

For centuries, Ireland's relative isolation on European Christianity's northwestern fringe influenced its domestic religious culture and shaped its relationship with Catholic authorities far-away in Rome. This geographical circumstance raises key questions for scholars interested in the Christianization of the island, the role of Church authorities in that process, and the persistence of indigenous beliefs from the outset of the conversion in the fifth century to the Norman conquests of the late twelfth century. My study synthesizes textual accounts of missionary activities and archaeological findings from the region of Ulster in order to explain how cultural investment in beings known as the *Áes Síde* (what we call "fairies" today) survived the conversion; and to show how many complementary aspects of Ireland's pre-conversion belief system were preserved through early medieval efforts to synchronize traditional Irish literature and geological sites with Christian themes. I argue that missionaries understood the importance of sacred sites in traditional Irish thought and thus centered their conversion efforts on recasting sacred natural landmarks as sites imbued with Christian significance. This continued investment in holy places, albeit under an amended context, helped to both hasten conversion and preserve popular investment in the *Áes Síde*. The long-term scope of this investigation bears relevance beyond medieval Irish history. It offers scholars of religious studies—particularly those interested in the homogenizing processes of globalization—with a model for the inherent plasticity of indigenous beliefs in the face of cultural upheaval and conversion at the hands of external powers.