'no' is also wrong. It implies that Arthur is fictitious as Don Quixote is fictitious, that he has no factual basis at all. The romancers themselves would never have accepted that, and it cannot be maintained as a definite statement.

Actually, of course, the literary Arthur is a shape-shifter who has taken different forms over the centuries. But all versions presumably derive from a source or prototype earlier than any. There have been numerous attempts to work back to this point, and, more specifically, to pin down a 'historical Arthur' as the starting-point, so that the question of existence can be affirmatively answered … on the understanding that this is the Arthur who is meant.

I believe the 'historical Arthur' quest has, in practice, been misguided. Historians in search of him have committed themselves to a certain mode of approach. They have tried to strip away legend and isolate hard evidence. Doing so means dismissing the medieval literature (Geoffrey of Monmouth and everything later), sifting older matter of Welsh provenance, and picking out whatever may be deemed factual or, at least, arguably so. Applied with due objectivity, such a process reduces the data to two Latin documents. They refer to Arthur at no great length as a successful war-leader of Celtic Britons in the

fifth or sixth century, embroiled chiefly with encroaching Saxons, ancestors of the English. One of these documents is the *Historia Brittonum*, History of the Britons, compiled early in the ninth century, and ascribed dubiously to a monk of Bangor named Nennius. In a single chapter it lists twelve Arthurian battles. The other document is a chronicle, the *Annales Cambriae*, Annals of Wales, which is somewhat later and has two Arthurian entries, also about battles. There is a penumbra of Welsh poems and traditions, and support for the Latin texts can be claimed from that quarter, especially from an allusion to Arthur's martial prowess which may be as early as 600. They alone, however, are the documents properly so called.[1]

Opinion on them has swung back and forth. One seldom-noted fact is that Edward Gibbon believed in Arthur, on the strength of the 'simple and circumstantial testimony of Nennius.' From the 1930s on, Collingwood's theory of an Arthur who revived the imperial military office of *Comes Britanniarum*, and employed Roman-type cavalry to rout pedestrian Saxons, appealed to many including novelists such as Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis. While the cavalry notion faded for lack of evidence, the image of Arthur as a post-Roman commander-in-chief, with or without civilian power as well, and as active in south and south-west Britain, flourished into the seventies. It seemed to have established itself through the work of Kenneth Jackson, Leslie Alcock and John Morris (though Alcock's review of Morris's *The Age of Arthur*, which made sweeping claims, was critical; there was never a united front). Some scholars, notably Rachel Bromwich, while accepting an Arthur who was primarily a warrior, dissented as to his homeland and made it northern.

In 1977 an onslaught by David Dumville on all such reconstructions, and on Welsh records generally, set the pendulum swinging the other way.[2] Today most historians who consider the 'historical Arthur' at all are sceptical and reluctant to discuss him. An added reason has been the partial discrediting of the topic by the appearance of further 'historical Arthur' books which are mutually contradictory, wildly unscholarly, and sometimes worse.

I would agree with the sceptics, not in giving up the procedure entirely, but in seeing it as a dead end unless it is supplemented in other ways. The Latin texts are too distant in time from Arthur's apparent floruit. The list of battles in Nennius – to use the name for convenience – is probably adapted from an earlier Welsh poem, but there is no telling how much earlier, or what exactly it said. Moreover, even taken at face value, the texts raise other chronological problems. For one thing, they spread Arthur's career over an incredible stretch of time. Two of Nennius's battles can be located with fair confidence, one at Chester and one in southern Scotland; they make sense only in the context of

widespread Saxon raiding in alliance with Picts, which is attested by Gildas and Bede; and that phase can hardly have been much later than the 450s. Yet the *Annales* put the last battle of all, the 'strife of Camlann,' in 539 (or 537; there is a slight ambiguity). Was Arthur a centenarian when he fought it? This is no modern quibble. At least two medieval authors seem to have been aware of a crux.[3] We might hope at least to locate him in some part of the time-range and then treat everything outside as spurious. Apparently, however, this cannot be done, because the Welsh matter nowhere supplies a chronological fix to calibrate him with known history. We are never told that his first battle took place when X was emperor, or his last when Y was pope.

Even the stripping-away of legend doesn't really work. Reducing the evidence to what is in the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales* still fails to get rid of the problem. Thus, both credit Arthur with winning the battle of Badon. It was a real and important victory, mentioned by Gildas somewhere about the 530s when it was within living memory. It may have occurred near Swindon, or farther west, near Bath. But the *Historia* passage says Arthur slew 960 of the enemy single-handed in one charge. That need not invalidate the whole story of his campaigns, but it means that at least where Badon is concerned, legend-making has entered: a conclusion supported by two Arthurian fables in an appendix. The same may have happened in the *Annales* entry about this battle, which is disproportionately long because of the allusion to Arthur, itself rather curious and perhaps interpolated.

Some accept the 'strife of Camlann' entry as a plain statement, legend-free. A point in its favour is that as everyone mentioned elsewhere in the *Annales* appears to be real; a completely fictitious Arthur here, with no hint of interpolation, would be anomalous. What it says is that Arthur and Medraut, the original Modred or Mordred, fell at Camlann in 539. The trouble is that to isolate this incident as the sole fact not only upsets almost everything else because of the difficulty over dates, but also suggests that the whole vast cycle grew around a squabble of minor chiefs, otherwise unknown, at an unidentified place certainly far from the Saxon enemy whose repulse was the basis of the Arthurian glory. I at least cannot think my way from one to the other. The 'Camlann Arthur' who has been seriously proposed – by Michael Wood, for instance – is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the method, showing that if you push it to its logical limit, the utmost it can offer is a minimal figure who explains nothing.

A more fruitful approach is to ask, not 'Did Arthur exist?' but 'How did the Arthurian Legend originate; what facts is it rooted in?' To do so is to acknowledge that this is a literary problem rather than a historical one, though with a hope

that literary investigation may lead to historical insight. Such an approach casts the net wider and introduces a kind of lateral thinking. It allows, for instance, the consideration of Geoffrey of Monmouth, not in the sense of believing what he says about Arthur, but in the sense of asking what his raw materials were: sometimes, plainly, the aforesaid Welsh matter, but maybe not always. The investigation may lead to a real Arthur-figure or it may not. The first requirement is to try.

A crucial question is whether the Legend's roots are as far back as the period it professes to be about; or, to put this another way, whether the bards and story-tellers who created it were using traditions genuinely dating from that period. It is here that archaeology enters. It confirms the story of Saxon incursions into Britain and a phase when the advance more or less halted. However, it is far from confirming the Welsh-derived drama of large-scale warfare triumphantly ended by Arthur's victories. In that respect, it is of little help with the Legend as such. More promising are the results at specific sites.

Three places are outstandingly linked with Arthur. According to Geoffrey he was conceived in a ducal stronghold on the Tintagel headland, and it is generally assumed that he was born there. According to Caradoc of Llancarfan he had dealings with an abbot of Glastonbury, and the monks who exhibited a grave sixty years later said it was his and he was buried there. According to John Leland, citing Somerset lore later again, Arthur's Camelot was the ancient Cadbury hill-fort which can be seen from Glastonbury Tor. The Camelot of romance is fictitious, but a significant point about it is that it is not Britain's capital. It is Arthur's personal headquarters. The possibility of 'Camelot' having a basis in such a headquarters can fairly be entertained.

In all three instances, archaeology has proved occupancy and eminence in the period to which the Legend refers. Tintagel, formerly interpreted as a dark-age monastery, has emerged in recent years as a major centre, very likely a regional seat of government, during the fifth century. At Glastonbury a Christian community existed almost or quite as early, if perhaps on the higher ground rather than the site of the Abbey, and may have been the only one in that part of Britain. At Cadbury, excavation in 1966-70 showed that the hill-fort was reoccupied probably during the second half of the fifth century, and fortified with a new stone-and-timber rampart nearly three-quarters of a mile in perimeter, including a gatehouse. Excavation of other hill-forts has since shown reoccupation and refurbishment, but no full parallel for the great Cadbury fortification, with its gatehouse, has turned up anywhere else in post-Roman Britain. It implies a very special occupant with impressive resources of manpower: a king or chief unique (so far as present knowledge goes) in his time.[4]

These three places were picked as major locations of Arthur's story, and all three now stand revealed as important and apt in the right period. The implication is clear. At Tintagel the headland would have gone through a long phase of vacancy or near-vacancy before Geoffrey told his tale. He was not spinning a fantasy around famous ruins as he did at Caerleon, he knew some kind of tradition of the place's long-ago appropriateness. At Glastonbury the acceptance of Arthur's grave by Welshmen, against natural inclination, and the non-emergence of any rival grave, go far to establish a similar tradition irrespective of what the monks may have heard.[5] At Cadbury, uninhabited for hundreds of years, even a modern archaeologist could not have detected the new fortification by inspection alone, without digging. It is really not to be supposed that the unknown person responsible for the Camelot identification chose the most plausible hill in Britain by a mere guess.

The people who focused on these places knew something about them. A purely accidental three-out-of-three score is beyond serious credence. They drew on traditions originating in the Britain to which they assigned Arthur, the Britain of the century or two after separation from Rome. That is truly where the Legend is rooted. All three places, by the way, are in the West Country, the former Dumnonia. Advocates of a northern Arthur have produced no comparable sites. Obviously Arthur, if he existed, could have been active in that part of Britain and inspired early bardic allusions, but nothing of consequence in the north gives him a birthplace or a headquarters or a grave, and the region's archaeology nowhere links up with any story of him. While Camlann might etymologically be Camboglanna, a northern Roman fort, the versions of Arthur's last battle never point to this fort or anywhere near it. There are two Camlanns in Wales, still called so, and even the claim of the Somerset river Cam is backed by a report of a mass burial.[6]

Given the apparent body of tradition we can venture a little further and glimpse a few individuals embedded in it from whom Arthurian characters are derived. The distant original of Uther's brother Aurelius Ambrosius is a fifth-century British war-leader, Ambrosius Aurelianus; he is mentioned by Gildas and Bede, and a continuity in legend is witnessed by Nennius. The distant original of Mark in the Tristan story is seemingly a certain Marcus, likewise Roman-named, with a father Marcianus who was called after a mid-fifth-century emperor. Romancers gave Marcus a role as King Mark of Cornwall that may be fictitious, but the Marcianus connection shows that he was 'there,' so to speak, from a very early stage.[7]

Was Arthur there also, perhaps as a real person, perhaps as an imaginary hero? Or was he inserted in the traditions later when they had undergone development?

His name favours the first alternative. 'Arthur' is a Welsh form of the Roman 'Artorius,' not common, but adequately attested. Arthur falls into place alongside Ambrosius, Marcus, and others in the same category, during a phase when Roman influence lingered. Furthermore, there is a sequel. In the latter part of the sixth century, when Roman names in general had faded out, this hitherto rare one began to enjoy a vogue. Several Arthurs are on record up and down Britain, including a Scottish prince. They are best explained as having been named after a hero established in song and story, and therefore alive or invented earlier, with a long enough interval to carry his bardic fame beyond his own people.[8]

As for his historicity or otherwise, two arguments can be dismissed. Critics have urged that because he is credited with fantastic feats, such as his single-handed slaughter at Badon, he cannot have been real. But fantastic feats were ascribed in America to Davy Crockett, who was real enough. Most were tongue-in-cheek tall tales, but they were current and popular, and within a year or two of his death at the Alamo, he was seriously alleged to have killed 85 Mexicans during the siege – not 960, admittedly, but still a pretty wild number, and after a much shorter time for exaggeration. It was formerly claimed that anyone said to have slain a dragon must be fictitious. Yet several reputed dragon-slayers, in the Balkans for instance, were undoubtedly real. Far-fetched elements in a story do not discredit the entire story. Far-fetched elements in a career do not disprove its protagonist's reality. Baron Munchausen himself was real.

On the opposite side is the 'must have' argument: that someone with such an impact as Arthur must have existed. It is not negligible, but neither is it strong. Here, a cautionary instance is Sherlock Holmes. He is so vivid that countless people have taken his existence for granted. For many years the office on the site of his Baker Street lodgings (not really identifiable, but given a street number) received a steady trickle of letters addressed to him. New stories continue to be written; new films continue to be made. The impact of Holmes has been immense. Yet we know how his saga began, and it was in Conan Doyle's imagination, not in the biography of a real detective.

It is worth observing, all the same, that those who maintain Arthur's non-existence can be asked to explain the phenomenon without him. Incantatory repetition of words like 'myth' is mere evasion. If there was no Arthur at all, what did happen, where did the idea of him come from, who launched it, and when? What propagandist feat enabled a British leader who didn't exist to blot out the fame of those who did? So far as I know, no one has offered convincing answers.

Opponents have argued that Arthur was a Celtic god, euhemerized as a human warrior. Such things did occur, if not in comparable detail, when

Christianity forbade the gods to go on being divine. Belinus became Beli, mythical king of Britain and ancestor of Welsh dynasties. Maponus became Mabon, associated with Arthur himself. His mother Matrona became – probably – Morgan le Fay; at any rate Morgan has a divine origin and is even called a goddess, though with a Christian explaining-away, by Giraldus Cambrensis and the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[9]

However, 'Artorius' could scarcely have been the name of a Celtic god, and there is no trace of any pre-Christian divinity whose name could have evolved into 'Arthur' by another route. This deity has never been more than a speculation, concocted for the sake of the theory. A notion that Arthur began as the war-god of a fifth-century pagan revival is refuted by the silence of Gildas, who denounces his British fellow-Christians for just about every sin except apostasy. He would have denounced neo-paganism if there had been any.

One resolute foe of historicity tried to make capital out of the 'lives' of Welsh saints, and since these seldom get much attention, they may be mentioned here. Four of them, associated with the Llancarfan community, introduce Arthur as an unpleasant figure with whom the saints come in conflict. Hence, supposedly, he was a demon in the eyes of clerics and therefore a pagan god. But the clerical author of the *Historia Brittonum* makes him a Christian champion, conquering heathen Saxons by heavenly aid, and the hagiographic items never make him hellish. They are anecdotes of a stock type demonstrating a saint's superiority over a turbulent layman. Their Arthur, abashed, shows penitence by gifts and concessions, as no demon would have done.[10]

Sometimes indeed Arthur is mythified, or involved in episodes of a mythical kind. That may apply, for instance, to the recurrent abduction of his wife. But as a purely or essentially mythical character he is a product of fashions in anthropology and comparative religion. Theorists on this line have discovered facts of genuine interest. In the larger presentation, however, they have contradicted each other too much and suppressed or distorted the evidence too often. While the self-destruction of their rival conjectures doesn't prove the contrary, the image of a real person, with a solidity that confounds exorcism, may be thought to emerge dimly by default.

One motif that certainly is pre-Christian may tell in his favour. The folk-belief in an Arthur who lies sleeping in a cave or underground chamber is scattered widely involving more than a dozen locations. Cadbury-Camelot is the first that can be documented, and a century or so ago, a local villager asked some archaeologists if they meant to dig up the King. As Sir John Rhys observed, the belief had its origin in a Celtic myth recorded by Plutarch, about a banished god asleep in a cave on a western island. In Christian times this belief was suitably adapted and annexed not only to Arthur but to other heroes, sometimes

perhaps in imitation of him, sometimes independently. Frederick Barbarossa is a famous instance. The folklorist Jennifer Westwood has remarked on a feature of the cave-legend that is easy to overlook. Despite its mythic ancestry, cave-legends do not attach themselves to fairy-tale characters: the sleepers are, or are regarded as, human beings in a historical context. Since Arthur is one such sleeper, he is likely to have at least some sort of historical substance.[11]

So – partly through the lack of a coherent alternative – we can detect a bias towards a starting-point for the Legend in the person of a post-Roman Briton known as Artorius and then, through linguistic changes, as Arthur. The case for him does not depend on Nennius or the *Annales Cambriae*, or on arguments of the 'must have' or 'no smoke without fire' type. If he did exist, he passed into the body of tradition handed on from the fifth century, most of it fabulous but a little of it historical, and rose gradually to dominate this tradition and extend whatever linkage he had with its factual elements. His saga may soon have come to credit him with other men's exploits – that has to be considered in connection with his long time-span – but he stands alone at the point of origin. Gildas's notorious silence is only a difficulty (a slight one at that, in view of the nature of his tract) on the supposition that Arthur would have been recent or contemporary when Gildas wrote. Too much has been made of Gildas's silence because of a tendency to assume that he would have been, that his correct position in the time-span is late. But if he flourished near the beginning of it, say in the third quarter of the fifth century, the silence means nothing. Gildas knows little about anybody beyond living memory and names no fifth-century Britons at all, except Ambrosius Aurelianus. He may only mention Ambrosius to blacken his descendants by contrast.

After a slow ascent through Welsh verse and story-telling, most of it now lost to view, Arthur (whoever or whatever he was) became the monarch of the Legend, quasi-historical ruler over a splendid kingdom, through the genius of one author. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, History of the Kings of Britain, appeared in the late 1130s and supplied the framework for the literature that followed.

There is much more in his book than Arthur. It opens in the twelfth century B.C. with an expansion of a Welsh legend telling how the island – then called Albion – was settled by migrating Trojans, under the leadership of Brutus, Aeneas's great-grandson. Geoffrey goes on through a long series of fictitious reigns, including King Lear's. He maintains that the line of British kings was unbroken even in the three and a half centuries of Roman rule, which he reduces to a vague protectorate.

It is after Britain's break with the Empire that his story moves towards its Arthurian climax. He tells how a sinister noble, Vortigern, usurped the throne

and invited heathen Saxons to make their homes in Britain as auxiliary troops in his service. Reinforced from overseas, they got out of hand and ravaged much of the country. Vortigern fled to Wales, where Merlin prophesied his downfall. The rightful princes returned from exile and overthrew him. The elder, Aurelius Ambrosius, was succeeded after a brief reign by his brother Uther Pendragon. Both managed to contain the Saxons; neither could bring them under control.

Arthur, Uther's son, is presented as a kind of Messiah delivering Britain from these troubles. Strangely begotten at Tintagel, Geoffrey informs us, he came to the throne while young and proved to be an able leader, subduing the Saxons, defeating the Picts and Scots who had aided them, and conquering Ireland. He married Guinevere and reigned in prosperity for twelve years, generally beloved. He founded an order of knighthood recruiting distinguished men from all nations. Then he gradually conquered large parts of Gaul, still shakily held by Rome.

During another spell of peace he held court magnificently at Caerleon. The Roman ruler Lucius demanded tribute and a restitution of conquests. Arthur took an army to Gaul again, leaving his nephew Mordred (to use the romancers' spelling) in charge at home, jointly with the Queen. He won a victory over Lucius near the land of the Allobroges, *i.e.,* the Burgundians, and pushed on into their territory. Mordred, however, turned traitor, proclaimed himself king, persuaded Guinevere to live in adultery with him, and made a deal with the Saxons. Arthur returned, and defeated and slew him beside the river Camel in Cornwall, but was grievously wounded and taken away to the Isle of Avalon – *Insula Avallonis* – for his wounds to be treated. Geoffrey leaves the door open for the folk-belief in his survival without affirming it. The King simply departs in the direction of Avalon, wherever that may be, with no recorded death. He has reigned for about twenty-five years.

Geoffrey is not a historian and can never, anywhere, be trusted for facts. However, he is not a total fantasist either. Except in the early reigns he habitually *uses* history, or what he would like to think is history. He inflates, he transforms, he mixes up chronology, he indulges in monstrous elaborations, but he does not contrive major episodes out of nothing at all. It is futile to sift his text, however selectively, for straightforward historical data. Yet, in pursuance of the present approach, it is proper to ask what history or supposed history he is drawing on here for his literary creation and to see whether this search for sources may lead towards an original Arthur by a fresh route.

When Geoffrey writes of events in post-Roman Britain, he is plainly drawing on something valid. Saxons did enter the country from across the North Sea, with Angles and other associates, and probably some at least came as auxiliary

troops long before the misleading mid-century date which historians used to copy from Bede. A Briton known as Vortigern probably did play a part in settling them. 'Vortigern' means 'over-chief' and may denote someone comparable to an Irish high king, claiming paramountcy over regional rulers. The settlers did mutiny and raid far and wide, withdrawing eventually to their permitted enclaves, where they seem to have been contained for a while. There was a British recovery, which, after years of sporadic fighting, stabilized the situation to the Britons' advantage. Ambrosius Aurelianus was a leader in this counter-attack, and so, according to Nennius, was Arthur. Geoffrey enlarges the recovery into an Arthurian golden age. Later authors turn Arthur's Britain into the chivalric Utopia of romance.

Where did Geoffrey acquire the knowledge he clearly had, however flamboyantly he played with it? He asserts in a dedicatory preface that he translated or adapted the entire *History* from 'a certain very ancient book written in the British language' given him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, where he held a teaching post. The British language could be Welsh, or it could be Breton, the kindred speech of the people of Brittany, descendants of emigrants from Britain who took Arthurian lore to Armorican Gaul. There are no extant copies of the book, or even fragments of it, and Geoffrey's claim as it stands is quite inadmissible. Many things in the *History*, such as a reference to Normans in Arthur's army, could not have come from a 'very ancient book.' Nevertheless he may have had a lost source of some kind. It could even have supplied him with information, or pseudo-information, on Arthur.[12]

However that may be, we must work with the sources that survive. Geoffrey uses Gildas, Bede, Nennius, the *Annales Cambriae*. With that much said we reach an impasse. These texts account for only about one-fifth of Arthur's story. More important, there has been a radical shift of emphasis. Arthur's quelling of the Saxons, which, for Nennius, is the whole point of his career, is merely a prelude, a necessary stage-setting for the glories that matter. When Geoffrey deals with the wicked Vortigern, he simply expands Nennius's account of him. When he deals with the heroic Arthur, he does something altogether different. Nearly half the story concerns Arthur's activities in Gaul; more than half, if we count the preliminaries to his greater war. Assessed by allocation of space, he is more a Gallic conqueror than anything else. Nor do the subsequent romancers lose sight of this. Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach both give weight to his continental domain. Malory takes him even farther along the same path.

A related departure from known precedent is the treatment of the King's passing, which is foreshadowed first in a prophecy by Merlin that seems to

hint it happened in Gaul. When Geoffrey composes the actual account, he bases it on the 'strife of Camlann.' Yet he still has the disaster strike when Arthur is overseas, and he transforms Mordred into a traitorous deputy-ruler who conspires with barbarians. It may be worth mentioning that he says only one specific thing about his 'ancient book': that it touched on the circumstances of Arthur's downfall.

This is where 'historical Arthur' investigators have gone astray, or at least ignored a problem which their own approach raises. Dismissing Geoffrey's *History* and everything later, they have brushed aside Arthur's activities abroad and restricted their attention to Britain, with the inconclusive results already noted. True, Geoffrey's Gallic narrative cannot be historical, but if we treat it as totally baseless, we have to assume that he is creating a long and important quasi-historical episode – to be precise, two instalments of such an episode – out of nothing whatever. That is simply not his way. He does not do it anywhere else, from Julius Caesar on. Even his fantasy about the knighthood and court has at least an echo of previous Welsh fantasy, as the tale *Culhwch and Olwen* shows. The same tale has a cryptic allusion to Arthur's going to Greece. But nothing Welsh suggests involvement in the Gallic affairs of the western Empire.

On the analogy of the rest of the *History*, Geoffrey found this idea in some source. Then where? He may have taken odd hints from other wars, real or mythical. Specifically, he may have taken such a hint from the continental campaign of the pretender Maximus in 383. However, he gives his own version of Maximus's enterprise in Book v. A fictitious Arthurian rehash in Book x would be most peculiar, suggesting an uncharacteristic failure of invention. And the Gallic warfare shows signs of a more definite inspiration.

Chronology offers clues. Suppose we survey the main post-Roman events in the *History*, asking when Geoffrey represents them as happening. If we line up various parts of the narrative, we can see roughly what he intends. Britain's separation from Rome, the family relationships of the kings, a visitation by Gallic bishops in 429, the expeditions to Gaul, and scattered mentions of periods of time, combine loosely to show that in devising his structure as far as Arthur's passing, Geoffrey meant it all to lie within the fifth century. Since there is still a western emperor, the limit of date is 476, when the line of western emperors ended. In the interests of that time-scheme Geoffrey pulls back the battle of Badon – he locates it near Bath – by several decades. Second thoughts may have sown doubt in the text as we have it, but the only real confusion is caused by the date given for Arthur's demise, 542. This date is so flagrantly inconsistent with everything prior that it is likely to be an error, scribal or otherwise, and it can be corroboratively explained as such; I shall return to this point.

Within Geoffrey's fifth-century range we get a single surprising piece of exactitude. It is not explicit, and its complete realization depends on juxtaposing a number of passages.

As remarked, one shortcoming of the Welsh matter is that it nowhere gives Arthur a chronological fix to line him up with known events. He does, however, get such a fix – the only one he gets anywhere up to Geoffrey's time – and the *History of the Kings of Britain* supplies it. Geoffrey is aware that until 476 the Late Roman world had two emperors, one in the west and one in the east. In fact he refers to 'the emperors' (ix.20). The eastern one during Arthur's Gallic exploits is named three times as Leo. He can only be Leo i, who reigned from 457 to 474. We can narrow down the date further. During Arthur's first Gallic war, Leo seems to have no western colleague, and there was indeed an interregnum when this was so. But the second war is provoked by an emperor in the west called Lucius. His exact status is unclear. He is introduced as Procurator of the Republic, a title of imperial deputies in minor provinces, and the Senate has power to give him orders. Both details hint at a dim awareness on Geoffrey's part of the last western emperors' limitations. There was never a Lucius. However, the Chronicle of Sigebert of Gembloux, which Geoffrey may have known, gives Leo a western colleague called Lucerius in 469-70. Sigebert is inaccurate. The last western Augusti were ephemeral and confusing. But the name would have been enough for Geoffrey, and he was quite capable of modifying 'Lucerius' into the more familiar 'Lucius.' Arguably then, he places Arthur's greater Gallic campaign during the years 469-70, at which time alone he could have found Leo and 'Lucius' reigning together.

 He has also picked up the name of a pope which he gives as 'Sulpicius.' This looks like another garble. Tatlock identifies the pope as Simplicius, whom Geoffrey could also have found in Sigebert's Chronicle and remembered imperfectly.[13] His pontificate ran from 468 to 483, so that he was pope in the Leo-'Lucius' years.

These clues are of unequal weight. Leo satisfactorily defines the period 457-74: not because Geoffrey is much concerned with chronology, but because, if he is taking hints from actual events, they must be such that any account of them would have given the name of this emperor. The clues that narrow the range depend on corrections. However, all three converge to form a triple chronological fix establishing the brief time-span 469-70. They suggest that Geoffrey made use of historical material and found something in it to indicate that Arthur, or a Briton he could take to be Arthur, campaigned in Gaul at that time. Such a 'something' would furnish a basis for the Gallic parts of the *History*.

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This might still signify very little, if it were not for a single and simple fact. A Briton whom Geoffrey could have taken to be Arthur did campaign in Gaul at that time.

I noticed him long ago and, after a later and better-informed study, learned that others had noticed him too. Between 1138 and 1147 the connection was almost made by a scribe at Ourscamp near Beauvais who enlarged the Sigebert Chronicle. The English historian Sharon Turner made it in 1799. The same issue was raised in 1906 by Robert Huntington Fletcher, and in 1987 by Professor Tournoy of Leuven. This is not a personal fancy but a well-grounded realization which several authors have attained; and it is senior to the modern 'historical Arthur' search, which, because of its self-imposed restrictions, has diverted attention from it.[14]

In 467 Leo i appointed a western colleague named Anthemius, who initiated a short-lived attempt to retrieve the crumbling situation in Gaul, much of it occupied by a medley of barbarians. The powerful Visigoths, already in control of Spain, were threatening to push north and take possession. Anthemius negotiated a British alliance, and, according to the Gothic historian Jordanes, the 'King of the Britons' crossed to Gaul with 12,000 troops.[15] Historians have underrated him because of an assumption that he was merely a chief of Bretons, that is, British migrants to Armorica. Gibbon, as a matter of fact, knew better. At that stage the migrants were far too few for a purely Breton force to have had any chance of stopping the Visigoths, and the British army that did arrive is plainly stated to have come over the Ocean in ships. The purely-Breton theory has been disposed of by James Campbell, who suggests that this king may have had authority on both sides of the Channel, and by Ian Wood, who accepts as a matter of course that he brought his army over from Britain itself, and remarks justifiably on his 'extraordinary career.'[16]

After a phase north of the Loire, he advanced into central Gaul. But Arvandus, Gaul's imperial prefect, had been acting treacherously, proposing to the Visigoths that they should crush the Britons and share out Gaul with the Burgundians, who held a good deal of the east and south. Arvandus was detected, but the Visigoths took up his idea. They pushed toward Bourges, which the Britons had occupied, and defeated them in a hotly contested battle near Châteauroux before Roman forces could arrive to aid them. The British king drew off with the remnant of his army into the territory of the Burgundians, who had kept aloof from Arvandus's plotting and were friendly. No more is said about him.[17]

All this is attested by sound evidence, some of it contemporary. There is even a letter to the king from Sidonius Apollinaris.[18] We have at last escaped the recurrent Arthurian difficulty over huge gaps of time. Geoffrey might have gleaned enough for his literary flight from a careful reading of the known

testimony, and Sigebert's Chronicle mentions the British action close to his 'Lucerius' items. But a lost source, assembling the scattered data, is more likely: a paragraph, maybe, in a 'very ancient book'? Geoffrey's account of the Gallic warfare may glance at such a source in a throwaway phrase, unusual for him, 'so the story goes' (*ut dictum est*, x.4). At any rate this episode provides data accounting for more of his Arthur narrative than the Welsh quasi-history does.

The 'King of the Britons' is in Gaul with his sea-borne army at exactly the right time. He advances to the neighbourhood of Burgundian country. He is betrayed by a deputy-ruler who conspires with barbarians (here we have the role and conduct imposed on Mordred with no hint from Wales). He vanishes after a fatal battle, without any recorded death. His apparent line of retreat shows him moving in the direction of the real town of Avallon in Burgundy. Rachel Bromwich has pointed out that Geoffrey's *Insula Avallonis* is not a precise Latinization of the Welsh form *Avallach* and is clearly influenced by this same Burgundian Avallon.[19] As observed, Merlin's prophecy of the unborn Arthur not only foretells the overseas warfare but indicates that at that stage of composition, Geoffrey may have intended the King to vanish in Gaul (vii.3), though he later adopted the Welsh tradition.

If Geoffrey exploited some version of these events, he altered the nature of the war for Arthur's greater glory. That would have been in line with his practice elsewhere. Farther back, for instance, when dealing with the imperial pretender Carausius, he turns a Roman commander into a British king, and a Roman victory into a British one (v.3-4). The present suggestion would imply similar changes. Arthur acts on his own account, not as an auxiliary to someone else, and he fights and defeats the Romans, who, in the real war, were nominal if useless allies. Geoffrey makes him vanquish the mightiest of opponents – mighty in retrospect, if hardly at the time – and come close to imperial power himself. Yet the change is not as absolute as it seems. A tell-tale phrase remains in the text, isolated. At a preliminary council, one of Arthur's sub-kings speaks of going over to the continent to fight Romans *and Germans* (ix.18). The significant point about these words is, precisely, their isolation. The Germans never appear, even in Lucius's cosmopolitan host. They are not a conscious invention of Geoffrey's; they are taken, apparently, from a source and then forgotten. The original reference could have been to the real Germanic enemy, the Visigoths.

A manifest obstacle is the date given for Arthur's passing, 542, so starkly in conflict with the whole narrative which it closes. Apart from anything else, the lifetimes of Uther and his son Arthur cannot possibly stretch so far, and in 542 there had been no western emperor for decades. There are signs, moreover,

that in his original plan Geoffrey envisaged a gap of much more than 54 years between Arthur's passing and the English mission of Augustine, dispatched by Pope Gregory in 596. He takes from Gildas the names of four British regional kings who, in reality, were all living at the same time, and makes them rule over Britain successively after Arthur. Four contrived reigns are still not enough. He adds a fifth, plus the break-up of British unity, plus the triumph of the Saxons with foreign aid, plus 'a long time,' before he gets to Augustine.

So the context, not only before but after, indicates that 542 is wrong. As we shall see, several chroniclers knew enough to reject it. Medieval texts are apt to be shaky on numerical dates, and this one could have crept in as a mere blunder. But I have shown that recognized processes of error, exemplified in Nennius and in Wace's French paraphrase of Geoffrey, could have conjured 542 out of 470, the probable date of the 'passing' of the King of the Britons.[20]

The main reason why this King has seldom made an impact in the Arthurian field is that the original texts refer to him not as Arthur but, with slight variations, as Riothamus. The assumption that this was his name has distracted attention from his Arthurian attributes, despite the fact that he is the only documented person who does anything Arthurian. Geoffrey, of course, would have taken the discrepancy in his stride. Earlier in the *History* he wants to make out, in defiance of Welsh tradition, that Merlin was the same person as the seer Ambrosius in Vortigern's reign, and he does it at a stroke, by speaking of him quite casually as 'Merlin who was also called Ambrosius.'

However, there need not actually be a discrepancy. Professor Fleuriot perceived some years ago that 'Riothamus' Latinizes a fifth-century British style, *Rigotamos*. The first syllable meant 'king' and *tamo*- was a superlative suffix. 'Riothamus' is 'king-most' (an analogous modern word is 'generalissimo'), and it may be translated 'supreme king' or 'supremely royal.' The same elements appear in 'Vortimer,' originally *Vortamorix*, 'over-most-king,' as Vortigern's shadowy son is called.[21] In Welsh and Breton derivatives 'Riothamus' evolves into a personal name, as 'Vortigern' does, but in the fifth century it may well have been a title or honorific, leaving the question of the king's name open to conjecture. Greek supplies an exact parallel, *Basileutatos*, and this was a term of honour bestowed on Minos of Crete.[22] Various potentates are known to history in much the same way. 'Genghis Khan,' 'Very Mighty Ruler,' is an instance: the Mongol chief began his career as Temujin. Even if 'Riothamus' was the British king's name, that would not exclude his having another. In view of its meaning, 'Riothamus' is likely to have been assumed rather than baptismal, in which case he was indeed called something else as well, and there was no obstacle to the notion that this was 'Arthur.'[23]

The phrase Jordanes applies to him, 'King of the Britons,' is more significant than it looks. It would have been usable only during a generation or so around the middle of the fifth century, say from some time in the 440s to some time in the 470s. In the early post-Roman aftermath a monarch of the ex-imperial territory would have been 'King of Britain.' By the last quarter of the century, Saxon encroachment and the rise of regional overlords had carried disintegration so far that a term implying overall sovereignty would have been meaningless. Between, however, while parts of the country were already Saxon-held, there could still have been a vestigial paramountcy over a fair number of Britons, or at least a claim to it, expressible in the phrase 'King of the Britons' paralleling 'King of the Franks,' 'King of the Visigoths,' and so forth – contemporaneous titles taken from these men's subjects and not from their ill-defined domains. The style 'Riothamus' is apt and intelligible in its time as one possessed or adopted by the leader who went to Gaul.

If Geoffrey drew on this leader's career for his story of Arthur, was the identification a fancy of his own like his Merlin-Ambrosius equation, or had he any reason to think that Arthur (or Artorius) actually was the king's name – even that he was *the* Arthur? The obvious thing to ask is whether anyone else made the identification, before Geoffrey or at least independently of him.

Professedly in 1019, a priest in Brittany giving his name as William composed a 'life' or 'legend' of St Gwyddno, one of the many Welsh clerics who took part in the British colonization of Armorica. 'Gwyddno' in Breton became 'Goueznou' and in the Latin of the surviving copy, 'Goeznovius.' The saint is unconnected with Arthur, but the *Legenda Sancti Goeznovii* has a prologue about the British migration, in which Arthur figures. William cites an unidentified *Ystoria Britanica*. Scholarly comment on the prologue has been scanty and variable. A. de la Borderie noted it in 1883. So did E.K. Chambers in 1927. In 1939 J.S.P. Tatlock ruled it out as Arthurian evidence on the ground that its alleged date of composition was spurious and the author simply paraphrased Geoffrey. Others, including R.S. Loomis, followed Tatlock uncritically. At length, however, Fleuriot vindicated the date as correct. Careful scrutiny shows that the prologue cannot be explained in Tatlock's terms, and he admitted as much himself in the case of one episode (a gruesome story of British settlers cutting out the tongues of indigenous women), which appears in *Goeznovius* and also in the Welsh tale *The Dream of Macsen Wledig*, but is not in Geoffrey. There had to be a prior source – a conclusion with a much wider application.[24]

William's prologue goes over familiar ground, but with some surprising divergences. It tells, as do other accounts, how Vortigern brought heathen Saxons

into Britain as auxiliary troops. They turned against their employers inflicting slaughter and devastation. Arthur pushed them back, but after successful campaigns he departed, and the way was open for fresh Saxon invasions of the island. The Britons became divided, and a fluctuating warfare went on through the times of many kings, British and Saxon. Numerous churchmen were driven by Saxon persecution to leave Britain and sail over to the 'lesser Britain' which emigration had formed in Armorica.

Even as a product of 1019, this prologue is too remote in time from its subject-matter to be used directly as history. Yet the relevant part is free from palpable legend, and whatever traditions it may embody deserve respect. The sentences about Arthur are the ones that need to be quoted fully.

> Presently their pride [*i.e.* the Saxons'] was checked for a while through the great Arthur, King of the Britons. They were largely cleared from the island and reduced to subjection. But when this same Arthur, after many victories which he won gloriously in Britain and Gaul, was summoned at last from human activity, the way was open for the Saxons to go again into the island …

And so on. William puts Arthur's campaigns after the Saxon revolt, but not long after. The word translated 'presently,' *postmodum*, implies sooner-rather-than-later. Furthermore Arthur seems to succeed Vortigern directly, without Geoffrey's other reigns between. Neither the revolt nor Vortigern's death can be dated with any accuracy, but it would be hard to put the beginning of this Arthur's activities much after the 450s. He campaigns in Gaul as well as Britain, and Saxons are the only enemies mentioned. There was one single period when a king could have gone on from fighting them in Britain to fighting them in Gaul. During the 460s Saxons were present on the lower Loire, and for some years they were in confrontation with the Britons who were settling just north of them. They were finally beaten and dispersed in a battle near Angers somewhere about 469.[25] The Britons, in their short-lived imperial alliance, appear to have taken part along with 'Romans' and Franks, and while no one says so, it is quite possible that Riothamus himself was involved. He was certainly in the right area before his march to Bourges. It is a fact that after his fading-out in 470, new Saxon incursions into Britain – 'going again into the island' – began along the south coast.

Goeznovius calls Arthur 'King of the Britons,' the same rather uncommon title, justified only for a limited time, that is given to Riothamus; and he, whether or not he came to Angers, was active in Gaul at the date indicated here for Arthur. The author certainly seems to be equating the two, and not at all as did Geoffrey. An unlocated Arthurian battle in Nennius, 'Agned,' has been explained as a scribal contraction and corruption of *Andegavum*, that is, Angers.

We may skip a century or two and consider the medieval chroniclers. With some, the Arthurian matter is their chief concern, and they adapt and paraphrase Geoffrey in various ways. The majority, for whom this is only one topic among many, tend to be rather uncomfortable with it and avoid going into much detail. In England and Scotland, several incorporate accounts of Arthur that more or less follow Geoffrey's *History*, selectively, sometimes with different sympathies, but without serious dissent. Some fasten on the unworkable date 542, and make whatever can be made of the story on that basis. The *History* is commonly accepted as truth with whatever difficulty. Explicit scepticism does not begin to bite until the sixteenth century.

But while English and Scottish chroniclers – with one major exception, to be noted – fail to take us much further with the present topic, a few overseas show traces of a tradition that is consistent with *Goeznovius* and an Arthur-Riothamus equation and cannot have been derived from Geoffrey. They ignore the fatal 542; if they are aware of it, they are evidently aware that it must be wrong. The Ourscamp re-issuer of Sigebert already has his suspicions in the twelfth century. I owe the list that follows to Professor Barbara Moorman.[26]

Albericus Trium Fontium, between 1227 and 1251, tries to give exact dates for Geoffrey's fifth-century kings, but with results that do not square with him and hint at some other basis of calculation. He says Arthur reigned only sixteen years, from 459 to 475. Earlier, his reference to Vortigern points to a mis-reading which, if corrected, would pull the series back and make Arthur king from 454 to 470. With or without correction, Albericus brackets the 460s. It may be significant that most of his information is from French sources.

The *Salzburg Annals* record the accession of Pope Hilarus in 461, and here someone a little later than Albericus has inserted a sentence: 'At this time Arthur, of whom many stories are told, reigned in Britain.'

Jean des Preis (1338-1400) accepts a sixth-century Arthur but feels bound to cite and rebut a rival statement by Martinus Polonus, to the effect that Arthur reigned during Hilarus's pontificate, which ended in 468. His source is not Geoffrey, who never mentions Hilarus. Martinus has little else that is relevant, but he does associate the stories of the Round Table with the reign of the emperor Leo.

Jacques de Guise, towards the end of the fourteenth century, says in his history of Hainaut (now part of Belgium) that the country suffered oppression in the time of 'Arthur and the Goths, Huns and Vandals.' The Huns dwindled rapidly as troublers of western Europe after Attila's death in 453, so an overlapping reign of Arthur cannot have begun much later. Further on, Jacques correctly notes Geoffrey's chronological fix putting Arthur's Gallic warfare in the reign

of the emperor Leo. Further on again, he speaks of Arthur as king during the rule of the Roman commander Aegidius in northern Gaul, from 461 to 464. His source is not Geoffrey, who never mentions Aegidius.

Philippe de Vigneulles, in 1525, has a passage adapted from Gregory of Tours about the reign of the Frankish king Childeric, which began in 456, and says he was temporarily banished and replaced by 'Gillon the Roman,' established at Soissons. There is ample proof that 'Gillon' is a French version of Aegidius, and Philippe not only echoes Jacques de Guise by making him contemporary with Arthur, he says he had 'many dealings' with the Briton. Once again, Geoffrey never mentions Aegidius. He is thought to have facilitated the Britons' settlement in Armorica, and enlisted their aid in coastal defence, a policy that would have required dealings with whatever chief they acknowledged.[27]

There would not be much point in quoting someone as late as Philippe if it were not for the signs that all these chroniclers are working with the same conception. Their allusions could go back to a single source, in some degree independent of Geoffrey, making Arthur reign from about 454 to 470. And to add one further chronicler, a very important and learned one, John Capgrave in England allots Arthur to just that stretch of time. As a final touch and possible sidelight, there is a Chronicle of Anjou that calls Arthur's betrayer 'Morvandus,' which looks like a conflation of 'Mordred' with 'Arvandus,' the name of the betrayer of Riothamus.[28]

It may now be judged likely that Riothamus, King of the Britons, is at least a major constituent of the figure of Arthur and perhaps the earliest. It may also appear that the signs of an identification do not point to Geoffrey exclusively. The *Goeznovius* author seems to have adopted it, as did the aforesaid chroniclers, on other grounds than the *History of the Kings of Britain*. The solution of the whole enigma may be as simple as that: the two are the same. 'Arthur,' or rather 'Artorius,' may have been the personal name of the man known to history by a title or honorific or whatever 'Riothamus' is; and he is on record as both. Similarly, the chief Spanish epic hero is sometimes Ruy Diaz de Bivar and sometimes El Cid Campeador. If we care to pursue the notion, there are further possibilities. 'Arthur' might have been a nickname or sobriquet. A previous Arthur in Britain, Lucius Artorius Castus, was a general who took an army across the Channel in 184 to suppress an Armorican revolt. A king taking another army across the Channel – and in the same direction, if for a different reason – might have been hailed by some well-informed panegyrist as a 'second Artorius.'[29]

Riothamus's stature and resources, and the fact that the western emperor sought his alliance, imply a career of some importance in Britain before he

went overseas. But nothing is said about him in that phase, at least as Riothamus. Therefore attempts to link him with the insular Arthur story must be conjectural. A few points are worth making. He could have fought some of the battles in Nennius's list, and, indeed, fully half of these – so far as they are locatable – fit better in the 450s and 60s than they do later. His trans-Channel contact suggests a home territory in the West Country, and he is the only documented person who could have organized the restructuring of Cadbury-Camelot, unless we count Ambrosius Aurelianus. Also his disappearance in Gaul would explain the long mystery over Arthur's fate and his grave, attested by a Welsh poem, and the hope of his second advent. The King of the Britons could have become like Sebastian, the lost king of Portugal whose return was expected for centuries, or like the Mexican peasant leader Zapata, rumoured to be still alive even today. Of course, though, his disappearance may be illusory, a product of our own lack of information. Britons at the time may have known quite well what happened to him.

One further, negative point is not wholly insignificant. If we reject the Riothamus equation, we cannot prove an Arthur in Britain at all. The historians have reduced him to a vague probability, no more, and some would challenge even that.

To revert to the insular tradition, we face the same problems but with more ways of resolving them. If we hypothesize Arthur-Riothamus as one person, it is clear that the two *Annales* battles, Badon and Camlann, are too late for him and will remain too late after any credible shift. Standing at the beginning of the Arthurian time-span, he cannot cover all the data. But no single leader could, wherever in the time-span he might be placed. Perhaps, once Arthur-Riothamus was established as a hero, other men's deeds, outside his lifetime, were ascribed to him by the bards and story-tellers.

If, however, we think in terms of two persons, blended into a composite like Merlin, we might suppose that the one called Arthur lived somewhat later. Or that Riothamus *was* called Arthur as *Goeznovius* and the chroniclers indicate, but that a junior Badon-Camlann Arthur, perhaps named after him, and eventually confused with him, accounts for the spread.

A further possibility is raised by a Welsh poem about yet another battle, at a place called Llongborth, probably Portchester on the Hampshire coast, the scene of a known Saxon incursion.[30] The poem is in praise of Geraint, one of several Britons so named. It includes a stanza which has been construed as saying that Arthur was present with his soldiers, but almost certainly does not.

> In Llongborth I saw Arthur's
> Brave men who cut with steel,
> The emperor, ruler in toil of battle.

The word 'emperor' applied to Arthur is *ameraudur*, derived from the Latin *imperator*, which may correspond to 'high king' (as sometimes in Ireland) but may mean simply 'commander-in-chief.' The main point, here, is that Arthur is not present himself. A force called 'Arthur's Men' – in the Welsh the words come together, with the adjective 'brave' following – is fighting without him, probably toward the close of the fifth century. Late Roman times supply instances of military units named after individuals: Theodosiani, Honoriaci.[31] Arthur's Men might have been Artoriani. This force could have stayed in being after his death, recruited new members, played a crucial part at Badon, and collapsed through internal conflict at Camlann. Ambiguity in poems about it, like the ambiguity in the Llongborth poem itself, could have fostered the belief that Arthur was present in person on occasions when he was present only as an inspiration or memory. Such misunderstandings would have stretched his career. This speculation has the advantage that it postulates only one Arthur who could be Riothamus, yet preserves his connection, if by proxy, with the two famous battles.

Such topics range beyond the present discussion. What I am proposing is that the King of the Britons who went to Gaul supplies a documented starting-point for at least a part of the Arthurian Legend, and, conceivably, for the whole of it.

glastonbury

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notes

1   For texts, see 'Nennius,' chapter 56, and Welsh Annals in the same volume. For discussion, see Alcock, *Arthur's Britain*, 45-71; Jackson in Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (hereafter cited as *ALIMA*), chapters 1 and 2; Lacy, ed., *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (hereafter cited as *Encyclopedia*), arts. 'Camlann,' '*Gododdin*,' 'Nennius.' Cp also Wilhelm, *Romance*, chapters 1 and 2.
2   Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain,' passim.
3   Ashe, *The Discovery of King Arthur*, 106.
4   *Encyclopedia*, art. 'Tintagel,' and discussions by O.J. Padel; Rahtz, *Glastonbury*, 59-60; Alcock, 'Cadbury-Camelot: a Fifteen-Year Perspective,' 358, 362-8, 380-5.
5   Cp the plaintive question by an opponent of the grave: 'Why were the Welsh so keen to give Somerset the credit?' Dunning, *Arthur: the King in the West*, 58.

6   Chambers, *Arthur of Britain,* 184.
7   Ambrosius: Gildas, chapter 25; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History,* I:16; Nennius, chapters
     40-42. Marcus and Marcianus: Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 443-8, 456-7.
8   Jackson in *ALIMA*, 3-4.
9   Giraldus Cambrensis, *Speculum Ecclesiae,* chapter 9; text in Chambers, 272. *Sir
     Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 2446-2455.
10   Jackson in *ALIMA*, 1-2; *Encyclopedia*, art. 'Saints' Lives.'
11   On the myth, see Rhys, *Celtic Folklore*, II.493-4. Jennifer Westwood made her
     observation in a BBC broadcast 'Tuesday Call' on February 11th 1986. See
     Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 185, 188, 192-3, 221-7, for specific instances.
12   Ashe, 'A Certain Very Ancient Book,' *Speculum* 56 (1981), 301-23 (hereafter cited
     as *Speculum* 1981). Cp Fleuriot, *Les Origines de la Bretagne*, 236-7, 245-7, 277,
     and Wright's edition of Geoffrey, xvii-xviii.
13   Tatlock, *Legendary History*, 251.
14   Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 310-19, For Tournoy and the Ourscamp scribe see Mildred
     Leake Day, *Quondam et Futurus*, Summer 1987, 6-8. Cp Fletcher, *The Arthurian
     Material in the Chronicles*, 82-3, 185.
15   Jordanes, *Gothic History*, chapter 45. Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 310.
16   Campbell, ed., *The Anglo-Saxons,* 37; Wood, 'The Fall of the Western Empire,'
     261. Cp Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 310-13.
17   Gregory of Tours, 2.18. Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 311.
18   Sidonius, Letters, 3.9. Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 312.
19   Bromwich, *Trioedd*, 267-8.
20   Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 317. The basic point is a recurrent confusion between *Anno
     Domini* dating and the chronology of Victorius of Aquitaine, but see the full
     discussion.
21   Fleuriot, *Origines*, 172-3; Bromwich, *Trioedd*, 386; *Encyclopedia*, arts. 'Riothamus,'
     'Vortimer.'
22   Plutarch, *Life of Theseus,* 16.
23   Fleuriot (*Origines*, 170-8) suggested that Riothamus was Ambrosius Aurelianus,
     who, however, is not spoken of as campaigning abroad in any evidential text.
     There are other objections to the identification: Ashe, *Discovery*, 113-14. Fleuriot
     did accept that the career of Riothamus, whoever he was, went into the making of
     the story of Arthur (*Origines*, 176).
24   Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, 92-4, 241-3 (text given here); Tatlock, 'The Dates of
     the Arthurian Saints' Legends,' 361-5; Loomis in *ALIMA*, 54; Fleuriot, *Origines*,
     277; Ashe in *Speculum* 1981, 304-6. Cp Wright's edition of Geoffrey, xvii, and
     Wilhelm, *Romance*, chapter 1 (two allusions).
25   Gregory of Tours, 2.18, 19. Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, 91-2 (certainly incorrect
     about Riothamus, see Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 320, n. 37).
26   Ashe, *Discovery*, 106-11.
27   Ashe, *Speculum* 1981, 307, where the principal reference is to Chadwick in n.14;
     Discovery, 49; Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, 90; *Encyclopedia*, art. 'Brittany.'
     Curiously enough, if Philippe in the sixteenth century and Morris in the twentieth

are both right, the Arthur-Riothamus equation is virtually clinched. But I don't think so – not entirely – and the conclusion would be disastrous for Morris's own view of Arthur.

28 Fleuriot, *Origines*, 118.
29 Jackson in *ALIMA*, 2; Fleuriot, *Origines*, 47-8. Lucius Artorius Castus is linked with the Arthurian Legend by advocates of the Sarmatian Connection; see art. on this in *Encyclopedia*. The emperor Domitian was reviled as a 'second Nero,' and a figurative use of 'Nero' for him by Juvenal becomes, in Geoffrey of Monmouth, a literal one (IV.16). Another suggestion is admittedly somewhat frivolous. The *h* in 'Riothamus' is probably scribal, and if so, the Latin form in his time was 'Riotamus.' 'Artorius' is close to being an anagram of this. I have shown that the letters RIOTAMUS can be arranged as they might have been, say, on a medallion so as to suggest ARTORIUS, expecially if we allow an added R for *Rex*. See my *Kings and Queens of Early Britain*, 132-3 (British edition), 152-3 (U.S. edition).
30 Jackson in *ALIMA*, 13; Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, 104-6; Ashe, *Discovery*, 121-3.
31 Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, 100.
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