ARMENIAN MONKS IN IRELAND

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Category: Did You Know?

After St. Patrick converted the Irish to Christianity the country experienced an influx of anchorites and monks fleeing before the barbarian hordes. These clergymen brought with them books and raised the level of education. Not a few of these bone-thin ascetics were from Armenia, Syria, and the Egyptian desert. The Ulster monastery of Bangor, for instance, claimed in its litany to be “ex Aegypto transducts” (“translated from Egypt”); and the convention of using red dots to adorn manuscript initials, a convention that soon became a mark of Irish manuscripts, had first been glimpsed by the Irish in books that the fleeing Copts brought with them.

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