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CHAPTER 4

Literature and learning in early medieval Meath

CLODAGH DOWNEY

The medieval literature of Ireland stands out among the vernacular literatures of western Europe for its volume, its diversity and its antiquity, and within this treasury of cultural riches, Meath holds a prominence greatly disproportionate to its geographical extent, however that extent is reckoned. Indeed, the first decision confronting anyone who wishes to consider this subject is to define its geographical limits: the modern county of Meath is quite a different entity to the medieval kingdom of Mide from which it gets its name and which itself designated different areas at different times. It would be quite defensible to include in a survey of medieval literature those areas which are now under the administration of other modern counties, but which may have been part of the medieval kingdom at the time that that literature was produced. On the other hand, as the guiding principle of this series is to consider each modern county in turn, it would seem desirable to maintain this rationale, if only to avoid encroaching on potential future surveys of counties once part of the ancient kingdom. I have opted for the latter approach. It should be borne in mind, however, that the imposition of the county boundaries that govern to such a great extent our sense of place today did not commence until after – in some cases, long after – the Anglo-Norman invasion; the territorial divisions that were thereby created have, for the most part, little bearing on life, or literature, prior to that time.

With respect to date, the material considered here belongs to the period between the seventh and twelfth centuries. While the dating of medieval Irish texts can be a difficult exercise with often inexact results, the texts referred to here may be reasonably confidently assigned to this period. The geographical area covered by most of the present-day county for most of this period was not in fact known as Mide (when it referred to the area roughly equating to modern Westmeath), but as Brega (literally 'hills', plural of *brí* 'hill'), a kingdom which also encompassed the part of modern-day County Dublin north of the Liffey, and

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part of County Louth south of the river Glyde.¹ It was not until the reign of Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill (ob. 1022) that the name Mide was applied to the region which still carries it today.²

I have confined this essay to two main concerns: firstly, evidence for centres of learning within Meath, specifically those which we may conjecture nurtured some interest in secular learning, and secondly, literature, both prose and verse, in respect of which a strong argument may be made for its origins within the area of the present county. This approach is necessarily limited to texts and sources which offer grounds for such an argument and so cannot hope to provide a complete picture of all literature produced in this area during this period. This is especially true in the case of prose texts, which are often quite opaque as regards indicators of provenance; a stronger argument of origins may often be made in the case of poetry, as, for example, when poems are attributed to named poets who may be associated with particular areas on the basis of known family background or working milieu. In some cases where such external evidence is lacking, provenance may be inferred from a distinct regional predilection in a poet's oeuvre. The selection of literary works in this essay is therefore necessarily predicated on speculation, more solid in some cases than in others, and indeed many more could be added in a longer study.³ Moreover, the selection here presented is just that: an essay of this scope cannot pretend to comprehensiveness, either in kind or quantity, but merely hopes to gather together some worthy representatives, both human and textual, of medieval learning in Meath.

Of all the counties in Ireland, Meath is perhaps the one whose important places and institutions, well-known and highly prestigious island-wide, were most likely to permeate a medieval cultural consciousness that extended beyond its own physical boundaries, and therefore most likely to figure in literature originating from other areas of the island. The most prestigious and well-known of these places is, of course, Tara. The prominence of Tara in early Irish learned tradition is incontrovertible. This proceeded from the transcendent nature of the sacral kingship that was anciently focused there and resounds through the extant mythological, historical, hagiographical, topographical, aetiological, gnomic and narrative literature. Tara was unlike any other place in Ireland: its essence was universal and its context was not merely local, and, as befits its unique status in Irish tradition, it has received much scholarly attention. In particular, the kingship with which it is synonymous, and for which literature is perhaps our most articulate source, has been a subject of deep interest and study among modern commentators.⁴ This interest is surely proportionate to Tara's importance, but it seems fair to allow some other Meath places a turn on centre stage, as I hope to do here.

*Literature and learning in early medieval Meath***Centres of learning**

Although the literature discussed here is mostly secular in tone and vernacular in language, evidence of early medieval seats of learning and manuscript production in Ireland is predominantly found in association with ecclesiastical centres, where the Latin language and Christian learning held an important position.⁵ One of our most important sources of information on such centres is the early Irish annals, which sometimes mention scholars who were incumbents in them, and who are predominantly described as scholars of church and Latin learning. The annalistic evidence is hardly complete, however, and the general picture of the transmission of early Irish literature is one of significant interest in and involvement with secular literature among many early Irish churches. So although such evidence attests to an ecclesiastical learning environment, it does not necessarily follow that a church was not interested in secular culture simply because the annals do not record it. Perhaps the place that first comes to most minds at the mention of early Irish manuscripts is Kells, a Columban monastery whose construction in 807 is recorded in the Annals of Ulster.⁶⁶ For a history of Kells and its place in the Columban federation, see Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry: the history and hagiography of the monastic familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988), chapters 5 to 8.



Plate 4.1: Kells Round Tower (courtesy Francis Ludlow).

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The spectacular manuscript that bears its name (although its true provenance is uncertain) falls outside the scope of this essay, since it is primarily a Latin Gospel book, and contains no vernacular literature. In the case of Kells, the annals record the deaths of six of its *fir léiginn* ('men of [ecclesiastical] learning') between 993 and 1070, and charter material later copied into the Book of Kells names another *fer léiginn*, as well as one Óengus Ua Gamna (fl. 1117), *toísech na scolóc/macc léigend* 'superior of students'.⁷ We may therefore assume, regardless of the provenance of the Book of Kells itself, that Kells was a distinguished centre of learning during this time (**plate 4.1**).

Similar conclusions may be drawn with regard to other churches in Meath, and the annalistic evidence can sometimes be supplemented from other sources. To go by the frequent annalistic references in the late ninth and tenth centuries to men of learning in Duleek, for example, a prolific scriptorium was maintained there during this time.⁸ (**plate 4.2**) One of the churches most associated with learning, not only in Meath, but in Ireland as a whole, was Clonard. Finnian, the sixth-century patron saint of this church on the border of the territories of Uí Néill and Leinster, was probably not of Meath origin himself,⁹ but enjoyed a reputation as teacher of some of the great saints of Ireland, and the foundation of Clonard continued to be associated with learning in the centuries following. The names of no less than seventeen Clonard clerics may be found in our sources accompanied by scholarly titles, and we need not assume this list to be exhaustive:



Plate 4.2: Duleek Church (courtesy Francis Ludlow).

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Michael Richter makes the important point that only men of learning who were considered outstanding, whether in the ecclesiastical or secular spheres, were deemed worthy of obituary notice in the annals.¹⁰ The nature of our medieval written sources is such that we may never be able to ascribe any surviving text to the vast majority of learned men mentioned in the annals, but a notable exception may be provided by Clonard. Ailerán *sapiens* ('the wise; [Christian] scholar') (ob. 665) was associated with Clonard and is credited fairly authoritatively with the composition of one of our earliest exegetical texts, and more speculatively with other hagiographical works.¹¹ All of these works are in Latin and those that are more reliably associated with Ailerán in particular are exclusively concerned with biblical studies, but they strongly indicate a stimulating and vibrant learning environment in Clonard which may well have made a place for more overtly secular traditions too, as we know certain other ecclesiastical centres did.

Áth Truim (Trim)

Trim may have been one such church: one Rumann mac Colmáin (ob. 747) is designated *poeta optimus* in his obit, which is probably a Latinisation of the secular office of *ollam filed*, the highest rank of poet, and is the first secular poet mentioned in the annals.¹² The annals, in typically laconic fashion, do not mention Rumann's connection with Trim, but this connection, as well as the extraordinary esteem in which he was held, is reported among the corpus of saints' genealogies: *Ruman m. Colmain in fili dia tá Sil Romain i nAth Truim; Tri filid in domain .i. Homer o Greuib 7 Fergil o Latinnaib et Ruman o Gaedelaib*¹³ 'Rumann the poet, son of Colmán, from whom are Sil Romainn in Trim; The three poets of the world: Homer of the Greeks and Virgil of the Latins (Romans) and Rumann of the Irish'. Very little of Rumann's work survives, unfortunately, although his literary prowess may be inferred not only from the rather bold comparison with Homer and Virgil, but also by the fact that a (now) rare and highly alliterative poetic metre, *ollbairdne Romainn recomarcach* (literally, 'Rumann's great bardic metre, [with lines] ending in a disyllable'), appears to have been named after him.¹⁴ Stray quatrains have survived that are ascribed to Rumann, although his authorship of them is difficult to prove: vicarious ascriptions are not unusual in medieval Irish poetry, especially to highly regarded poets. One is found in a version of the story of the Battle of Allen (*Cath Almaine*), where Rumann is described as the poet of the king of Tara, Fergal mac Maíle Dúin, and is made to utter a quatrain lamenting Fergal's death.¹⁵ This is the only reference, to my knowledge, to a connection between Rumann and the king of Tara, Fergal mac Maíle Dúin, but they were contemporaries, and we should not be surprised to find a close association between a poet of Rumann's stature and a powerful king. The only other surviving fragment of verse which may be plausibly

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attributed to Rumann is the quatrain attached to the short account in the so-called 'Fragmentary Annals' of the battle of Kildalkey (an ecclesiastical site west of Trim) in 724 which saw the defeat of the Uí Chernaig, the main southern division of Sil nÁedo Sláine (the branch of the Southern Uí Néill which controlled and occupied the territory of Brega during the early medieval period), by the Uí Chonaing, its main northern division.¹⁶ The corpus of work ascribed to Rumann, then, while exiguous, is focused on royalty and significant political events. We may further note the close historical and genealogical associations between Rumann's family, which included a number of abbots and bishops of Trim, and the ruling dynasty of the area, the Cenél Lóegaire.¹⁷ Rumann's association with learning was maintained by his descendants, if we may judge by obits such as that in the Annals of Ulster for Cenn Fáelad mac Romainn, *scriba ⁊ episcopus ⁊ ancorita, abb Átho Truim* 'scholar and bishop and anchorite, abbot of Trim', who died in 821. Donnchadh Ó Corráin has furthermore suggested that we almost certainly owe the relatively copious genealogies of Cenél Lóegaire to the abbots of Trim who descended from Rumann.¹⁸ The ascription of other work to Rumann has been rejected on linguistic and historical grounds,¹⁹ but whatever little we may now recover of his oeuvre, the evidence points to his reputation and legacy among the learned classes. And that an interest in secular literature was maintained in Trim would seem to be suggested by the obit of Flann úa Cináeda (ob. 1100), who is described in the Annals of Ulster as *airchinnech* 'monastic superior' of Trim, as well as *ardollam Mide*, the latter title bespeaks high secular learning, while reflecting the fact that the sway of the kingdom of Mide had by now been extended eastwards into Brega. Unfortunately, nothing now remains which we may ascribe to Flann with certainty.

Ard Breacán (Ardbraccan)

Another Meath church in Lóegaire territory with connections to both Latin and vernacular learning is Ardbraccan. Its patron saint, Ultán (ob. 657, at the age of 189, according to at least one source²⁰), was credited with two extant hymns to St Brigit, one in Latin and one in Irish, and although these ascriptions are likely to be spurious, they do point to Ultán's association with devotional literature.²¹ It has even been suggested that a Life of Brigit written by Ultán, but now lost, was the source of extant hagiographical material on Brigit in Latin and Irish, although this is a matter of debate.²² The loss of Ultán's own work is only one of very many unfortunate lacunae in the early Irish literary record, but his influence may still be seen in the reputation of two of his protégés. One was Tírechán, a native of the area around Killala Bay in present-day north Mayo and compiler in the 670s of the *Collectanea*, an account in Latin of Patrick's travels in Ireland, the surviving copy of which begins: 'Bishop Tírechán has written this, based on the words [literally, 'from the mouth'] and the book of bishop Ultán, whose

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fosterling and pupil he was'.²³ (Patrick's other seventh-century biographer, Muirchú, also mentions a book of Ultán as one of his sources.²⁴) Another of Ultán's pupils, Broccán, was credited with the composition of a long poem in Irish in praise of Brigit, beginning *Ní car Brigit búadach bith* ('Victorious Brigit loved not the world').²⁵ This attribution was questioned by James Kenney, who considered the poem not older than the ninth century, but James Carney dated it to the middle or second half of the seventh, suggesting it is one of the oldest surviving examples of syllabic verse.²⁶ This would allow for composition by Broccán, as well as making it one of the earliest extant hagiographical texts in Irish. The prose preface to the poem makes the connection between Broccán and Ultán, and between Ultán and the cultivation of literature: 'the cause [of the writing of the poem]: Ultán of Ardbreccan his tutor had requested him to relate all the miracles of Brigit compendiously (and) with poetic harmony, for it is Ultán who had collected all the miracles of Brigit'.²⁷

Ardraccan's literary connections may be seen again in the twelfth century, in the works of the poet Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside (fl. 1147), to whom is attributed a considerable poetic corpus of twelve substantial poems.²⁸ He is perhaps best known for his *Ban enchas* 'lore of women', a long versified list of famous women, mostly Irish but also including some from the bible and the *Iliad*, from Eve up to his own time.²⁹ Although Gilla Mo Dutu included many mythological and literary women in his catalogue, the majority of the women listed were wives and mothers of Uí Néill kings of Tara; he was careful, however, to 'omit the strict enumeration of the harlots and base offspring and evil women and people of low birth' in the interests of decorum.³⁰ Despite these omissions, Gilla Mo Dutu's unique creation constitutes the most extensive source of information we have on real medieval Irish women, about most of whom we would otherwise know nothing. That a member of a male-dominated learned class of a patriarchal society should embark on such a project at all says much for his disposition, even if it was intended to honour the wife of Gilla Mo Dutu's overlord, as has been suggested.³¹ Neither was he lacking in the requisite knowledge to do so: Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin has drawn attention to the great store of knowledge that he drew on to compile the *Ban enchas*.³² The poem also offers an extraordinary insight to Gilla Mo Dutu's personality and to his literary sensibilities:

God bestowed poetry upon people for the purpose of creating an accurate arrangement (of poetry), so that it could serve as a means of revealing good and a means of manifesting precise knowledge.

The stories that were written long ago are a history for the benefit of the world. These statements are intended for the appraisal of wealth and the accurate cultivation of poetry.

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Every contentious matter which is heard, every question which is examined in lasting manner, is considered until it becomes shaped by excellence, and work is done with ordered clarity, so that a poem or a letter is always improved by the knowledge of intelligent men.

God and men are praised by the craft of true bards and poets. Wealth and constant good fortunes of excellence are received for that praise. Beautiful fitting quatrains are composed, as well as satire and triviality which is not proper.³³

It may not be too much to suggest that the knowledge and the literary appreciation displayed by Gilla Mo Dutu were at least partly acquired in Ardraccan, although this was not where he spent his whole life, nor where he composed the *Ban enchas*. The final stanza of the poem identifies his native place, and his current location:

Gilla Mo Dutu composed this poem with noble harmonies. He came from Ardbracken, he is not worried or distressed by minor matters in Devinish of the gracious speeches and of the clear-coloured holy arts.³⁴

This is one of a number of indications that Gilla Mo Dutu was later attached to the monastery of Daminis (Devenish) on Lower Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh. Whether or not he was a cleric is not altogether certain; it has been argued, in any case, that he was the progenitor of the prominent medical family, the Uí Chaiside (Cassidys) of Fermanagh.³⁵ Much of his surviving work is connected with this area. In his study of Gilla Mo Dutu and his work, Kevin Murray has shown that Gilla Mo Dutu's substantial poetic output relating to the saints Mo Laisse of Devenish and M'Áedóc of Ferns, for example, manifest his connections with both ecclesiastical communities and secular rulers in Fermanagh and Bréifne.³⁶ Gilla Mo Dutu's interest in political matters is evidenced in another major poem attributed to him, *Ériu óg inis na náem* ('Pure Ireland, island of the saints'), which was immensely popular to judge by the number of surviving copies.³⁷ Internal evidence points to a date of composition of 1143, although Máire Ní Mhaonaigh has drawn attention to the composite nature of the poem and to the possibility that it was not entirely Gilla Mo Dutu's work.³⁸ The poem is essentially an enumeration of the kings of Ireland, from the beginning of the Christian period up to the twelfth century (in its longest version), with information on their regnal years and deaths. Gilla Mo Dutu, described in the introduction to the poem as found in *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* as 'blind and flat-faced' but having 'never chanted falsehood or a crooked history',³⁹ mentions Devenish in laudatory terms, but also alludes to his home place, to which he clearly retained a great attachment:

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Ardbreccan is my home of fame,
 there Christ, fair and pure, is magnified;
 reverence in a church, hide it not –
 the home of hospitality in Ireland.⁴⁰

Sláine (Slane)

Not all centres of learning in Meath are as fortunate as Ardbreccan in being able to lay claim to scholars of whom both name and work survives. We must often be grateful for oblique hints of former greatnesses; one such is the reference to the Yellow Book of Slane found in *Lebor na hUidre* ('Book of the Dun Cow'), the oldest manuscript to contain vernacular Irish material (compiled c.1100). Here, the Ulster cycle tale *Serglige Con Culainn* ('The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn') is introduced with the heading *slicht Libair Budi Slani* 'the version of the Yellow Book of Slane'.⁴¹ This may be taken to refer to a manuscript compiled or housed at Slane, and possibly used as a source for the *Lebor na hUidre* text.⁴² The 'yellow' of the manuscript's name may refer to the colour of its cover;⁴³ alternatively, it may refer to the colour of its parchment, possibly due to a particular preparation technique, or because it was made from sheepskin which, unlike the paler vellum of calfskin, tended to be yellowish in colour.⁴⁴ To my knowledge, this is the only surviving reference to this manuscript, and our only indication of its contents; it is reasonable to suppose that it contained other secular texts in the vernacular.⁴⁵ At any rate, it points to Slane as an important early monastic settlement and a place with the considerable economic and intellectual means necessary to produce such a manuscript. (**plate 4.3**) The



Plate 4.3: Slane Church (courtesy Francis Ludlow).

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identification of Slane in the ninth-century ‘Triads of Ireland’ with *brethemnas hÉrenn*, ‘the judgement of Ireland’, points to its importance as a legal centre; further evidence of learning at Slane is provided by the obits of two *sapientes*, Ailill mac Cormaic, also described as abbot of Slane and a *iudex optimus* ‘excellent judge’, who died in 802, and another abbot, Congal mac Móenaig, who died in celibacy in 806.⁴⁶ Another first for Slane, the first documented reference to a round tower, is found in the Annals of Ulster for the year 950, when the ‘bellhouse’ was burned by the Vikings, killing the *fer léiginn* Cáenachair in the process. The cumulative evidence indicates that Slane was home to scholars interested not only in ecclesiastical learning, but in secular and native traditions also.

Treóit Mór (Trevet)

One of the grounds for inferring a particular church’s interest in secular literature is the presence of allusions to that church within essentially secular texts. The church of Treóit Mór (Trevet) included a working scriptorium, to judge by the obituaries of learned men associated with it in the annals.⁴⁷ Trevet also plays a prominent part in *Fáistine Airt meic Cuind ocus a chretem* ‘The prophecy of Art son of Conn and his faith’, a Middle-Irish text consisting of a short prose introduction and a poem of thirty-nine quatrains.⁴⁸ (plate 4.4) *Fáistine Airt* tells how angels appeared to Art (a legendary pre-Christian king of Ireland, father of the famous king Cormac mac Airt, and ancestor of the powerful Uí Néill and Connachta dynasties) at Trevet while he was on a hunt. The sight of the angels filled Art with the grace of the Holy Spirit and, as the text tells us, empowered him to prophesy his fate and the outcome of his encounter with Mac Con in battle. This is a reference to the Battle of Mag Mucrama in which Art would fight in alliance with his sister’s son, Eógan (eponymous ancestor of the Munster ruling dynasties of Eóganachta). The story of that battle tells us that Art and Eógan were defeated by Eógan’s foster-brother (Lugaid) Mac Con; it also includes the interesting detail that among the demons that filled the sky waiting to take the doomed souls to hell were two angels, who hovered above Art throughout the battle.⁴⁹ According to *Fáistine Airt*, Art’s vision at Trevet, or Duma Derglúachra (‘mound of red rushes’) as it was then called, included a prophecy of the coming of the Christian faith, and as it was at Trevet that this revelation was made to him, it was there that he chose as the place of his imminent burial. The poem which makes up the bulk of the text is put into the mouth of Art and is part-prophecy, part-paeon to Trevet, combining secular and Christian themes in notable ways. It etymologises the name Treóit as deriving from the phrase *tréide fót* ‘a trio of sods’, which it explains as *trí fótú ind rí* ‘the three sods of the king (i.e. Art)’.⁵⁰ The name Treóit (Latinised *Trioit*) is attested as early as the end of the 7th century,⁵¹ and as far as I have been able to discover, the declared earlier name, Duma

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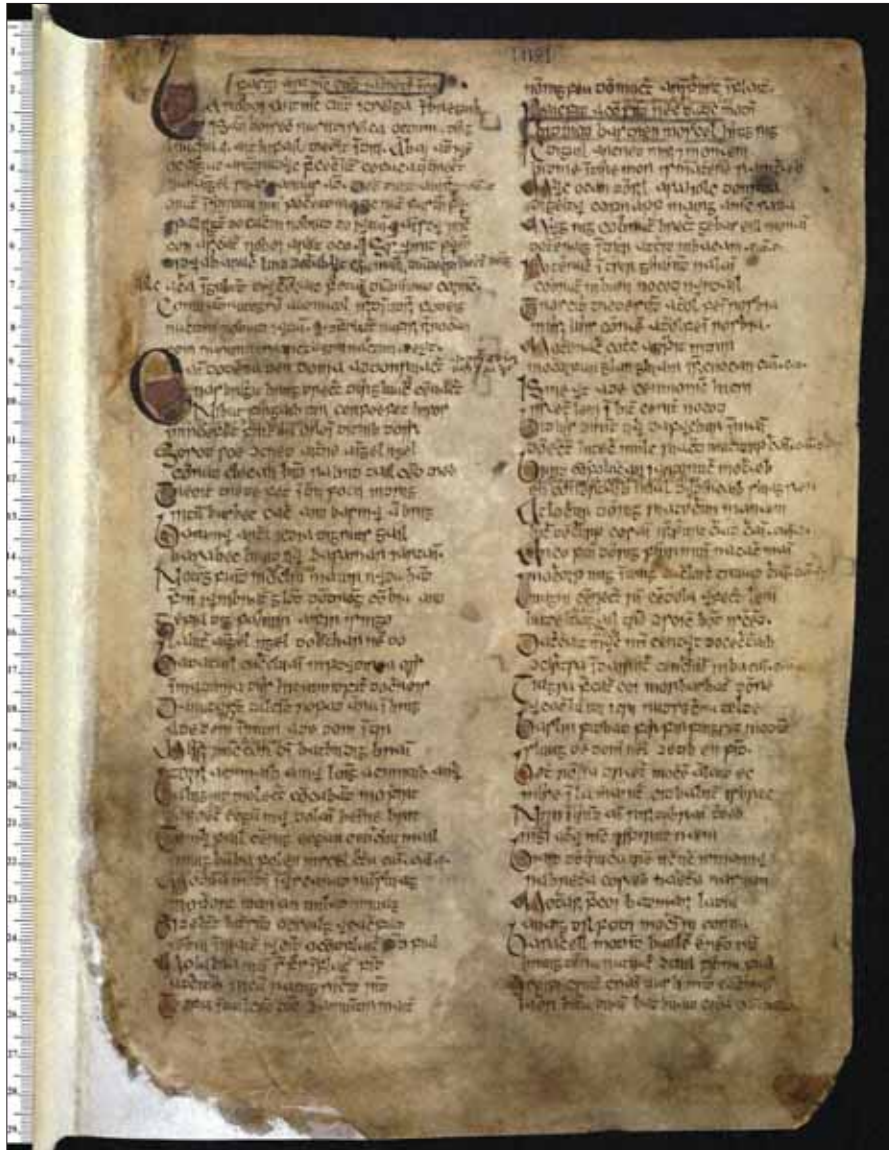


Plate 4.4: Fáistine Airt.

Derglúachra, is now found mentioned only in the context of its replacement by Treóit, although Art's burial place is named as Lúachair Derg ('red rushy place') elsewhere.⁵² As the situation is presented to us in *Fáistine Airt*, then, the place formerly known as Duma Derglúachra acquired a new name, Treóit, which becomes primarily associated with a Christian monastic foundation, but which memorialises a pre-Christian king. The seemingly casual interfusion of a pre-Christian with Christian milieu is characteristic of the text as a whole, which,

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although almost entirely presented as if from the pagan Art's point of view, is fundamentally concerned with promoting Christian ideas, a concern which reinforces for us the text's ecclesiastical provenance. Allusions to the transitory pagan life in the poem are not entirely condemnatory, although in Art's evaluations of their respective merits, the eternal Christian life emerges triumphantly superior:

Though it is sweet to be here
 hunting for every game,
 sweeter the good hereafter
 with the bright noble Prince.⁵³

The absorption of pre-Christian tradition by the Christian that characterises the text as a whole may find a more concrete expression in the following quatrain:

Every meadow will be pleasing to thee;
 the deer have not been allowed
 around its mound on the south,
 on which they will plant thy cross.⁵⁴

There survives today the remains of an oval mound barrow at Trevet, measuring eleven by sixteen metres in diameters.⁵⁵ It may have been funerary in function and of pre-Christian date, as in the case of other barrows,⁵⁶ but has not been excavated or dated. The barrow at Trevet lies very close to the ruins of a medieval church, likely to have been built on the site of the original church. It is tempting to see here the physical remains of a superimposition of a Christian church site on a pre-Christian burial site which is expressed in verse in *Fáistine Airt*, although it is impossible to prove. A problem with the physical description of Trevet as given in the poem is the apparent reference in the final quatrain to a lake beside Art's burial mound:

The tomb of Conn's son ye see,
 with a wave along its side,
 on the bank of the full lake;
 it is not a tale of pleasant form.⁵⁷

There is now no lake at Trevet, although the name Duma Derglúachra 'mound of red rushes' may indicate a wet place. Helen Imhoff has suggested, however, that the lake here referred to may be Loch nGabor (Lagore).⁵⁸ The crannóg in Loch nGabor was a royal residence of the kings of the southern branch of Síl nÁedo Sláine, and Thomas Charles-Edwards has pointed to an association between the Uí Chernaig, the main southern branch of Síl nÁedo Sláine, and the

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church of Trevet.⁵⁹ Could this quatrain be an expression of this connection? It would certainly seem that the piety and glory of the church of Trevet, although a prime focus of the poem, is not its only concern:

In avenging our wounds,
I and my saint,
I shall be the great burden,
and my fire by my side.⁶⁰

Woe to the youth of my seed
whose evil will come to us;
he shall be punished forthwith,
woe to his son and his grandson.

Woe to the king till splendid doom
who will take an advantage of my saint;
to Tara of the three, ye see,
it will not be pleasant.⁶¹

These quatrains, though cast in the form of a prophecy, would seem to voice a righteous outrage at a contemporary or recent violation, possibly a reverberation of violent rivalries either within the *Síl nÁedo Sláine* sept or more widely among the southern *Uí Néill*. We may never know exactly which of Art's descendants elicited the above execration, or why, but potential objects of opprobrium are suggested in entries such as the following from the *Annals of Ulster* for the year 850, which bears witness to the destruction suffered at Trevet as 'collateral damage' of such conflicts:

Cináed son of Conaing, king of Ciannacht, rebelled against Máel Sechnaill with the support of the foreigners, and plundered the *Uí Néill* from the Shannon to the sea, both churches and states, and he deceitfully sacked the island of Loch nGabor, levelling it to the ground, and the oratory of Treóit, with two hundred and sixty people in it, was burned by him.⁶²

Pointed reproofs aside, the overall message of *Fáistine Airt* is the glory of Trevet, its saint Lonán and God, achieved both through direct statements to this effect ('Trevet, a trio of sods, from the three sods of the king, when all else shall be little, then shall their power be great. Thou shalt be great at first before God excellent in power; thou shalt be little, there shall be a time; thou shalt be great thereafter'⁶³) and more generally in the pervasive assertion of a special link with Art. This links Trevet to the power-holders of medieval Ireland through their

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legendary ancestor, and its establishment of itself as Art's choice of burial place was perhaps intended to secure it a niche in Uí Néill tradition and thereby to claim their favour in more practical ways. The link is subtly but firmly made; the author even cleverly subverts his purpose by having Art predict that greater glory will accrue to his legend on account of his connection with Trevet and Lonán:

He will leave with me here
 one from whom my protection comes;
 it will be the more [on that account]
 that my story will be great in a house of kings.⁶⁴

Possible practical and historical concerns in the poem should not distract us from appreciating its literary quality. It is written in *lethrannaigeacht mór*, a metre of quintasyllabic lines, each one of which should end in a monosyllable, with end-rhyme required between lines *b* and *d*, and *aicill* rhyme between lines *c* and *d*, as well as alliteration and consonance.⁶⁵ The poet was naturally limited in what he could say within these constraints, but succeeded in crafting some lines of elegant concision and quatrains of musical intricacy, which can get lost in translation:

*Messi ocus Macc Con
 dín bat budig brain...*

I and Mac Con,
 from us ravens will be sated...⁶⁶

*Biaid com fholuch án
 iar tonuch mo tháeb;
 en co nertaib núal
 dar dercaib slúag sáer.*

There will be at my splendid burial
 after the washing of my sides,
 water with many cries
 through the eyes of noble hosts.⁶⁷

Finally, despite the clear Christian intent of the poem, it is hard not to smile at the relatively painless pledge that Art takes on the eve of his own death, as he himself has already foretold:

I go on a path of battles,
 great will be the end to my life;
 on every day that I am in the body,
 may I not shun God's will.⁶⁸

Tuilén (Dulane)

The central part that Trevet plays in *Fáistine Airt* allows us to make a strong argument for the association of that text with that foundation. Similarly, internal evidence suggests the involvement of the church of Tuilén (Dulane) in the redaction of one of our most dramatic king-tales, *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca*

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Plate 4.5: Dulane Church (courtesy Francis Ludlow)

‘The Violent Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca’.⁶⁹ **(plate 4.5)** The destruction of the king of Ireland, Muirchertach, by a beautiful, otherworldly woman is the focal event of the story, which is built up through a complex layering of traditional, mythic narrative themes and patterns with historical concerns and a contemporary moral. The tale begins with Muirchertach’s encounter with a strange, alluring woman while out hunting near Brug na Bóinne, who tells him that she came in search of him. So enchanted with her, he agreed to her rather suspect conditions, including that he should not allow his wife, Duaibsech, nor any clerics, into his house as long as she stayed there, nor should he ever utter her name, *Sín* (literally ‘bad weather, storm’). The banished Duaibsech went with her children to Tuilén, where she appealed to her confessor, the saintly bishop Cairnech, who blessed her and reassured her of her wifely prerogative and set out to challenge the king on her behalf. He, however, was repulsed by *Sín*, upon which he cursed the king’s house and prophesied the end of Muirchertach’s life and reign, although he and Muirchertach soon met again when Cairnech was acting as mediator of a peace treaty.

Sín’s character then begins to emerge in a verse dialogue between her and Muirchertach: she claims to be human, yet capable of miracles which no Christian listener would countenance from a mere mortal, including the creation of a sun, moon and stars, and the turning of Boyne water into wine. She conjures up two battalions, and she and Muirchertach watch them as they slaughter each

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other. She then makes wine from Boyne water, and pigs from bracken, on which the household feasts and are greatly satisfied. Next morning, however, all who had partaken of Síin's feast were debilitated. She magically turns stones into yet more warriors, some black, some goat-headed. The crazed Muirchertach charges in among them, but each one he wounds rises up again immediately. Síin appears to project an anticlerical malevolence into this battle in her speech to Muirchertach:

<i>Ar in cl irech rot c[h]abair,</i>	Wage the bloody battle
<i>in cath cr dasa tabair,</i>	on the cleric who helped you,
<i>gar t[h]uitset co ndogra lind</i>	so that the black and goat-headed men
<i>fir gorma 7 gobar-chind.⁷⁰</i>	may be killed, wailing, by us.

Muirchertach again partakes of Síin's enchanted food and drink, falls into a heavy slumber, awakes debilitated, and sets to fighting the phantasmal warriors he sees before him. Understanding the difficulty Muirchertach is in, Cairnech comes to assist him, and by the sign of the cross enables him to see that he was not attacking men, but stones and sods. King and saint reconciled, Cairnech and his clerics tell Muirchertach that they have come to apprise him of his impending death and to take his body for burial in Tuilén. As an act of expiation, and in what was, we are told, the first time ever ground was broken at Brug na Bóinne, Muirchertach himself digs a trench for the building of a church for the clerics. When Síin learns of this, she induces Muirchertach, by magic and verbal persuasion, to turn his back again on the clerics and their teachings. During another drugged sleep, Muirchertach awakes screaming from a dream in which an otherworld army overcame and destroyed his house and people. By this point in the story, the audience are in no doubt that Muirchertach has lost all control and is heading ineluctably to his end, and as if to confirm this, he accidentally breaks Síin's prohibition ever to utter her name, eliciting a prophecy of his death from her. He sleeps his final earthly sleep, again, under the effects of Síin's hallucinative wine, while Síin blockades the doorways with spears and javelins pointing inwards and magically creates a demonic host around the house. Muirchertach awakes from his slumber and rushes the host, but is pierced by a spear in the doorway. Trapped in the house, which is now on fire, he seeks shelter in a cask of wine, but is drowned therein, while the burning house falls down on top of him, burning the five feet of his body not immersed in the wine (it is later pointed out that Muirchertach was thirty feet tall).

This episode is an instance of the so-called 'threefold death motif', well known from Irish sources and beyond, in the classic Irish examples of which death is more or less simultaneously caused by wounding, drowning and burning.⁷¹ William Sayers has argued that this motif, though reshaped to suit

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Christian ideological interests, goes back to a much earlier tradition, fundamentally concerned with relations between human sovereignty and cosmic order, some elements of which are meaningfully retained in surviving examples.⁷² Muirchertach's body was washed in the Boyne by Cairnech and his clerics, who took it to Tuilén for burial. Duaibsech, having come across the clerics carrying her husband's corpse, broke down and died immediately from grief as 'a burst of gore broke from her heart'; her body was then also taken by the clerics for burial. Sín then appears to the clerics, and asks Cairnech for absolution, who assures her that God's forgiveness is available to all. She explains her motive for killing the king: he had killed her family and routed her people from their homelands near Tara. She is remorseful, however, and repents and dies of grief for the king whom she had destroyed but genuinely loved, and the clerics bury their third body that day. Muirchertach's soul remained in hell, despite Cairnech's efforts, until ultimately he composed a Latin prayer, the constant repetition of which secured the soul's release. An angel then descended, telling Cairnech that heaven would be the reward for anyone who would repeat his prayer.

Brendan O Hehir described *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* as 'highly Christianized', and an 'anti-goddess story, reversing the pagan polarities'.⁷³ Indeed, the inspiration behind the story's composition is manifestly Christian, and its message that redemption, and worldly success, is to be achieved through communion with the Church and espousal of its ideals rings loud and clear throughout, but the narrative framework that carries this message is rich and complex, and draws heavily on secular narrative traditions. The careful adaptation, manipulation and subversion of traditional story patterns in the story to serve new purposes have been discussed by Joan Radner and Máire Herbert.⁷⁴ The characters of Muirchertach and Sín challenge expectations of the stock king and goddess types which they resemble, and the treatment of notions of good, evil, transgression, justice, love and revenge in the story reveals an authorial sensitivity and sense of nuance which complicates the moralism of the story. Máire Herbert has pointed to the author's consciousness of the human element of the story;⁷⁵ much of the ambivalence of the characters' motivations and reactions can be seen best in the first-person verse sections (mostly untranslated by Stokes in his edition). Cairnech ultimately prevails, but the level of power conceded in the story to the non-Christian supernatural is noteworthy. On the level of narrative action, as well as of literary composition, the text epitomises the accommodation that the church in Ireland made for secular traditions, and the firm, but relatively gentle, subordination of old ideas to Christian ideals. The image of the building of a new church on the previously sacrosanct land of Brug na Bóinne, pagan location *par excellence*, is perhaps as vivid a metaphor for this palimpsesting as one may get.

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The story's link with Tuilén, at least in the version which survives, is clearly made. It is represented by its saint Cairnech and the central part he is made to play in the story may be a fair indication, as Máire Herbert has suggested, that the author was himself connected with Cairnech's community.⁷⁶ The Tuilén connection is reinforced by the emphasis in the story on burial there, both with Muirchertach's burial beside the church itself and with Cairnech's pronouncement that Tuilén would henceforth be the burial place of the kings of Ailech, the Cenél nÉogain branch of the Northern Uí Néill to which Muirchertach belonged.⁷⁷ This emphasis was likely intended to cement a favourable contemporary political relationship through a demonstration of Tuilén's long-standing prerogative.⁷⁸ *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* is thus a wonderful example of a medieval Irish text which combines a practical purpose with the aesthetic satisfaction of story, and a testament to the literary talent which Tuilén seemingly had at its disposal.

Other possible echoes of a busy learned environment at Tuilén are the citing of Cairnech as one of the three bishops that participated in the compilation of the *Senchas Már*, one of the most important and extensive early Irish legal tracts, and Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's reference to the lost manuscript *Leabhar Gearr Thuilén* ('Short Book of Tuilén') as a source in his *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach* ('Great Book of Genealogies').⁷⁹ We need not accept the historicity of the former claim; it is rather the associations that it connotes that are significant for us.

Flannacán mac Cellaig

Muirchertach's death is among those listed in a poem beginning *Innid scél scaílter n-airich* ('Tell the tale of the chief which is spread'), ascribed to Flannacán mac Cellaig, a remarkable character who was not only an esteemed poet, but also a king of Brega. The annalistic notice of his death by Vikings in 896 makes no reference to his poetic accomplishments, but he is listed with three other kings as an example of a *rígbard* 'king-bard' in a legal tract on poets.⁸⁰ He is now best known for the above-mentioned poem, which relates the deaths of great heroes of Irish tradition, mostly from Ulster Cycle tales, but also of some legendary and historical kings, grouped according to the days of the week on which they died.⁸¹ One of the great merits of the poem is the witness it bears to the early Irish traditional repertoire: Kathleen Mulchrone, the poem's editor, regarded the poem as 'practically the earliest independent evidence we possess of the existence of Old Irish versions of many of our *prímscéla* ['primary stories']'.⁸² The poem thus gives us a snapshot of the richness of early medieval literary culture, as well as a glimpse of some of what has been lost of it.

Mulchrone noted two other short poems ascribed to Flannacán but remarked that he must have written many more, given his high profile.⁸³ One such may

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Plate 4.6: Cath Crinna

possibly be found in *Cath Crinna* ‘the Battle of Crinna’, a Middle Irish tale which sets out to explain the presence of the non-Uí Néill population group Ciannacht Breg in Brega.⁸⁴ (plate 4.6) Crinna has not been definitively identified, but references to it suggest it was in the vicinity of Tara, or perhaps of the Boyne Valley archaeological complex; *Cath Crinna* itself associates it with Cenn Comair, which is probably near the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater rivers.⁸⁵ The

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tale relates that Cormac mac Airt enlisted the help of Tadc mac Céin, a legendary Munster ancestor-figure, to defeat the Ulstermen who had expelled him from his kingdom. It was in return for his assistance that Tadc was granted the territories later occupied by the Ciannacht Breg, who traced their descent to Tadc. A short poem found in the earlier version of the tale lists the seven battles in one day that Tadc fought, and is ascribed in the Book of Leinster to 'Flannacán', perhaps referring to Flannacán mac Cellaig. This may be a vicarious ascription, and there are indications that the poem as it stands is a Middle Irish composition, but it is interesting to note Paul Byrne's suggestion made on internal historical grounds that *Cath Crinna* (or a precursor of the extant text) was perhaps a product of the ninth century, when Flannacán and others of his family were kings of Brega, by which time Síol nÁedo Sláine had subsumed the kingship of the Ciannacht Breg.⁸⁶ In any case, however little may remain of Flannacán's oeuvre, it is of immense value as literature that can be ascribed with confidence to a particular person, time and place, an intersection of co-ordinates all too rare in the early Irish context.

Cináed ua hArtacáin

Flannacán is not the only poet whose authority is invoked in *Cath Crinna*. Another short poem on Tadc's victories and his compact with Cormac is ascribed to 'Cinaed' in all three manuscripts of the earlier version.⁸⁷ Probably the best-known poet of this name was Cináed ua hArtacáin, designated *príméices Érenn* 'chief poet of Ireland' in the notice of his death in 975 in the Annals of Ulster, to which a note was added stating that he was of Síol Cernaig Sotail (Uí Chernaig), a branch of Síol nÁedo Sláine that traced their descent from Cernach Sotal, grandson of Áed Sláine, and that were probably partly responsible for the appropriation of Ciannacht territory in Brega.⁸⁸ It is quite possible that the *Cath Crinna* ascription was intended to refer to him. Another poem, beginning *Úallach do-luid Tadc i tresuib* ('Proudly did Tadc come in the battles'), is found at the end of the copies of the text found in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote, and is ascribed to 'Cinaeth eolach' ('Cináed the learned'), perhaps referring to the same poet. Cináed ua hArtacáin has a considerable corpus of poetry ascribed to him in our sources; as far as I am aware, twelve poems, other than those in *Cath Crinna*, bear ascriptions to Cináed, although not all may be authentic. Poems ascribed to him are mainly concerned with the traditional history of Ireland – tales of kings, heroes, mythological figures and the lore of famous places – and are therefore hugely valuable witnesses to these traditions. Moreover, they testify to Cináed's credentials as a poet, both in terms of his great knowledge and of his poetic skill. Even doubtful ascriptions presuppose this pre-eminence: Rudolf Thurneysen observed that the fathering of the poem beginning *Secht o.f.n.* ('seven ...?')⁸⁹ on Cináed, perhaps two centuries after he lived, demonstrates his enduring prestige.⁹⁰

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The theme of death and burial provides a ‘catch-all’ in Cináed’s poetry under which a multitude of traditions are brought together. Perhaps his best-known poem, *Fianna bátar i nEmain* (‘Champions who dwelt in Emain (Navan Fort)’) is a catalogue of the deaths of many heroes (mostly from the Ulster Cycle) and kings of Irish tradition, including limited details about the circumstances or place of death, place of burial, or identity of perpetrators and their motives.⁹¹ (plate 4.7) Most of the characters are known from elsewhere, but some allusions are

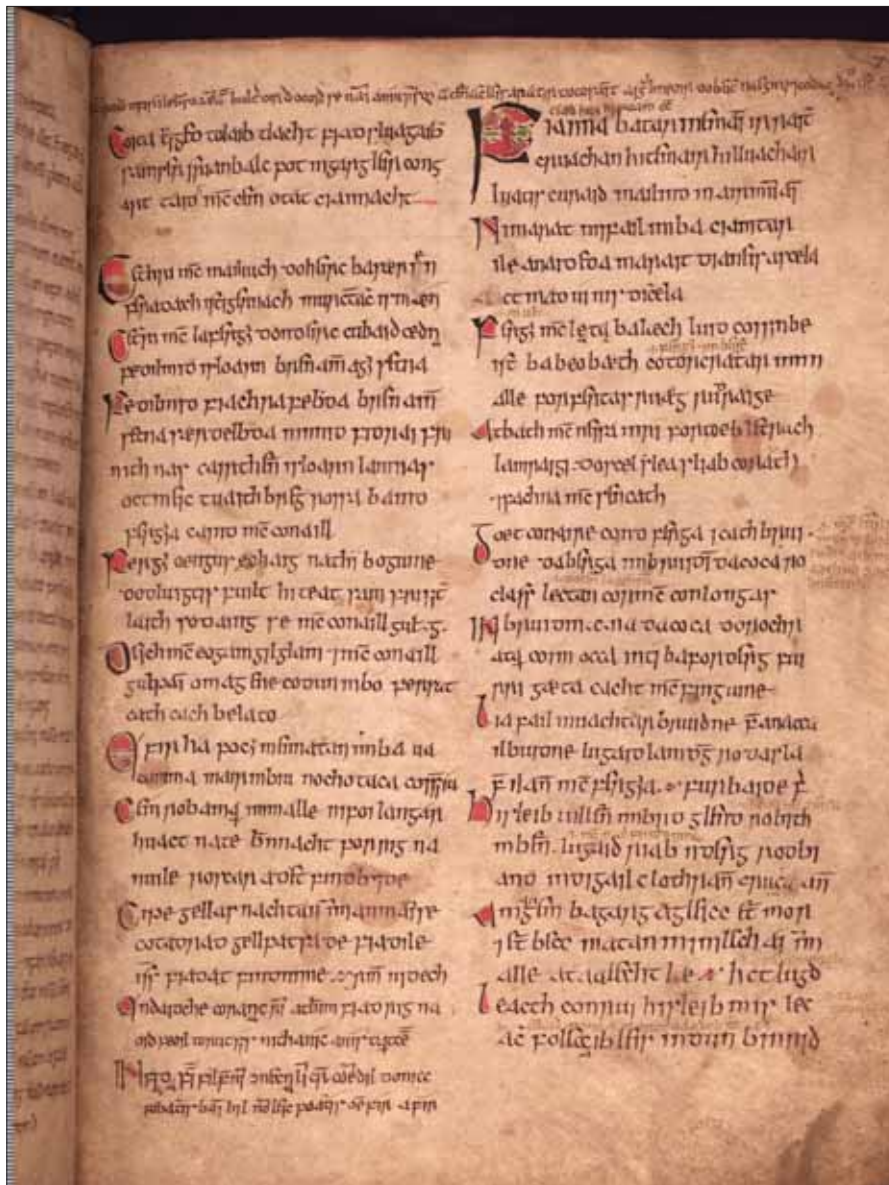


Plate 4.7: *Fianna bátar i nEmain*

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tantalisingly laconic: the death of a certain Cellach, buried at the Brug, occurred, a gloss tells us, 'by the cold of the river, or a disease feigned to put love of him in his wives'.⁹² This may refer to the king of Ireland Cellach mac Maíle Coba, who died at Brug na Bóinne in 656 and whose grave at the Brug is referred to elsewhere, but if so, we may never be able to fully understand what part his domestic situation may have played in his demise.⁹³ Burial is central to other poems ascribed to Cináed. *Án sin a maig Meic ind Óc* ('Bright is it here, o plain of Mac ind Óc') is a *dind enchas* ('lore of notable places') poem on Brug na Bóinne, and is primarily concerned with the pagan kings who were buried at the Boyne Valley necropolis.⁹⁴ The final quatrain of the poem may contain a dedication to Congalach mac Maíle Mithig (or Congalach Cnogba, 'Congalach of Knowth', grandson of Flannacán mac Cellaig), a Síol nÁedo Sláine high-king who died in 956.⁹⁵ The association with burial is reinforced by the poem's inclusion in *Senchas na Relec*, a text concerned with the pre-eminent burial places of Ireland, where it is also ascribed to Cináed, who composed it, we are told, 'to make known the nobles who were buried in the Brug'.⁹⁶ *A chloch thall for elaid úair* ('O stone yonder upon the cold tomb') is addressed to the petrified brain of Mes Gegra, a Leinster king, which was driven into the head of the Ulster king Conchobar mac Nessa by a Connacht warrior. There it harmlessly stayed until Conchobar's fury at hearing about Christ's crucifixion caused it, and his own brain, to burst from his head. Mes Gegra's stone brain was allegedly later used as a pillow by St Buithe, founder of Monasterboice (northwest of Drogheda, in County Louth); it is Buithe's tomb that is referred to in the opening line of the poem.⁹⁷ Contemplation of Niall Noígiallach's (Niall of the Nine Hostages) grave provides a starting point from which to tell the story of his death in the *dind enchas* poem on Ochan (Faughan Hill, west of Navan, in Martry parish), *Déccid ferta níthaig Néill* ('Behold the martial trench [grave] of Niall').⁹⁸ As in the poem on Conchobar mac Nessa, the image of the poet's physical presence at the grave lends a sense of immediacy to the poem: it is the very sight of the grave which, he might like us to think, spontaneously inspired his composition. Graves also play a prominent part in another *dind enchas* poem, *Achall ar-aicce Temair* ('Achall which overlooks Temair [Tara]'), which purports to tell the history of the name Achall, the old name for the Hill of Skryne; the poet, intimating his deep knowledge of the area and its traditions, alludes to an even older name replaced by it: 'the land of the poet Mane the indolent / it was called from him before it was named Achall'.⁹⁹ Again, the poet makes a point of placing himself at the location: 'that there may be a place in high heaven for Cináed ua hArtacáin: he knows the rule of rhyme for every verse; it is he that goes to and fro in Achall'.¹⁰⁰ It has been suggested that Cináed's patron at this time was Amlaib Cuarán, a Norse king of Dublin, who is mentioned in a quatrain (found in the Book of Leinster copy only).¹⁰¹ If this is the case, the poem offers intriguing evidence for Norse-Irish cultural relations in the late tenth century.¹⁰²

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Cináed's two *dind enchas* poems on Tara, *Ní cheil maissi dona mnáib* ('(Tara) does not hide the glory due to women') and *Domun duthain a lainde* ('This world, transient its splendour'), are replete with allusions to mythological and legendary traditions about Tara, woven together in an intricate and highly ornamented metre.¹⁰³ In the former poem in particular, which is set entirely in a mythological milieu, emphasis is again placed on graves and the sanctity of burial sites. *Domun duthain a lainde*, bringing the story somewhat closer to our time, focuses on the prehistoric kingship of Cormac mac Airt, and the poet clearly delights in painting an evocative picture of opulence and grandeur in Cormac's imposing court. Another poem which evinces Cináed's close connection with the Brega area is *Doluid Ailill isin caillid* ('Ailill came into the forest'), a poem concerned with Síl nÁedo Sláine dynasts.¹⁰⁴ Some of the linguistic forms it contains suggest a later date than Cináed's floruit, but if he was not himself responsible for its composition, it is likely that he became linked with it on account of his well-known association with Síl nÁedó Sláine. The overall picture that emerges from Cináed's poetry, then, is of a politically-aware and well-connected poet, a religious man with a passionate interest in the historical traditions of Ireland, and particularly of the Síl nÁedo Sláine territory of Brega, centred in present-day Meath, and who infused these interests into some of the most technically accomplished and historically important poetry that survives from tenth-century Ireland.

Conclusion

Indeed, there are other *dind enchas* poets who would merit discussion here should space permit it. Cúán ua Lothcháin (ob. 1024) was another prolific *dind enchas* poet and one, it has been suggested, who may have been behind the project of compiling the roughly two hundred poems and prose pieces into the main collection of *dind enchas* that we know today.¹⁰⁵ Cúán's material is predominantly concerned with areas in present-day counties Meath and Westmeath; it has been suggested that he himself came from the Westmeath area, although the sources are not categorical on this point.¹⁰⁶ Another high-profile poet, Flann Mainistrech (ob. 1056), contributed a significant number of *dind enchas* poems to the collection, and is also attributed with a considerable body of other work, including some concerned with the history of Brega; his epithet *Mainistrech* ('of Mainistir') is a reference to Monasterboice, Co. Louth, where he was lector.¹⁰⁷ There are moreover many anonymous poems in the *dind enchas* collections which treat of Meath places; it must be reasonably likely that they were also written *in* Meath, but corroborative evidence on this point is scant, and space does not allow for their consideration here.¹⁰⁸

The written corpus that survives from the middle ages must fall far short of the actual output of the time. Despite this, and the difficulties attendant on

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localising the composition of the early anonymous literature which survives, various centres of learning in Meath may be identified, and some may be proposed as the places of compilation of extant literary texts. In this way, from the penumbra of early Irish scholarship, areas of brilliant light appear, some of them emanating from the poets, scholars and centres of learning of Meath which left an imprint that long outlasted their own existence, in some cases up till the present day.

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2. See Eoin O'Flynn's article in this volume for discussion.
3. Texts such as *Tochmarc Bec ola* (Máire Bhreathnach, 'A new edition of Tochmarc Becfholá', in *Ériu*, 35 (1984), pp 59-91 and *Genemain Áedo Sláine* (Standish Hayes O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* (London, 1892), vol.I, pp 82-4; vol.II, pp 88-91), for example, could be considered for such a study.
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5. This is not to say that secular learning was not organised outside ecclesiastical centres, but only that documentary or physical evidence for secular schools is unfortunately lacking. For a recent discussion on this question, see Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The beginnings of Irish vernacular literary tradition', in Fondazione centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo: atti delle settimane 57* (Spoleto, 2010), pp 533-600, esp. pp 551-6. See also remarks by Michael Richter, 'The scholars of early Christian Ireland', in Geraint Evans et al. (eds), *Origins and Revivals: Proceedings of the First Australian Conference of Celtic Studies* (Sydney, 2000), pp 149-58: 154-5. The present essay is concerned only with churches associated with learning in our sources; for information on the churches of Meath generally, see A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses in Ireland* (Dublin, 1970) and <http://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/>.
7. For a list of these scholars, see M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, pp 98, 100.
8. Death notices for *scribae* ('Christian scholars') of Duleek are found for the years 872, 907, 920, 929 and 961. For a discussion of the Latin term *scriba* used in the annals, see Michael Richter, 'The personnel of learning in early medieval Ireland', in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds), *Irland und Europa im früheren Mittelalter: Bildung und Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1996), pp 275-308: 279-83; Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp 264-71.
9. Two distinct traditions of a descent from an Ulster hero and a legendary Leinster king are found in later medieval Lives of Finnian; see Paul Byrne, 'The ancestry of St. Finnian of Clonard', in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 7/3 (1984), pp 29-36. More recent research, however, has identified him with St Finnian of Moville, Co.

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- Down: Pádraig Ó Riain, *A dictionary of Irish saints* (Dublin, 2011), pp 319-21.
10. Paul Byrne, 'The community of Clonard, sixth to twelfth centuries', in *Peritia*, 4 (1985), pp 171-3; Richter, 'The scholars of early Christian Ireland', pp 152-3.
 11. Kim McCone, 'Brigit in the seventh century: a saint with three lives?', in *Peritia*, 1 (1982), pp 107-45, esp. 114-7; Aidan Breen, *Ailerani interpretatio mystica et moralis progenitorum Domini Iesu Christi* (Dublin, 1995), pp 1-2, 8; Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, p.520. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p.266 and n. 130 has doubted Ailerán's association with Clonard, while Richard Sharpe 'Vitae S. Brigitae: the oldest texts', in *Peritia*, 1 (1982), pp 81-106: 100-1 has questioned his contribution to learning.
 12. Francis John Byrne, 'Church and politics, c.750-c.1100', in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland I: Prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), pp 656-79: 669 and n. 20; Richter, 'The scholars of early Christian Ireland', pp 152-3. The seventeenth-century Annals of the Four Masters (s.a. 742) add that he was *saoi i n-ecna, i ccroinic 7 i filidhecht* 'an expert in (ecclesiastical) scholarship, in history and in poetry'.
 13. Pádraig Ó Riain, *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), p.126 §690.4.
 14. Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish metrics* (Dublin, 1961), pp 51, 131 (s.v. Rumann); Donncha Ó hAodha, 'The first Middle Irish metrical tract', in H.L.C. Tristram (ed.), *Metrik und medienwechsel. Metrics and media* (Tübingen, 1991), pp 207-44: 228-9 and n. 78.
 15. Text in Pádraig Ó Riain (ed.), *Cath Almaine* (Dublin, 1978), p.29 ll 170-3; translation in Whitley Stokes, 'The Battle of Allen', in *Revue Celtique*, 24 (1903), pp 41-70: 65 §24, and Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic poets: songs and tales from early Ireland and Wales* (Belmont, 1999), p.63.
 16. Joan N. Radner, *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978), pp 80-1.
 17. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Nationality and kingship in pre-Norman Ireland', in T.W. Moody (ed.), *Nationality and the pursuit of national independence*, Historical Studies XI (Belfast, 1978), pp 1-35: 18; cf. idem., 'The early Irish churches: some aspects of organisation', in Michael J. O'Kelly and Donnchadh Ó Corráin (eds), *Irish antiquity: essays and studies presented to Professor M. J. O'Kelly* (Cork, 1981), pp 327-41: 329-30; Francis John Byrne, 'A note on Trim and Sletty', in *Peritia*, 3 (1984), pp 316-9: 316-7.
 18. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Review of F.J. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* [London, 1973], in *Celtica*, 13 (1980), pp 150-58: 151.
 19. See John O'Donovan in George Petrie, *The ecclesiastical architecture of Ireland anterior to the Anglo-Norman invasion comprising an essay on the origin and use of the round towers of Ireland* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1845), pp 353-5; Kuno Meyer, 'Songs and stories from Irish manuscripts', in *Otia Mersejana*, 2 (Liverpool, 1900-1), pp 75-105; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'The stony Vikings of Cell Belaig', in Tom Condit and Christiaan Corlett (eds), *Above and beyond: essays in memory of Leo Swan* (Bray, 2005), pp 343-9.
 20. John O'Donovan and James H. Todd (eds), *The Martyrology of Donegal: a calendar of the saints of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), pp 234-5.
 21. The hymns are *Audites uirginis laudes/Christus in nostra insola* (ed. with trans. of Irish text in J.H. Bernard and R. Atkinson, *The Irish Liber Hymnorum* (London, 1898), vol.I, pp 14-15; vol.II, pp 8, 106-8), and *Brigit bé bithmaith* 'Brigit ever- excellent woman', (ed. and trans. in Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol.II (Cambridge, 1903), pp 323-6). In both cases, Ultán is only one of a number of authors suggested in the prose preface to the poems; one of the others suggested for *Brigit bé bithmaith* was Ultán's pupil, Broccán. Cf. Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, pp 580-1.
 22. See Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigitae', esp. pp 98-100; Kim McCone, 'Brigit in the seventh century', esp. pp 114-7; Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives* (Oxford, 1991), pp 14-15; David Howlett, 'The Brigitine hymn *Xpistus in nostra insula*', in *Peritia*, 12 (1998), pp 79-86.
 23. Tírechán's text and translation may be found at Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), pp 124-63. For recent discussion, see Catherine Swift, 'Tírechán's motives in compiling the *Collectanea*: an alternative interpretation', in *Ériu*, 45 (1994), pp 53-82; idem., 'St Patrick, Skerries and the earliest evidence for local church organisation in Ireland', in Mac Shamhráin, *The island of St Patrick*, pp 61-78.
 24. Bieler, *Patrician texts*, pp 62-3.
 25. Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol.II, pp 327-49.
 26. James F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland, vol. 1: Ecclesiastical* (New York, 1929; 2nd ed.

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- 1966), p.360; James Carney, 'The dating of early Irish verse texts, 500-1100', in *Éigse*, 19 (1983), pp 177-216: 182-3, 190-4. Daniel Binchy, 'Bergin's Law', in *Studia Celtica*, 14-15 (1979-80), pp 34-53: 46 also favoured a ninth-century date. Cf. Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol.II, pp xxxviii-xxxix.
27. Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol.II, p.327.
 28. A survey of his corpus may be found at Kevin Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside', in John Carey et al. (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile: texts, saints and places. Essays in honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth, 2004), pp 150-62.
 29. Edition and translation (based on the Book of Leinster) by Margaret E. Dobbs, 'The Ban-shenchus', in *Revue Celtique*, 47 (1930), pp 283-339; indices in *Revue Celtique*, 49 (1932), pp 437-89. There is an unpublished edition by Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Bansaenchas Filiochta* (M.A. thesis, University College, Galway, 1977) based mostly on the fuller version in the Book of Lecan.
 30. Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, 'The *Banshenchas* revisited', in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), *Chattel, servant or citizen. Women's status in church, state and society*, Historical Studies XIX (Belfast, 1995), pp 70-81: 71. This stanza is not found in the Book of Leinster. For discussion of Gilla Mo Dutu's poem and of the prose version of the *ban enchas*, see Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, 'The manuscript tradition of the *Banshenchas*', in *Ériu*, 33 (1982), pp 109-35; idem., 'An *Banshenchas*', *Léachtaí Cholm Cille XII: na mná sa litríocht* (Maigh Nuad, 1982), pp 5-29; idem., 'The *Banshenchas* revisited'; Anne Connon, 'The *Banshenchas* and the Uí Néill queens of Tara', in Alfred P. Smyth (ed.), *Seanchas: studies in early and medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne* (Dublin, 2000), pp 98-108.
 31. Ní Bhrolcháin, 'The manuscript tradition', p.110; idem., 'The *Banshenchas* revisited', p.71.
 32. Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Bansaenchas Filiochta*, pp 27-43.
 33. Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Bansaenchas Filiochta*, pp 6, 185-6; idem., 'The manuscript tradition', pp 109-10.
 34. Ní Bhrolcháin, 'The *Banshenchas* revisited', p.70.
 35. Brian Ó Cuív, 'The surname *Ó Caisidé*', in *Celtica*, 18 (1987), p.176; Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu', pp 153-4.
 36. Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu', pp 156-8.
 37. Printed and translated in Bartholomew Mac Carthy, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus no. 830* (Dublin, 1892), pp 408-37; R.A.S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: the Book of the Taking of Ireland*, Part V (Dublin, 1956), pp 540-65; and (in German) by Gisbert Hemprich, 'Die frühen Fassungen von *Éiri óg inis na náem*', in Gisbert Hemprich (ed.), *Festgabe für Hildegard L.C. Tristram* (Berlin, 2009), pp 289-383. Forty-eight (mostly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century) manuscripts containing the poem are listed in Murray, 'Gilla Mo Dutu', pp 161-2; Hemprich lists a further ten from the National Library of Ireland: 'Die frühen Fassungen', p.383. I am grateful to Prof. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha for pointing me to Hemprich's edition.
 38. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Bréifne bias in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaiß*', in *Ériu*, 43 (1992), pp 135-58: 154-6.
 39. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, Part V, pp 412-3.
 40. *Ibid.*, p.565. Although there are some textual problems in this stanza, which do not appear to be resolved in Hemprich's edition, the salient point of Gilla Mo Dutu's connection with Ardraccan is unaffected.
 41. R.I. Best and Osborn Bergin (eds), *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin, 1929), p.104 l. 3220.
 42. The editors (*ibid.*) comment that the note was added by a hand other than that of the scribe of the text itself.
 43. This was the view put forward by Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden und Königsage* (Halle, 1921), p.30. H.P.A. Oskamp, 'The Yellow Book of Lecan Proper', in *Ériu*, 26 (1975), pp 102-21: 119 suggested that another famous 'yellow book', the Yellow Book of Lecan, may have been so called from the colour of its leaves, of their cover, or of a box which may have housed the manuscript.
 44. Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca, 2007), p.9. Calfskin was the more usual material in Ireland, to judge by surviving manuscripts; see William O'Sullivan, 'Manuscripts and palaeography', in Ó Cróinín, *A new history of Ireland I*, p.515.
 45. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, '*Lebar buide meic murchada*', in Toby Bernard et al. (eds), '*A miracle of learning: studies in manuscripts and Irish learning: essays in honour of William O'Sullivan*' (Aldershot, 1998), pp 40-51: 49 n. 9 has tentatively suggested that it may have been the 'Yellow Book' which disappeared from the

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- strong-room of Armagh, according to another note elsewhere in *Lebor na hUidre* (Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, p.94 ll 2921-2).
46. Kuno Meyer, *The Triads of Ireland* (Dublin, 1906), pp 2-3. Ailill's obit is our earliest annalistic reference to a *iudex*; see Fergus Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law* (Dublin, 1988), pp 248-9.
 47. Annals of Ulster s.aa. 739 (Cuanu ua Bésáin, *scriba*), 774 (Forannán, *scriba 7 episcopus*), 888 (Máel Pátraic, *scriba 7 sapiens optimus*, 1005 (Áed Treóiti, *suí ind ecnai 7 i crabad* 'paragon of knowledge and piety'). It has been suggested that Cuanu ua Bésáin may have been the man behind the compilation of the Book of Cuanu, an annalistic compilation now lost but which was partly incorporated into the Annals of Ulster, but other scholars of that name have also been proposed: John V. Kelleher, 'The Táin and the annals', in *Ériu*, 22 (1971), pp 107-27: 122; Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *The medieval Irish annals* (Dublin, 1975), p.20; Francis John Byrne, 'Ut Beda boat. Cuanu's signature?' in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: texts and transmission* (Dublin, 2002), pp 45-67: 68 n. 48; Thomas Charles-Edwards, *The chronicle of Ireland* (Liverpool, 2006), p.72 n.4; Daniel P. McCarthy, *The Irish Annals: their genesis, evolution and history* (Dublin, 2008), pp 11, 68, 208-9, 222 (but see, for example, Thomas Charles-Edwards, review of McCarthy, *The Irish Annals*, in *Studia Hibernica*, 36 [2009-10], pp 207-10: 210). Charles-Edwards, *The Chronicle of Ireland*, pp 14-15 also suggests Trevet as one possible place of compilation of the 'Chronicle of Ireland', the lost hypothesised common source for the Irish annals 431-911: *ibid.*, pp 14-15.
 48. Text and translation in John Mac Neill, 'Three poems in Middle-Irish, relating to the Battle of Mucrama', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 3, Third Series (1893-96), pp 532-9. A new edition and translation is being prepared by Helen Imhoff, who I would like to thank for her valuable suggestions and generous assistance. I have used Mac Neill's translation except where otherwise indicated.
 49. Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama: The Battle of Mag Mucrama* (London, 1975). The story of the battle of Mag Mucrama is at pp 38-63; the reference to the angels at pp 54-5 §51. Mag Mucrama is between Athenry and Galway.
 50. The entry for St Lonán of Trevet's feastday, 1st November, in the Martyrology of Donegal tells us that the name of Tréfót (> Treóit) came 'from the three sods which he [i.e. Art] would cut at that time, viz., a sod to be put under his head, and a sod under each of his sides, and that it is there he should be buried in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost': O'Donovan and Todd, *The Martyrology of Donegal*, pp 290-1.
 51. Richard Sharpe (transl.), *Adomnán of Iona: life of St Columba* (London, 1995), pp 142-3.
 52. E.g. Edward Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part II (Dublin, 1906), pp 14-15 ll 53-56. See further Helen Imhoff, 'The tradition of Art mac Cuind's burial at Treóit (Trevet, Co. Meath)', in *Riocht na Midhe*, 24 (2013), pp 73-114. There is a townland to the south of Trevet called Redbog, but its Irish name is given as Móin Ruadh by John O'Donovan in the Ordnance Survey name books (Mí 039.19).
 53. Mac Neill, 'Three poems', p.535 §15.
 54. *Ibid.*, p.535 §9. As Helen Imhoff has pointed out to me, an alternative translation for the third line is 'around its fine mound'.
 55. Michael J. Moore, *Archaeological inventory of County Meath* (Dublin, 1987), p.33 §222, where it is described as a 'tumulus'; cf. ME038-018 (Archaeological Survey of Ireland, Record Details) on . Posted 10 July 2007. A connection with this mound was suggested by Helen Imhoff, 'Art and Treóit in *Fástiní Airt meic Cuind*' paper presented at the 14th International Congress of Celtic Studies, Maynooth, 2nd August 2011; see also Imhoff, 'The tradition of Art mac Cuind's burial', p.92.
 56. See John Waddell, *The prehistoric archaeology of Ireland* (Galway, 1998), pp 365-72.
 57. Mac Neill, 'Three poems', p.539 §40.
 58. Imhoff, 'The tradition of Art mac Cuind's burial', p.101.
 59. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p.271.
 60. A gloss in the manuscript identifies Art's 'fire' as St Lonán.
 61. Mac Neill, 'Three poems', p.537 §§19-21.
 62. Translation slightly changed from Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds), *The Annals of Ulster* (Dublin, 1983), s.a. 850.3. 'King of Ciannacht' refers to the king of Uí Chonaing, the northern branch of Síil nÁedo Sláine who had appropriated the lands of the Ciannacht Breg ('Ciannacht of Brega') and

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- assumed the title of 'king of Ciannacht' by the ninth century: see Paul Byrne, 'Ciannachta Breg before SílnÁeda Sláine', in Smyth, *Seanchas* pp. 121-6. The 'foreigners' refer to the Vikings, while Máel Sechnaill mac Maile Rúanaid (ob. 862) was the Southern Uí Néill king of Tara and Cináed's overking; he belonged to the Míde family of Cland Cholmáin. Both he and Cináed, therefore, would have been reckoned as descendants of Art. The allusion to two hundred and sixty people contained in the church of Trevet gives some indication of its size and importance. Roger Stalley, 'Ecclesiastical architecture before 1169', in Ó Cróinín, *A new history of Ireland I*, pp 714-43: 721 estimates that it must have measured twelve by eight metres at the very least. See also Imhoff, 'The tradition of Art mac Cuind's burial', pp 96-8, 102-3.
63. Mac Neill, 'Three poems', pp 533, 535 §§5-6.
 64. *Ibid.*, p.537 §18. 'He' refers to St Patrick; 'one from whom my protection comes' refers to St Lonán. Helen Imhoff points out that the last line could also be translated 'that my story will be great in the house of God'.
 65. *Aicill* rhyme refers to rhyme between the end-word of one line and an internal word in the next. Illustration of the metre may be found at Murphy, *Early Irish metrics* p.57 §33. The metrical ornament in *Fáistine Airt* is not consistently applied as in the illustrative examples in Murphy – internal rhyme between *a* and *b* is only occasionally found, for example – but deviations are often compensated for by alternative ornament.
 66. Mac Neill, 'The three poems', pp 534-5 §11. The reference is to the association of the raven with the carnage of battle in early Irish tradition.
 67. *Ibid.*, pp 536-7 §27. I have departed from Mac Neill's edition and translation of this stanza and take *en* as 'water' and not as *én* 'bird'; cf. the gloss on the last line: *.i. use dar súilib sœrchland ocom chainiud* 'water through the eyes of free families bewailing me', which Mac Neill (p. 536 n. c) explains as 'tears'.
 68. *Ibid.*, p.539 §32. His liaison with the daughter of Olc Aiche on the eve of the battle which resulted in the conception of Cormac mac Airt, and is referred to earlier in the poem (p.537 §§25-6), must have happened after Art's vision and should therefore clearly be understood as God's will.
 69. Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), 'The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca', in *Revue Celtique*, 23 (1902), pp 395-437; Lil Nic Dhonnchadha (ed.), *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* (Dublin, 1980); T.P. Cross and C.H. Slover (transl. based on Stokes), *Ancient Irish tales* (New York, 1936), pp 518-32.
 70. Nic Dhonnchadha, *Aided Muirchertaig*, p.15 ll 429-32. The translation is mine; Stokes omitted most of the verse from his edition.
 71. For a crucial emendation to Stokes' and Nic Dhonnchadha's text, see Tomás Ó Concheanainn, 'The act of wounding in the Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca', in *Éigse*, 15 (1973-74), pp 141-4.
 72. William Sayers, '*Guin & crochad & gólad*: the earliest Irish threefold death', in Cyril J. Byrne et al. (eds), *Celtic languages and Celtic peoples: proceedings of the second North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (Halifax, 1992), pp 65-82. Cf. Joan Radner, 'The significance of the threefold death in Celtic tradition', in Patrick K. Ford (ed.), *Celtic folklore and Christianity* (Santa Barbara, 1983), pp 180-200, esp. 195-8. See also Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The threefold death in early Irish sources', in *Studia Celtica Japonica*, 6 (1994), pp 53-75; references to earlier discussions may be found in these articles.
 73. Brendan O Hehir, 'The Christian revision of *Eachtra Airt meic Cuind ocus Tochmarc Delbchaim ingine Morgain*', in Ford, *Celtic folklore and Christianity*, pp 159-79: 168.
 74. Radner, 'The significance of the threefold death', pp 195-8; Máire Herbert, 'The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca: a twelfth-century tale', in Folke Josephson (ed.), *Celts and Vikings: proceedings of the fourth Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica* (Göteborg, 1997), pp 27-39. Cf. William Sayers, 'Deficient royal rule: the king's proxies, judges and the instruments of his fate', in Dan M. Wiley (ed.), *Essays on the early Irish king tales* (Dublin, 2008), pp 104-26: 118-21.
 75. Herbert, 'The death of Muirchertach Mac Erca', pp 31-2.
 76. *Ibid.*, p.35; Cairnech himself was not a Meathman according to traditions about him, see Ó Riain, *Dictionary*, pp 145-6.
 77. Nic Dhonnchadha, pp 18 ll 513-4, 29 ll 842, 845-6.
 78. See Herbert, 'The death of Muirchertach Mac Erca', pp 33-6, for discussion of the story's historical-political context.

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79. John Carey, 'An edition of the pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas Már*', in *Ériu*, 45 (1994), pp 1-32: 12, 19, 25 §8; Nollaig Ó Muraíle (ed.), *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach: The great book of Irish genealogies compiled (1645-66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*, vol.I (Dublin, 2003-04), §207.5.
80. E.J. Gwynn, 'An Old-Irish tract on the privileges and responsibilities of poets', in *Ériu*, 13 (1942), pp. 1-60, 220-36: 42. This tract defines the *rigbard* as someone who has both *rige* 'kingship' and *bairdne* 'bardic craft': *ibid.*, pp 42, 231.
81. Kathleen Mulchrone (ed. and transl.), '*Flannacán mac Cellaich rí Breg hoc carmen*', in *Journal of Celtic Studies*, 1 (1949), pp 80-93.
82. *Ibid.*, p.82.
83. *Ibid.*, p.81.
84. The text survives in two main versions. The older is printed without translation in Anne O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Book of Leinster formerly Leabar na Núachongbála*, vol.VI (Dublin, 1983), pp 1433-5, ll 43221-43312; see also M.A. O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1962), pp 246, 403-5. A later version is printed and translated by O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, vol.I, pp 319-26 (text), vol.II, pp 359-68 (translation). O'Grady provides a translation of the Book of Leinster text at *ibid.*, vol.II, pp 540-1.
85. See Bhreathnach, 'The medieval kingdom of Brega', p.421; O'Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster*, p.1433 ll 43252-3; Ó Riain et al. (eds), *Historical dictionary of Gaelic placenames*, Fasc. 4 (London, 2011), p.70 s.v. Ceannt Comair.
86. Byrne, 'Ciannachta Breg', pp 121-2. Other commentators have suggested an eighth-century date: Francis John Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings* (London, 1973), p.68 (cf. Ó Corráin, Review of *ibid.*, p.158); Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp 550-1.
87. The first quatrain of the poem is also found in the later version; it is ascribed to *in fili* 'the poet' in the Book of Lismore and to 'Cormac' in the Book of Fermoy, where the scribe may have had the speaker rather than the poet in mind.
88. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, p.552.
89. What the letters *a.f.n.* stand for has unfortunately not yet been discovered. For an edition and translation of the poem, see Lucius Gwynn, 'Cináed ua hArtacáin's poem on Brugh na Bóinne', in *Ériu*, 7 (1914), pp 210-38.
90. Rudolf Thurneysen, 'Allerlei irisches', in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 10 (1915), pp 421-43: 440; cf. *idem.*, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p.608. Gerard Murphy, 'On the dates of two sources used in Thurneysen's *Heldensage*', in *Ériu*, 16 (1952), pp 145-56: 156 agreed with Thurneysen's dating of *Secht a.f.n.* to the twelfth century, although James Carney, 'The dating of early Irish verse', p.188 and n. 21 reservedly accepted Cináed's authorship. One manuscript copy of another poem which, like *Secht a.f.n.*, deals with material connected with the story of the Wooing of Étaín, bears an ascription to Cináed: *Sund dessid domunemar* 'Here settled, as we believe' - Ráth Ésa; see Edward Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part II, pp 2-9.
91. Whitley Stokes (ed. and transl.), 'On the deaths of some Irish heroes', in *Revue Celtique*, 23 (1902), pp 303-48; corrigenda in *Revue Celtique*, 27 (1906), p.202. Although Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp 20-1 doubted Cináed's authorship of the poem, Gerard Murphy, 'On the dates', pp 151-6 argued convincingly in favour of it.
92. Stokes, 'On the deaths', pp 328, 339 §29.
93. Cellach's place and year of death is taken from the Annals of the Four Masters; the Annals of Ulster gives alternative dates of 658 or 664.
94. Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part II, pp 10-17.
95. John Carey, 'Cináed ua hArtacáin [Cineth O'Hartagain] (d. 975)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (2004), where he suggests that other poems of Cináed's may also have been composed under Congalach's patronage.
96. Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, pp 129-32.
97. The poem is included in one version of the death-tale of Conchobar, without ascription: Kuno Meyer (ed. and transl.), *The death-tales of the Ulster heroes* (Dublin, 1906), pp 18-21. For a discussion of the story of Conchobar's death, including Cináed's version, see T.O. Clancy, 'Lethal weapon/means of grace: Mess-Gegra's brain' in *The Death of Conchobar*, *Æstel: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1996), pp 87-115.

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98. Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part II, pp 36-41. The place was so named because of the great *ochan* ('lamentation') made by Niall's people after his death, according to the poem.
99. Idem., Part I (Dublin, 1903), pp 46-53: pp 50-1 ll 67-8.
100. Idem., pp 50-1 ll 53-6. This quatrain is found only in the Book of Leinster copy.
101. Carey, 'Cináed ua hArtacáin'; Charles Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland: a review', in Howard B. Clarke et al. (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the early Viking age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 288-330: 297-8; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Friend and foe: Vikings in ninth- and tenth-century Irish literature', in *ibid.*, pp 381-402: 399-400; idem., 'Cináed ha hArtacáin', in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopaedia* (New York, 2005), p.87; Aidan Breen, 'Ua hArtacáin, Cináed', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography* (Cambridge, 2009).
102. John Carey, 'Cináed ua hArtacáin' has suggested that *A chloch thall for elaid úair* and another poem ascribed to Cináed, *Etar étan ri dílind* ('Etar [= Howth], forehead to the flood') by Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part III (Dublin, 1913), pp 104-109, may also have been written for Amlá.
103. Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part I, pp 6-13; 28-37.
104. Partly printed without translation by Kuno Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 12 (1918), pp 358-9.
105. Tomás Ó Concheanainn, 'A pious redactor of Dinshenchas Érenn', in *Ériu*, 33 (1982), pp 85-98; cf. Clodagh Downey, 'Cúán ua Lothcháin and the transmission of the *Dind enchas*', in Ailbhe Ó Corráin and Gordon Ó Riain (eds), *Celebrating sixty years of Celtic Studies at Uppsala University: Proceedings of the Eleventh Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica* (Uppsala, 2013), pp 45-61. For helpful surveys of the *dind enchas* corpus, see Charles Bowen, 'A historical inventory of the *Dindshenchas*', in *Studia Celtica*, 10/11 (1975-76), pp 113-37; Tomás Ó Concheanainn, 'The three forms of *Dinshenchas Érenn*', in *Journal of Celtic Studies*, 3 (1981-82), pp 88-131, and Edward Gwynn's general introduction to *The metrical dindshenchas*, part V (Dublin, 1935), pp 3-114.
106. For an overview of Cúán's career, see Clodagh Downey, 'The life and work of Cúán ua Lothcháin', in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 19 (2008), pp 55-78.
107. No full account of Flann's work has been published. For an overview, see John Carey, 'Flann Mainistrech (d. 1056)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Flann Mainistrech', *Medieval Ireland*, pp 180-1; Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, 'Flann Mainistrech', *Dictionary of Irish biography*.
108. See Gwynn, *The metrical dindshenchas*, Part V, pp 31-3 for comments on the geographical breakdown of the *dind enchas* and Meath's place in its overall scheme and structure.