

Ireland was never invaded by either the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons. The message of Christianity was spread in Ireland by a British slave, Patrick, who became the "patron saint" of Ireland. Christianity brought writing, which weakened the position of the Druids, who depended on memory and the spoken word. Christian monasteries grew up, frequently along the coast. This period is often called Ireland's "golden age". Five kingdoms grew up in Ireland: Ulster in the north, Munster in the southwest, Leinster in the southeast, Connaught in the west, with Tara as the seat of the high kings of Ireland. As in Wales, people were known by the family grouping they belonged to. Outside their tribe they had no protection and no name of their own. In fact the system led to continuous challenges. It was a land of monasteries and had a flourishing Celtic culture. They had only the name of their tribe. The kings in this tribal society were chosen by election. Christianity came to Ireland in about A.D. 430. The beginning of Ireland's history dates from that time, because for the first time there were people who could write down events. Invaders were unknown and culture flourished. The idea was that the strongest man should lead.