CHAPTER FOUR

The Famous Cemeteries of Medieval Ireland: The Place-Names of

Senchas na Relec compared with Aided Nath Í ɣa adnacol and Various

Dindshenchas Tracts

§ I. INTRODUCTION

Senchas na Relec (‘The History of Cemeteries’) is an often over-looked Middle-Irish senchas concerning the prímreilce (‘chief cemeteries’) of Ireland before the arrival of Christianity and the mythological and pseudo-historical individuals reputed to be buried within them. Almost every toponymic reference within this text is embedded in descriptive narrative or glossed, which provides evidence of the legends specifically associated with these sites and the various ways in which these places were interpreted during the medieval period. Senchas na Relec is not the only text of its type in both structure and content matter, and related material exists in sources such as Aided Nath Í ɣa adnacol (‘The Violent Death of Nath Í and His Burial’) and in the dindshenchas tradition (metrical and prose). These will frequently be compared throughout this essay to demonstrate the relationship between these sources and to compare and contrast the toponymic evidence recorded within them.

MANUSCRIPTS AND RELATED SOURCES

Senchas na Relec (henceforth SnR) will be the primary text discussed throughout this essay. SnR is only found in two MSS: LU (=RIA 23 E 25), fols. 50b¹⁵-52a²⁻¹¹ and the sixteenth-century MS TCD H.3.17 (=1336), cols. 730-32. The primary source used
throughout this discussion will be the LU version which has been edited by Best and Bergin. SnR in LU consists of the prose senchas followed by a dindshenchas poem attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin who is given the epithet in the Annals the ‘chief poet of the northern half of Ireland’. The prose senchas of SnR has been translated by O’Donovan in Petrie’s Round Towers, and though the dindshenchas poem has been omitted from O’Donovan’s translation, an edition including translation can be found in Edward Gwynn, MD, II. A complete edition and translation of SnR including the dindshenchas from LU and TCD H.3.17 can be found in Appendix II.1 for the reader’s convenience.

The latter sections of Aided Nath Í 7 a adnacol (henceforth ANÍ) are concerned with the same subject matter as SnR. The earliest edition of ANÍ is also found in LU before SnR at fols. 38a¹-25 to 38b³⁸-39a²¹, and the lines which primarily concern us here are 2989-2910. Other editions of ANÍ can be found in the Book of Ballymote fols. 248 a 42- 249 a 30 and in YBL (facsimile) pages 191-2, cols. 909-911. A translation of the LU version of ANÍ can be found in Appendix II.2.

Other contemporary materials that will be considered throughout this discussion are dindshenchas tracts. One dindshenchas that is related to ANÍ and possibly to SnR is a prose dindshenchas on Crúachu found in LL (fol. 170a-170b, vol. III, pp. 757-758). For the purposes of this essay, this dindshenchas will be referred to as Ráith Crúachan, but it should not be confused with another verse dindshenchas on Crúachu also titled Rath Crúachan in Gwynn, MD, III, pp. 348-55.

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1 AT 975.4 and AU 974.

which is a separate dindshenchas entirely. The first half of Ráith Crúachan (lines 22551-22562) is seen in other MSS and is based on the tale Tochmarc Étaine, but the second half is lacking from these sources. The second part of Ráith Crúachan (lines 22563-22585) is a lengthier version of the senchas of cemeteries, which is closely related to ANÍ and to some extent SnR. The LL version of this dindshenchas and a translation can be found in Appendix II.3.

Another dindshenchas that is similar in content matter and structure, generally referred to as Relec Carmuin, can be found in LL (fols. 215ª-216ª, vol. IV, pp. 842-852) and the Book of Ballymote (fol. 193 b.a.). Relec Carmuin follows a format similar to SnR, namely, a narrative introduction followed by a dindshenchas poem, the latter of which has been edited and translated by Gwynn, MD, III, pp. 1-25. This poem preserves the longest metrical dindshenchas in LL (81 stanzas), though from textual analysis it is clear that only the first twenty stanzas were part of the original poem.

SCRIBES AND DATE

There are only two hands seen in the LU version of SnR, and the primary scribe has been identified by Best as Mael Muire (labelled as M). There are also a few glosses and marginalia in SnR added by another scribe conventionally labelled as H. Mael Muire was associated with the monastery of Clonmacnoise, and according to an entry

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3 For editions and translations of these dindshenchas: ‘The Bodleian Dindshenchas’, ed. & tr. W. Stokes, Folk-Lore, 3, no. 4 (December, 1892), 492-3 (27); ‘The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas’, Stokes, 463-4. The first half of Ráith Crúachan is closest to the Rennes Dindshenchas.
6 R. I. Best & O. Bergin, Lebor na hUdire (Dublin, 1929; repr. 1992), xvii-xviii.
in *AFM* he was ‘slain by marauders in 1106 in the middle of the *Daimhliag* of Clonmacnoise’.

The language of *SnR* dates to the Middle-Irish period (c. 900-1200). The *LU* version is the latest edition of *SnR*, and *LU* was compiled before 1106. The *dindshenchas* poem following *SnR* is attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin, who died in 974 or 975. Other aspects of the text itself including the content suggest that *SnR* may have been composed at the end of the tenth century or at the beginning of the eleventh century, which likewise accords with the known dates of the MS, the poet Cináed húa hArtacáin and the language.

The scribes of *ANÍ* in *LU* are also the same as in *SnR*, namely M and H. Scribe M compiled the majority of the text, finishing at folio 38b, though he was likely to have finished the folio removed by H. The beginning of fol. 39a is the first of the intercalated leaves in *LU* added by H. Scribe H might have interpolated this material from another source. Alternatively, H may have finished the pre-existing version of *ANÍ* as scribe M had written it on the folio that H removed (assuming that M finished the text on a folio removed by H). H may not have intended to change the ending of *ANÍ*, but to incorporate *Aided Echach meic Maíreda* (39a-41b) into *LU*. The precise date of H’s hand is ambiguous, though Best and Bergin suggest H was writing in the twelfth or thirteenth century, not long after the original foliation of *LU*.

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7 *AFM* 1106.7.
SnR begins with an introduction on the pseudo-historical king Cormac mac Airt, including his reign, his death and the story of his burial. This is followed by a sentence listing the names of the prímrílece ‘chief cemeteries’ of Ireland before the coming of Christianity. The place-names mentioned in this sentence establish the order of the prímrílece discussed in the remainder of the prose senchas, which the author generally followed. For this essay place-names in SnR will be analysed in chronological order alongside the narrative of the text. My numbering of these passages (see Figure 4.1) will form the structure of the following discussion.

The content and structure of ANÍ in LU, the Book of Ballymote and YBL is rather peculiar. Analysis of the contents of ANÍ indicates that the text is not coherent (see Figure 4.2), and appears to be an eclectic assortment of material loosely connected by subject matter. The only unifying theme throughout ANÍ is the attention to Crúachu. The text begins as a typical aided ‘death tale’, which is then supported by a poem attributed to the legendary poet Torna Éces. This is not uncommon in aided tales, but following the poem is a lengthy section concerning the famous cemeteries of Ireland, and the final sections have virtually nothing to do with Nath Í. The passage on the famous cemeteries appears to stem from a dindshenchas tradition rather than an aided, and it would not be unlikely that this was added into an early version of ANÍ prior to its compilation in LU. This is also the portion of ANÍ that has very much in common with Ráith Crúachan and SnR.

The transmission history of ANÍ is complex, and worthy of brief discussion here because it has affected the place-names in these respective editions. From

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11 For a discussion on the relationship between the LU, YBL and Book of Ballymote versions of ANÍ: T. Ó Choncheanainn, ‘ “Aided Nath Í” and the Scribes of Leabhar Na Huidhre,’ Éigse, 16 (1975), 146-
Passage Summary

I 2784-2795 Nath Í (also known as Dathi) goes to the Alps; Formenus the king of Thrace happened to be there on pilgrimage at the time; Nath Í and his followers destroyed Formenus’s tower. Nath Í was struck by lightning and killed.

II 2796-2802 Amalgaid took command of the men of Ireland and carried Nath Í’s body with them. They fought nine battles in the East. Amalgaid was killed at Tara. Then the body of Nath Í was buried at Crúachu, in the middle of the lár ‘surface’ of Óenach Crúachan.

III 4084-4088 Those interred at Brug, with three exceptions, i.e. Art mac Cuinn, Cormac mac Airt and Níall Nígíallach.

IV 4089-4096 Why Art mac Cuinn was not interred at Brug.

V 4100-4103 Where Conaire Mór (or Conaire Carraighe) was interred.

VI 4103-4106 Tailtiu, the cemetery of the Ulaid, except for Conchobor mac Nessa

VII 4107-4110 The burial of the Tuatha Dé Danann at Brug and Cremthand Nia Náir

VIII 4111-4112 Cemeteries at Óenach Albi, Óenach Cúli and Óenach Colmán

IX 4112-4113 The Cemetery of the Connachta at Crúachu

X 4113-4204 Introduction and the dindshenchas poem about Brug by Cináed húa hArtacáin

Figure 4.1 Table illustrating the format of SNR in LU and the order in which the place-names in SNR are discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>§§</th>
<th>LU line numbers</th>
<th>Aided Nath Í Passage Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2784-2795</td>
<td>Nath Í (also known as Dathi) goes to the Alps; Formenus the king of Thrace happened to be there on pilgrimage at the time; Nath Í and his followers destroyed Formenus’s tower. Nath Í was struck by lightning and killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>2796-2802</td>
<td>Amalgaid took command of the men of Ireland and carried Nath Í’s body with them. They fought nine battles in the East. Amalgaid was killed at Tara. Then the body of Nath Í was buried at Crúachu, in the middle of the lár ‘surface’ of Óenach Crúachan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>2803-2850</td>
<td>poem by Torna Éces on the burial of Nath Í and Crúachu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>2851-2858</td>
<td>verse concerning the fili, Dorban, and the three scholars buried beneath Óenach Crúachan as well as the progeny of Eocho Fedlech, also buried at Crúachu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>2859-2898</td>
<td>poem attributed to Dorban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>2899-2907</td>
<td>Listing of the famous cemeteries of Ireland, including the mythological buried in them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>2907-2918</td>
<td>Intercalated by Scribe H. Discusses the mounds of Crúachu and Brug and the poets buried beneath them. <em>This section is also found in the LL dindshenchas on Ráith Crúachan.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>2919-2924</td>
<td>Fland and Eochaid, descendant of Cérin, and the books of Ard Macha, Mainistir, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 Table illustrating the format of ANÍ in LU 38a¹-ług to 38b³⁹-³⁹a²¹.

comparison of the LU text with the Book of Ballymote and YBL, it will be noticed that
the colophon of H in LU can be found, though not in the same sequence, in both
Ballymote and YBL. This led Ó Concheanainn to suggest that the scribes of
Ballymote and YBL were relying on LU for their source material.\textsuperscript{12} Though H’s
colophon is included in the Book of Ballymote and YBL, this does not necessarily
indicate that the scribes of these texts were relying on the LU edition of ANÍ for their
source, as West has thoroughly demonstrated.\textsuperscript{13} Firstly, the Book of Ballymote version
is nearly identical to the LU edition of ANÍ, except the marginalia by both M and H
are not included, and we might expect them to be in Ballymote if its compiler was
relying on LU as a source. The YBL edition of ANÍ also has additional material not
seen in either LU or Ballymote, and again the same order of LU is not followed.
Furthermore, the poetic stanzas in both Ballymote and YBL do not match those of LU.
Therefore, we must conclude that it is very unlikely that LU served as the primary
source for both Ballymote and YBL.

If we were to compare the texts of ANÍ (fols. 38b-39a [2899-2918]) with Ráith
Crúachan (lines 22563-585) we find exactly the same material, in practically the
same order (with the exception that H’s colophon in LU fol. 39a is the beginning of
Ráith Crúachan [line 22563]).\textsuperscript{14} Though the Ráith Crúachan dindshenchas is itself
an amalgamation of two distinct sources (i.e. Tochmarc Étaíne and the prose
senchas), nevertheless, the remaining half of the text consists of a senchas of
cemeteries and is the same material seen in all three recensions of ANÍ. This led West

\textsuperscript{12} Ó Choncheanainn, ‘ “Aided Nath Í” and the Scribes of Leabhar Na Huidhre,’ 159.
\textsuperscript{13} For a counter-argument to Ó Choncheanainn’s transmission theories, Cf. M. West, ‘Leabhar na
hUidhre’s Position in the Manuscript History of Togail Bruidne Da Derga and Orgain Brudne Úi
Dergae,’ CMCS, 20 (Winter, 1990), 61-98.
\textsuperscript{14} This was noted by Ó Choncheanainn, but no further connections were made or discussed in his
article: Ó Choncheanainn, ‘ “Aided Nath Í” and the Scribes of Leabhar Na Huidhre,’ 161-2. See West,
‘Leabhar na hUidhre’s Position in the Manuscript History,’ 85-8 where this relationship is discussed,
and an edition of the LU, YBL and LL dindshenchas are presented and compared.
to suggest that: ‘the compiler of the prose dindshenchas of Crúachan had access to a version of ANÍ’. It is also possible that these sections in ANÍ (LU) could be an abridged version of this text from Ráith Crúachan, or both Ráith Crúachan and ANÍ (LU) may have been based on an earlier copy of ANÍ, now lost. The compiler of Ráith Crúachan was also aware of the poem attributed to Torna Éces found in all three editions of ANÍ, because Ráith Crúachan ends with the first line of the poem, Ut Torna Eices cecinit. Ata fotsu ri fer Fail, though the poem is not included at the end of the narrative dindshenchas. Though Ráith Crúachan is found in a later MS than LU, this does not necessarily indicate that the contents are much later than those of LU; both texts date to the Middle-Irish period. Furthermore, many of the glosses added into ANÍ (LU) are included in the text of Ráith Crúachan.

Because Scribe H removed a folio to intercalate Aided Echach meic Maíreda, we have no way of knowing whether M finished ANÍ on the missing folio and if H copied this in his colophon at the beginning of fol. 39a, or if H added entirely new material. Scribe H may have been aware of Ráith Crúachan or a related text, and his colophon at the beginning of 39a may have been interpolated to include additional material in ANÍ that was lacking in comparison with these other sources. This may also account for the textual differences in the Book of Ballymote and YBL. The Book of Ballymote and YBL texts of ANÍ are certainly related to the LU text, but are not direct descendents of it, and therefore it seems most likely that another extant version of ANÍ existed (portions of which were preserved in the second half of Ráith Crúachan) that is now lost. Therefore, throughout this discussion, comparisons with the place-names in SnR will not only rely on ANÍ, but also on the second half of Ráith Crúachan.

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15 Ibid., 86.
§ II. THE PLACE-NAMES OF SENCHAS NA RELEC

I. The Introduction Concerning Cormac mac Airt

SnR begins in the fashion of an *aided*, with a lengthy narrative introduction about Cormac mac Airt, a pseudo-historical early Irish high-king of Tara. The tales of Cormac’s prosperous reign are summarized in SnR, and his acceptance of the Christian faith is also elaborated upon.\(^{16}\) Cormac was said to be the third believer in Christ before the arrival of St Patrick, and the statement that Cormac believed in God *do réir rechta* ‘according to the law’, implies that he was an Old Testament believer.\(^{17}\) According to tradition, which SnR also agrees with, Cormac was the third believer after Conchobor mac Nessa (who was converted by Altus), and Morann mac Corpri Cind Chaitt (also known as mac Mán, noted in a gloss by M).\(^{18}\)

Following this, the places of Cormac’s residences are listed. Cormac, according to SnR, first resided at Temair (modern Tara in Co. Meath), which was his ancestral court. However, one of Cormac’s eyes was destroyed by Óengus Gai Buaphnech the son of Eochu Find Fúaith Airt, and since it was taboo for a king with a blemish to reside at Tara, Cormac had to move his court. These, we are told, were afterwards held at three nearby places. Cormac resided at Achall, which is noted in the margins as *i. tulach hi fil Scrín Cholum Cille ind(iu)* ‘the hill on which Scrín Cholum Cille is today’, and is identified as the modern Hill of Skreen in Co.

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\(^{17}\) This is a reference to Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Romans 4:13.

\(^{18}\) See *Aided Conchobair*, ed. & tr. K. Meyer, *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes* (Dublin, 1906; repr. 1993), at pp. 10-14 (A), 12-13 (B), 14-17 (C) and McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*, 73.
Meath. Both names for the site, Achall and Scrín Cholum Cille, can be found in a separate dindshenchas poem attributed to Cináed hú hArtaigain. Achall is very close to Tara, and has generally always been associated with Tara; in some cases in the literature the name Achall may actually have been synonymous with Tara. Cormac’s other residences were in Cenandas (modern Kells, Co. Meath) and at Tech Cleitig. The precise location of Tech Cleitig is uncertain. The suggested locations north of the Boyne near Stackallon or near Slane must be erroneous. From the literature, Cleitech must have been located south of the Boyne and opposite Brug (modern Newgrange).

Cormac’s residences were near his ancestral court at Tara, and Tara would have been visible from Achall. From the place-names included in the first passage it is clear that Cormac and his legends were an integral part of the landscape in the vicinity of Tara and the Boyne Valley. When Cormac was no longer allowed to rule from his ancestral court at Tara, his adoption of other nearby sites did not dissociate him from his ancestral landscape or the centre from which his power was originally based.

19 Achall is the older name for the Hill of Skreen. The Columban Church at Skreen is recorded in CS 976 as Scrín Cholum Chille. Bhreathnach demonstrates that the church at Skreen was possibly founded or endowed by Amlaíb Cúarán (Old Norse Olaf Kváran), the Norse king of Dublin († 980). E. Bhreathnach, ‘The Documentary Evidence for pre-Norman Skreen, County Meath,’ Ríocht na Midhe, 9, no. 2 (1996), 37-45; eadem, ‘Columban Churches in Brega and Leinster: Relations with the Norse and the Anglo-Normans,’ JRSAI, 129 (1999), 8-9. The term scrín 'shrine' (often containing saints’ relics) fossilized in the place-name suggests that a relic of St Columba was housed there. 20 MD I, 52-3. 21 HDGP (2003), 24-5. 22 OG, 248. 23 ‘Tochmarc Étaine’, § I. 9: ‘Midir came to visit Mac Óc at the Brug, and he found him for duma Sidhe an Brogha ‘on the mound of Sid in Brug’ with two companies of youths playing before him in the Brug, and Elcmar fora duma Cleitch allás andes ‘on the mound of Cleitech to the south, watching them’. In SNR, Cormac died at Tech Cleitig, and when his household tried to take him to the Brug for burial, they were unable to cross the Boyne. Hence, Tech Cleitig must have been on the southern side of the Boyne. It is likely identified with the ringfort on the low ridge at O 004 715, for which see G. Stout, Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne (Cork, 2002), map. I am especially grateful to Prof. Thomas Charles-Edwards for bringing this to my attention. For the dindshenchas of Cleitech: ‘The Bodleian Dindshenchas’, ed. Stokes, 511-12.
Map 4.1  Place-names recorded in *SnR* § I and other sites in the Boyne Valley.

**Legend**

A. Temair (Tara)  
B. Achall or Scrín Choluim Cille (Skreen)  
C. Cenandas (Kells)  
D. Tech Cleitig (?)  
E. Brug na Bónne (Newgrange)  
F. Ros na Rig (Rosnaree)  
G. Cnogba (Knowth)  
H. Dubad (Dowth)
Following the descriptions of Cormac’s reign and the location of his courts, his death and burial are recounted in SnR (4057-4067). Two years after his eye injury, Cormac died at Tech Cleitig from having a salmon bone stuck in his throat. This account of Cormac’s death is paralleled in other contemporary texts, notably Geneamuin Chormaic. All sources agree that Cormac died at Tech Cleitig. Cormac had commanded his household not to bury him in Brug because he believed in God, but to give him a Christian burial at Ros na Ríg (‘wooded promontary of the kings’, modern Rosnaree) with his face eastwards (7 a aiged sair). According to SnR (4062-4067), Cormac’s household ignored his final wish and decided to bury him in Brug as was customary for the kings of Tara. They tried to carry his body to the Brug three times, but were prevented from doing so because the Boyne flooded whenever they attempted crossing. They then observed that they were violating Cormac’s judgement, and afterwards buried him at Ros na Ríg as Cormac himself had ordered.

Brug (also known in Irish literature as Brug na Bóinne ‘the mansion of the Boyne’) is identified specifically as the site of the famous passage grave at

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24 ‘Geneamuin Chormaic’, ed. V. Hull, Ériu, 16 (1952), 79-85; M. Dillon, The Cycles of the Kings (London, 1946), at pp. 23-25 for a translation; S. H. O’Grady, Silvia Gadelica, 2 vols. (London, 1892), I. 253-6 & II. 286-9. In Geneamuin Chormaic, Cormac was said to have died during a meal at Ráith Spelán (the home of the ‘hospitaler’ Spelán) in Cleitech. Tech Cleitig and Ráith Spelán are presumably one and the same place. For a full discussion of Cormac’s death: T. Ó Cathasaigh, The Historical Biography of Cormac Mac Airt (Dublin, 1977), 68-72. A different account of the hero’s death recounts that Cormac was killed by phantoms incited by the druid Máelchend: Baile in Scáil, ed. & tr. K. Murray (Dublin, 2004), § 13. In a marginal note of SnR, Cormac’s death was said to be brought about by the siabra ‘phantoms’, further classified as the Tuatha Dé Danann. See Appendix II.1. The Annalistic tradition of Cormac’s death amalgamates both traditions: AU 4209, p. 19; AT, p. 20; AFM 266.1. CGH, 136 b 1 only records Cormac’s death by the salmon bone. In either case, all sources agree that Tech Cleitig (or Ráith Spelán) was where Cormac died. See M. Ó Bhrolcháin, ‘Death-tales of the Early Kings of Tara,’ in R. Schot et alii (eds.), Landscapes of Cult and Kingship (Dublin, 2011), 49-51.

25 There is an Iron Age (third through fifth century AD) burial at Rosnaree, which was uncovered in 1942 at the site known as King Cormac’s Mound, but it is the grave of a woman and a foetus. Accompanying this grave is a silver-plated ring of the Roman-type. See the Mapping Death database at www.mappindeathdb.ie. In 1941 two female burials in slab-lined cists were also discovered at Rosnaree. See J. Raftery, ‘Long Stone Cists of the Early Iron Age,’ PRIA, 46, Sec. C (1941), 302.
Plate 4.1  Brug na Bónne (Newgrange), viewed from across the River Boyne.

Photo: © Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland.
Newgrange. In some instances the name may refer to the general area, and may encompass the associated sites of Dowth and Knowth in the Boyne Valley. In the Tochmarc Étaíne, Newgrange is referred to as Síd in Broga (‘the fairy-mound of the Brug’) in contrast with the Brug as a whole. Newgrange, the most conspicuous of these Neolithic monuments, and its environs is certainly the Brug intended in Irish literature. Ros na Ríg, the final resting place of Cormac mac Airt, is modern Rossnaree, a townland near a ford on the southern banks of the Boyne. It later formed a grange of Mellifont Abbey. All literary sources which mention Cormac’s grave agree on the site of Ros na Ríg, and this is also attested in two dindshenchas poems by Cináed húa hArtacáin (one of which follows SnR).

The location of Rossnaree (Ros na Ríg) in relation to Newgrange (Brug) as the site of Cormac’s burial is worthy of discussion. In the early period it was typical for the deceased to be interred in a family cemetery, and Cormac’s family cemetery was Brug na Bóinne. But Cormac distinguished himself from his ancestors by his religion and the manner in which he chose to be buried. Therefore, the author’s intention in this introduction was perhaps to explain the anomalous burial of Cormac, as his ancestors, the kings of Tara, would have been buried in the Brug. Other

26 P. W. Joyce, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, 2 (London, 1903), 556-7: ‘To this day the name is preserved: for the very field in which the New Grange mound stands is now called Broo or Bro Park, and in it also are Broo or Bro Farm, Bro House and Bro Mill.’ The modern spelling is Broe.

27 Mac Óc is commonly associated with Brug, and in the literature references to mag mic ind Óc ‘the plain of Mac Ind Óc’ must refer to the plain north of the Boyne around Newgrange. *OG*, 525, 526. See Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne*, 62, 67.


30 ‘On the Death of Some Irish Heroes’, Stokes, 310-311: ‘atá lecht Cormac iar fir, | for in n-áth ic Ros na rig.’ [The grave of Cormac is of a truth, | by the ford at Ros na rig.] For the second *dindshenchas* reference to Cormac’s grave at Ros na Ríg: Appendix II.1 (15). Cormac’s grave is also mentioned in ‘Geneamuin Chormaic’, Hull, 84-5.

elements about the perception of these sites in the Boyne Valley may also be gleaned from this introduction. Rosnaree is directly south-west of Newgrange across the River Boyne. SnR clearly implies that the immediate landscape around the Brug was interpreted as the burial place of pre-Christians, a view which is further enforced by a gloss of M stating that it was *í dáig bá relec idaladartha* ‘because it was a cemetery of idol-worshippers’. The River Boyne may have been viewed as the boundary between a pagan landscape encompassing pre-Christian monuments and the cemetery of the pre-Christian kings of Tara to the north, and the area south of the Boyne may have been interpreted as the non-pagan landscape. This might explain Cormac’s chosen site for his final repose, and is possibly the reason why Cormac wished to be interred outside of this pagan landscape, but close enough to it to still be associated with his ancestors. This connection is further highlighted by the fact that Rosnaree used to be the site of a ford until recent times, providing the best place to cross the river into the landscape of the Brug.\(^{32}\) This concept is paralleled in Cormac’s residential choice after he was not allowed to rule from Tara. Just as Cormac chose to remain within the immediate vicinity of his ancestral court, the same is true of his burial, except he separated himself from his ancestors by the boundary of the Boyne, but remained within view of the cemetery of his forbears. This distinction and the establishment of a precedent for a king of Tara to have a Christian burial is significant, and from this account SnR demonstrates from the context and the place-names that there was an emblematic divide in the Boyne Valley, that is, a landscape of pre-Christians and a landscape of believers, separated by the River Boyne itself. This theme is revisited throughout the remainder of SnR.

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II. The Prímreilce of Ireland before the Faith

The sentence following the introduction concerning Cormac mac Airt signposts the place-names to be discussed throughout the remainder of SnR. This sentence lists the names of the *prímreilce* ‘chief cemeteries’ of Ireland before the arrival of Christianity. This passage in the TCD H.3.17 MS of SnR also includes additional place-names not seen in SnR (LU) or in the related texts, though the final phrase suggests a relationship with *Relec Carmuin*. This sentence has parallels in *Ráith Crúachan*, *Relec Carmuin* and ANÍ, though it is lengthier in ANÍ. The similarity of this sentence in these related texts suggests that the recitation of famous cemeteries in this format and order was common to this sub-genre of *senchas*, and it may also imply that there were written precedents which may have influenced these texts. For comparison, these passages in SnR (LU and TCD H.3.17) and *Relec Carmuin* will be listed below:

*SnR* (LU 4068-4070)

Roptar iat so trá prímreilce Herend ría cretim .i. Crúachu. in Brug. in Talltiu. Lúacair Ailbe. Óenach Ailbe. Óenach Cúli. Óenach Colman. Temair Erand.

*SnR* (TCD H.3.17 cols. 730-1, lines 44-3)


*Relec Carmuin* (LL 25091-25094)

primreilge Herend ut reilge Relec Talten ria toga. Relec Cruachna aire. γ Relec in Broga. Relec Carmuin Chuiredaig. Oenach Cuile co cintaib. γ martra muntire is Oenach Dún Fintain.
Map 4.2 The *Prímeilce* ‘Chief Cemeteries’ of Ireland according to *SnR* § and TCD H.3.17.
It is noticeable that a significant number of the place-names above are preceded by the
descriptor Óenach (later Aenach). Irish óenach, glossed theatrum (‘theatre, audience,
stage’), spectaculum (‘sight, spectacle, public show, theatre, seats’) and agon (‘games,
contests’) is typically translated as ‘fair’ or ‘assembly’; this term and its interpretation
in medieval Ireland will be discussed in greater detail shortly.\textsuperscript{33}

Of the \textit{prímreilce} recorded in II, \textbf{Lúachair Ailbe}, the fourth of the cemeteries,
is only mentioned in \textit{SnR} (\textit{LU} and TCD), and is not elaborated upon. It is not the
same place-name as \textbf{Óenach Ailbe}, which immediately follows it in \textit{SnR}. The second
element implies \textbf{Lúachair Ailbe} was probably located in one of the medieval plains
known as \textbf{Mag nAilbe}.\textsuperscript{34} It has been suggested that \textbf{Lúachair Ailbe} was located in
the parishes of Clonalvy and Moorechurch in the barony of Upper Duleek, Co.
Meath.\textsuperscript{35} A similar name, \textbf{Lia Ailbe} ‘the Stone of Ailbe’, is described as ‘the chief
monument of \textbf{Brega}’; Byrne suggests that \textbf{Clonalvy} is ‘a most likely location’ for the
\textbf{Lia Ailbe}.\textsuperscript{36} \textbf{Lúachair Ailbe} and \textbf{Lia Ailbe} might be one and the same since they are
both possibly identified with the area of \textbf{Clonalvy}, Co. Meath. Alternatively, a battle
was won by Túathal Máelgarb against the Cíannacht Breg at \textbf{Lúachair Mór} (alias
\textbf{Lúachair Ailbe}) in the sixth century; the annal entries for this event refer to this
place-name as \textbf{Lúachair Mór eiter da Inber} (‘Lúachair Mór between the two


\textsuperscript{34} There were two plains known as \textbf{Mag nAilbe} in early medieval \textbf{Brega}, one around the townland of Moynalvy in the parish of Kilmore, barony of Upper Deece, Co. Meath, and another around the parish of Clonalvy, Upper Duleek, Co. Meath. There was also a district known as \textbf{Mag nAilbe} in Cos. Carlow and Kildare. See Smyth, \textit{Celtic Leinster}, plate XII; \textit{OG}, 506, 511-12. \textbf{Mag nAilbe} was said to have
derived its name from the famous dog Ailbe. See \textit{Scél a Mucce Meic Dathó}, 18 (§19).

\textsuperscript{35} Murray, \textit{Baile in Scáil}, 176. For other examples of this place-name: \textit{Baile in Scáil}, 56-7 (§ 22), 39-40
($\S$22).

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{AU} 999.4: [The \textbf{Lia Ailbe}, the chief monument (\textit{primhindingnai}) of Mag Breg, fell. Four mill-stones
were afterwards made of it by Máel Sechnaill.]. F. J. Byrne, ‘Historical Note on Cnogba (Knowth),’ in G. Eogan (ed.), \textit{Excavations at Knowth, Co. Meath 1962-1965}, PRIA, 66, Sec. C, no. 4 (Dublin, 1968), 396.
Hogan identifies Lúachair Mór as the townland of Lougher in the parish of Duleek; the eiter da Inber are identified with the Boyne and the Nanny. Later sources specify that this event was known as the battle of Ailbe, and in Baile in Scáil it is referred to as the cath ‘battle’ of Lúachair Ailbe. Lúachair Ailbe of SnR might be identified with Lougher, and if this is the correct identification, it is very close to Ros na Ríg and Brug na Bóinne. SnR, however, does not specifically state who was buried in Lúachair Ailbe. It was unlikely to be the cemetery of the Síl nÁedo Sláine, because the dindshenchas on Cerna (modern Carnes East and West south of Duleek, Co. Meath) describes Cnoc Cerna (‘the hill of Cerna’) as the royal cemetery of the Síl nÁedo Sláine, primarily the Uí Chernaig. Lúachair Ailbe may have been the cemetery of the Cíannacht Breg. In the sixth century the central territory of the Cíannacht Breg was around Duleek and they comprised the region located between the Boyne and the Delvin. By the mid-eighth century much of this territory had been taken by the Uí Chonaing. Furthermore, the battle of Lúachair Ailbe was fought between Túathal Máelgarb and the Cíannacht Breg.

Additional reilce-names in the TCD edition include Aenach sean Clochair and Aenach Eamna. The latter was located in Mag Macha (the ‘plain of Macha’) probably around Emain Macha, modern Navan Fort near Armagh (see Plate 4.2). Aenach Eamna is the same as Óenach Macha, which was an assembly site of the

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37 AU 535.2; AT 534. Cf. AFM 528.2.
39 AFM 528.2; Baile in Scáil, 39 (§ 22).
41 MacCotter, Medieval Ireland, 204-5, 236-7.
42 Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 551.

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Plate 4.2  The mound of Emain Macha, modern Navan Fort, Co. Armagh. Pictured atop are Dr. Kay Muhr and Eoin Bairéad.  (Photograph by author).
Ulaid. The location of Aenach sean Clochair is debatable (discussed in greater detail in VIII), but it is likely to have either been in Leinster or in Munster. The final site listed in TCD H.3.17 is martra muinntiri Fhinntain ‘martyrdom of the household of Fintain’. This place-name is seen in Relec Carmuin as Óenach Dúni Fintain. This site is unidentified, though Hogan notes that one Dún Fintain appears to be in the region of the Ciarraige Luachra and one in Connacht.44 In both TCD and Relec Carmuin the inclusion of the term martra ‘martyr’ should indicate that this was a Christian religious site. Relec Carmuin also includes the place-name Carmuin in the list of famous cemeteries, and this site will be discussed in greater detail below (VII).

III. Óenach Cruachan: the cemetery of the Clann Éremóin

The first of the prímréilce mentioned in SnR, Cruachu, is elaborated upon from lines 4070-4076. In 4070 the place-name Cruachu is styled Óenach Cruachan; it is also referred to as Óenach Cruachan in Ráith Cruachan (22563) and in all three recensions of ANÍ. Cruachu and the synonymous Óenach Cruachan are identified with Rathcroghan and its numerous associated monuments near Tulsk, Co. Roscommon. Cruachu was the symbolic royal seat of the Connachta in the early medieval period.

This section of SnR explains why the Clann Éremóin (see Figure 4.3) were buried at Óenach Cruachan until the time of Cremthand (Nia Náir) mac Luigdech Riab nDerg, and how from the time of Cremthand to the reign of Lóegaire mac Néill the Clann Éremóin chose to bury at Brug na Bóinne. This passage implies that the two cemeteries of the high-kings of Tara were Cruachu and Brug at different stages

44 OG, 384.
Plate 4.3  Rathcroghan mound. In the foreground is a stone known as Misguan Medb. (Photograph by Paul Tempan).
in Irish mythological history. This passage names the individuals alleged to be buried at Crúachu, and Scribe M was also very concerned with glossing the names of the presumed characters not included in the main text. This provides us with a good idea of the famous people believed to be buried at Óenach Crúachan by a medieval Irish readership.

The descendents of Érimón (i.e. Clann Éremón) are the first to be named in III. According to the LG, Érimón, son of Míl Espáine, helped the Milesians (i.e. the Gaels) to defeat the Tuatha Dé Danann. In LG, Ireland was divided between the northern and southern halves from a contention of the kingship between the two sons of Míl, Éber and Érimón. In the literature Érimón was the supreme ruler of the northern half of Ireland and Éber the south. The dividing of Ireland between Érimón and Éber represents the Leth Cuind and Leth Moga respectively; this traditional division runs along the ridge of Eiscir Riada from Dublin to Galway, the northern part being Leth Cuind (Érimón’s half) and the southern Leth Moga (Éber’s half). This was contentious because the Laigin were attached genealogically to Leth Cuind but geographically part of Leth Moga: the division along the Eiscir Riada was the Munster view. Érimón, according to the genealogies and LG, is credited as the founder of the dynasty of Temair (Tara), the three branches of the Connachta, the Airgialla, the Laigin, Osraige, Déssi, Érnae and Clann Dedad. It will be noticed throughout this discussion that SnR places a great deal of emphasis on these peoples,

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46 LG, V, 42-43 ($400); V, 42-43 ($401).
48 McCone, ibid., 240-1.
49 CGH, 117g 33.
Figure 4.3 The descendents of Érimón according to medieval Irish genealogical tradition. Due to spatial constraints some generations whose names are not stated in SnR, ANÍ or any of the related texts have been abbreviated here.
namely, the mythological and pseudo-historical descendents of Érimón, or the dynasties of *Leth Cuind*.

Following the statement that the Clann Éremóin down to Cremthand Nia Náir were buried at *Crúachu*, is a list of famous mythological individuals buried at *Crúachu*. The first said to be interred at *Crúachu* is Cobthach Cöel Breg, the son of Úgaine Máir, who according to Irish legend was an early king of *Tara*. Cobthach’s exploits are the focus of the tale *Orgain Denna Ríg* (c. ninth century). The second character mentioned in the list is Labraid Loingsech, a legendary leader of the Laigin, who also features in *Orgain Denna Ríg*. In this tale, however, there is no mention of Cobthach Cöel Breg or Labraid being interred at *Crúachu*. Labraid is also noted on three occasions in *Relec Carmu* (§§ 36, 49, 80), but no mention is made of his burial or grave-site. The only related source that records the burial-place of Cobthach and Labraid at *Crúachu* is the poem in *ANÍ (LU)* attributed to Torna Éces, which states that both Cobthach and Labraid were buried beneath *Crúachu* (lines 2835-2838).

It is slightly peculiar that *SnR* and *ANÍ (LU)* state that the legendary leader of the Laigin, i.e. Labraid Loingsech, was buried at *Óenach Crúachan* in Connachta territory. According to the genealogies of Irish mythography (see Figure 4.3), the Laigin were direct descendents of Érimón, as were both Labraid Loingsech and Cobthach Cöel Breg. However, Labraid’s descendents formed what was to become the Laigin, and Cobthach Cöel Breg’s direct descendents ruled in *Crúachu*. *SnR*, later states (see X below) that the Laigin were buried in *Óenach Ailbe*, so one has to wonder exactly how was Labraid and his burial outside of Leinster to be interpreted? This passage in *SnR* was possibly to be understood in two ways: either that Labraid

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51 This stanza is lacking in the *Book of Ballymote* and *YBL* recension.
Loingsech was interred at Crúachu because he was of the Clann Éremóin, or the assertion that the legendary founder of the Leinstermen was buried alongside his enemies in Crúachu could be the result of a northern, Uí Néill, bias. Charles-Edwards has noted that the ‘traditions’ of Labraid Loingsech and Cobthach Cóel Breg frequently ‘defined’ the relationship between the Leinstermen and the descendents of Cobthach (i.e. the Connachta and the Uí Néill).\textsuperscript{53} If the latter interpretation is the case, then SnR is implying that the ancestral figure of the Leinstermen was buried within the territory of the Dál Cuind because he was a descendent of Érimón and the Laigin were part of the Leth Cuind. This passage, and other aspects of SnR which will be discussed shortly, may imply an impartial Uí Néill perspective.

Following Cobthach Cóel Breg and Labraid Loingsech, the third renowned individual said to be buried at Crúachu was Eocho Fedlech ‘and his three sons’, who are named in a gloss added by M as ‘the three Find Emma (‘the fair triplets’), namely, Bres, Nar and Lothor’. The next kings interred in Crúachu were Eocho Airem and Lugaid Riab nDerg. Eocho Airem was esteemed in early Irish literature as a famous horseman.\textsuperscript{54} Though nothing more is said of him here in SnR, according to tradition his wife was Étaín, and the two are the principal characters of Tochmarc Étaíne. Eocho Airem is also mentioned in Ráith Crúachan and in the other metrical dindshenchas of Crúachu, which draw a considerable amount of their content from Tochmarc Étaíne.\textsuperscript{55} Lugaid Riab nDerg ‘Lugaid of the red-stripes’ according to tradition, was the offspring of an incestuous relationship between Clothru, the daughter of Eocho Fedlech and her brothers the Find Emma (hence Lugaid’s body was characterised by three red stripes dividing the parts of him that resembled his three

\textsuperscript{53} Charles-Edwards, \textit{Early Irish and Welsh Kinship}, 119-121.
\textsuperscript{54} O’Rahilly, \textit{Early Irish History and Mythology}, 175. ff. 1.
\textsuperscript{55} MD, III, 348-355 for the other dindshenchas on Rath Crúachan.
fathers, Bres, Nar and Lothor). Incest influenced the following generation of this genealogy, for tradition implies that Lugaid Riab nDerg slept with his mother Clothru, and from this relationship Cremthand (Nia Náír) was born. Following Lugaid Riab nDerg in the list, the six daughters of Eocho Fedlech are said to be interred at Crúachu, and some of them are named in a gloss by M: ‘Medb, Clothru, Muresc, Drebru, Mugain and Ele, etc’ (the only daughter not named is Eithne). Then Ailill mac Mata and his seven brothers, three of whom are named in a gloss by M as Cet, Anlon, Doche, etc., were also said to be buried at Crúachu.

Almost all of these mythological individuals buried beneath Crúachu are included in ANÍ, particularly in the poem attributed to Torna Éces (see Appendix II.2 for a translation of LU 2819-2842). In ANÍ, Lugaid Riab nDerg and the King Núada Argetlám are said to be buried at Crúachu in a marginal note by H. In the verse, Eocho Fedlech and his famous daughters are also included (2854-5) and Medb and Eocho Fedlech are again mentioned in the colophon by H (at 2914-5). In ANÍ, Ailill is also said to be buried at Óenach Crúachan along with the three derbsethracha ‘blood sisters’ named Niam, Drucht and Dathe instead of the brothers of Ailill as in SnR. Every person said to be interred at Óenach Crúachan in SnR is also recorded in ANÍ with a few exceptions and some additions. It is important that the two texts agree on the personal names, and this suggests that the authors of SnR and ANÍ were relying on the same tradition.

The individuals named in III in SnR were all early rulers of Tara or Crúachu (with the exception of some of the women and others listed in the glosses). SnR and the related texts provide evidence that Crúachu was not only viewed as the royal centre of the Connacht, but also as the cemetery for the kings and queens of the

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56 Ó hÓgáin, The Lore of Ireland, 318-9.

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Clann Éremóin prior to the reign of Cremthand Nia Náir. **Crúachu**, according to the tradition in *SnR* and the related texts, did not cease to be a royal burial-site after the reign of Cremthand Nia Náir, for we are later informed in *SnR*, *ANÍ* and the related texts that **Crúachu** became the cemetery of the Connachta monarchy (see IX below).[^57] A further perception of the cemetery at **Crúachu** may be inferred from the personal names recorded in this passage in *SnR*: the individuals mentioned, as the descendants of Érimón, were Milesians (i.e. Gaels).

### III.a. The reason why Clann Érimón buried at **Crúachu** instead of **Brug**

This passage in *SnR* is merely an elaboration of III above, and has been divided here for the convenience of discussion. III.a begins by asking the question which is also clarified by a gloss: ‘Why was it not at **Brug** that the kings (i.e. of the race of Cobthach down to Cremthand) were interred?’ This presumably needed to be distinguished because the first part of *SnR* explained that **Brug** was the cemetery of the kings of **Tara**, and Cobthach Cóel Breg as well as a number of his descendants, were famous kings of **Tara** in Irish literature. After the question, the answer is then provided: the two fifths *(da cóiced)* Clann Éremóin possessed was the **cóiced** of the Galióin (glossed by M as **cóiced** Laigen) and **cóiced** Ól nÉcmacht (glossed by M as **cóiced** Connacht); the **cóiced** Galióin was occupied by the descendants of Labraid Loingsech, and the **cóiced** Connacht was the ‘peculiar inheritance’ of Cobthach Cóel Breg, and therefore Connacht was given to Medb. A gloss by M states that Connacht

[^57]: *MD*, III, 348-9 *Rath Crúachan*: [Listen ye warriors about Cruachu! | with its barrows for every noble couple: | O host whence springs lasting fame of law! | O royal line of the men of Connacht!]. Cf. *MD*, III, 432-3 *Mag Tíabra* where it is suggested Crúachu was the cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann: [All the men of Erin came | at the tidings of yellow-haired Irial, | to bear him to Cruachu of the clans, | the burying-ground of the Tuatha De Danann.] In the poem attributed to Torna Êces, see Appendix II.2. *ANÍ* (10), Midir of the Tuatha Dé Danann is implied to be buried at Crúachu. In all other accounts Crúachu was the cemetery of Clann Éremóin and the Connachta.
was given to Medb because there were no other descendents of Eocho Fedlech fit at the time except for Medb. Therefore, the answer is concluded that when the monarchy of Ireland was held by a descendent of Cobthach, Connacht was his \textit{ruidles} (glossed his \textit{flesc láma} ‘native principality’), and therefore Cobthach’s descendents buried at \textit{Crúachu} until the time of Cremthand Nia Náir.

In the response, Clann Éremóin are said to have possessed the Gálión and the \textit{cóiced Ól nÉcmacht}, and this further clarifies two of the major provinces of \textit{Leth Cuind} (which was also implied by the personal names mentioned in III above).\footnote{The name \textit{cóiced Ól nÉcmacht}, according to medieval Irish folk-etymology, means ‘the province of feeble drinks’, and was a name invented to describe the province of Connacht before the time of Conn Céchtadhach. See \textit{Cóir Anmann}, ed. & tr. S. Arbuthnot, \textit{Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names}, (London, 2005), 86-87, 125-126 (§ 33). Cf. J. Waddell, J. Fenwick & K. Barton, \textit{Rathcroghan: Archaeological and Geophysical Survey in a Ritual Landscape} (Dublin, 2009), 27: for the suggestion that the term means ‘the people beyond the impassable land’.} The Gálión are traditionally associated with the territory of the Laigin, and in one text the Gálión appear as a ‘chief race’.\footnote{The Saga of Fergus mac Léti’, ed. D. A. Binchy, \textit{Ériu}, 16 (1952), 37: [There were three chief races in Ireland: the Féni, the Ulaid, and the Gáilni or Laigin.]} The Gálión feature in \textit{LG} as a pre-Milesian race who invaded Ireland along with the Fir Bolg (they are generally grouped under the same heading as ‘Fir Bolg’).\footnote{\textit{LG}, I, 22-23 & 156-157; Scowcroft, \textit{‘Leabhar Gabhála, Part I,’} 108.} Their territorial location was probably in Co. Wicklow and Kildare.\footnote{Ó hUiginn, ‘The Literature of the Laigin,’ 6.} Here \textit{cóiced} Gálión is synonymous with the territory of the Laigin because the Clann Éremóin, as was stated above, were Milesians.

Though it is very subtle, this section may hint at the traditional feud between the Uí Néill and the Laigin. Through literary idiom, we are informed that the kings of Tara and the Laigin were buried in the political heartland of Connacht. This may not have been pleasing information to a Leinstermen, and as such this passage may be viewed as Uí Néill political propaganda supported by mythographical genealogies.
IV. The Burial of the Kings Cremthand Nia Náir to Lóegaire meic Niall at Brug

SnR continues in chronological order with the kings who were descendents of Érimón, beginning here with Cremthand Nia Náir, who chose to bury in Brug rather than in his ancestral cemetery at Crúach. SnR states that the kings were interred in Brug from the time of Cremthand to Lóegaire mac Néill, with the exception of three individuals: Art mac Conn, Cormac mac Airt and Níall Noígíallach. The reason why Cremthand was not buried at Crúach is explained later in the text (see VII below). The Brug was regarded as the cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a pre-Milesian race, but Cremthand’s wife, Náir, was of the Tuatha Dé, and she convinced him to be buried in the Brug. After Cremthand the cemetery of the high kings of Tara was Brug. Perhaps not incidentally, Brug is said to be the cemetery of the high-kings from Cremthand in the dindshenchas immediately following SnR (see Appendix II.1, § 11 [4157-4160]). According to a separate dindshenchas on Brug, a monument in the area was known as ‘Cremthand’s Palace’, because he was reputed to lie buried within it (see below). 62

IV.a. Duma Derglúachra and the grave of Art mac Conn

High-kings after Cremthand Nia Náir who were not buried in Brug are elaborated in the following sections. The purpose of these passages is to explain the anomalous burials of these individuals, and it is similar in many respects to the introduction concerning Cormac mac Airt. Likewise, Cormac mac Airt (though he is listed as one

of the three who was not buried in Brug here), is not discussed further because his burial at Ros na Ríg was mentioned in the introductory paragraphs.

Art mac Conn was not buried in Brug because he believed and accepted Christianity the day before the Battle of Mucrama was fought, and he predicted that Christianity would prevail over Ireland: this material is also found in Fástini Airt meic Cuind 7 a Chretem ‘The Prophecy of Art mac Conn and his Faith’ in LU (fols. 119a-120a).\textsuperscript{63} SnR states that Art’s grave was in Duma Dergláchara, where Art had predicted he would find his final place of repose in a poem he composed called ‘Cain do den da den’, which is also recorded in LU in the tract titled Fástini Airt meic Cuind (LU 9835-9990). According to SnR, Art’s body was carried eastwards to Duma Dergláchara, and ‘if all the men of Erinn were drawing thence, they could not’, and there would be a Catholic church (eclais cathalacda) on the site where he was buried. In a marginal note by M the site is called ‘Treoit hodie’ (modern Trevet in Co. Meath near Tara), and this is also included in the main text of Fástini Airt meic Cuind (LU 9823-4, 9838 and 9847). Duma Dergláchara means ‘the sepulchral mound of the red marsh’, and it is identified in LU with Treoit.\textsuperscript{64} In a dindshenchas poem attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin, Art’s grave is said to be at Lúachair Derg (here the place-name has probably been inverted to fit the rhyme).\textsuperscript{65} In the tale Cath Maige Mucrama, Art’s manner of death is discussed: his head was struck off at Turloch Airt ‘Art’s Swamp’ in the territory of the Óic Bethrae (a marsh between Cell Cornan and Magnoel, near Mag Mucrama, a plain southwest of Athenry in Co. Galway), but no mention is made of his burial at Duma Dergluachra.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} See Cath Maige Mucrama, ed. & tr. M. O Daly (Dublin, 1975); ‘The Battle of Mag Mucrime’, ed. W. Stokes, RC, 13 (1892), 426-474. This text dates to the early Middle-Irish period.

\textsuperscript{64} OG, 373-4; 465; 506.


\textsuperscript{66} Cath Maige Mucrama, § 58; OG, 658.
Legend

Cemetery or Grave-Site
A. Brug na Bóinne (Newgrange)  G. Ocha (Faughan Hill)
B. Lúachair Ailbe
C. Tailtiu (Teltown)
D. Temair (Tara)
E. Ros na Ríg (Rosnaree)
F. Duma Dergluachra or Treoit (Trevet)

Additional Place-Names Mentioned
1. Cnogba (Knowth)
2. Cenandas (Kells)
3. Achall or Scrín Choluim Cille (Skreen)
4. Tech Cleitig (?)
5. Loch nGabor (Lagore)

Map 4.3 Cemeteries and individual grave-sites recorded in *SnR* §§ I, IVa, IVb and V. Unidentified sites include Mag Feci and Ferta Conaire.
IV.b. **Ochan and the grave of Níall Noígíallach**

*Snr* states that Níall Noígíallach (‘Níall of the Nine Hostages’), the eponymous ancestor of the Uí Néill, was buried at **Ochan**, modern **Faughanhill** about five miles north-west of **Navan**, Co. Meath.67 *SnR* does not provide us with any further information about Níall’s death and burial apart from the folk-etymology of the site, namely, that the hill where he was buried was derived from *och caine* ‘from the sighing and lamentation’ the people of Ireland made as a result of Níall’s death.68

A number of Middle-Irish sources recount Níall’s death differently, though in all accounts it is agreed that he was slain abroad by Eochaid mac Ênnai.69 In *Réim Ríograide* of the *LG*, Níall was slain in **Muir Icht** (the sea of Wight), but no mention is made of his interment at **Ochan**.70 In another tract Níall is killed in Alba, and in one account he is said to have been slain on the **River Loire**, however, neither of these stories mention the location of Níall’s final resting place.71 Níall’s successor to the high-kingship according to tradition was his nephew Nath Í (the primary character of the first half of *ANÍ*), but in *ANÍ* neither Níall nor his grave-site is recorded. A lengthy *dindshenchas* poem attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin does, however, recount that Níall was buried at **Ochan**:

Lótar asin Temraig sár | fían a theglaid trelmaig tréin: | ba de bói iar mbaisse brón | **Ochan**

mór muntire Néill.

68 Professor Charles-Edwards has suggested to me that the accent on *Ochaín* in *SnR* (*LU*) must be derived from the etymology *caíd* ‘laments, keens’, with diphthong *at*.
70 *LG*, V. 348-9.
V. *Maig Feci, Ferta Conaire and the burial of Conaire Mór or Conaire Carpraige*

This section has been written at the bottom of column *a* and at the top of column *b* of page 51 in *LU* by Scribe H, with the exception of the first few words which were transcribed by M (i.e. *Conaire Mór dano...*). This interpolation states that Conaire Mór was buried in *Maig Feci* in *Brega*, glossed by H as *Ferta Conaire*. This continues to say, ‘however, some say that it was Conaire Carpraige’ who was buried there (i.e. in *Maig Feci* or *Ferta Conaire*), and that Conaire Mór was one of the three kings to be interred in *Tara*. On the top of column *b* two of the three kings said to be buried at *Tara* are listed, namely, Conaire and Lóegaire, but then H is silent about the name of the third king, and the interpolation ends. This interpolation is also included in TCD H.3.17, but it also ends with the name Lóegaire.

Though most of this passage was written by H, it nevertheless agrees with the earlier III which states that the kings from Cremthand Nia Náir to Lóegaire mac Néill (with the exception of Art mac Conn, Cormac mac Airt and Níall Noígíallach) were buried in *Brug*, and here we are informed that Lóegaire and a certain Conaire were buried at *Tara*. In the Patrician tradition, Lóegaire mac Néill expressed that his father wished for him to be buried in *Tara*, and here it would not be unlikely that the interpolation in *LU* reflects this tradition of Lóegaire’s burial seen in the Patrician

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72*MD*, II, 38-39: [Westward from Tara came | the warrior band of his warlike powerful retinue: | thence was called, after grief and beating of breasts, great Ochan of the following of Niall:]; [There parted in high Ochan | one from another the noblest in rank, | Leinstermen, Munstermen, (he caused them grief) | men of Connaught, men of Ulster, famous men and troops.]
In literary tradition, Conaire Mór was the son of Eterscél and Mes Búachalla, the daughter of Eocho Fedlech (or Eocho Airem) and Étaín. Conaire Mór is a leading character in both *De Síl Chonairi Móir* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, and in the latter *Bruiden Dá Derga* is the site where Conaire meets his death. In the *LU* version of this story, Conaire Mór was said to have been taken to *Tara* for burial, but this is also in a colophon added by Scribe H. I have found no attestation of the other individual mentioned in this passage, Conaire Carpraige. In the genealogies, Conaire Mór’s son is named Carpre, but Carpraige is presumably a group-name or kingdom-name derived from Cairpre.

Both *Mag Feci* and *Ferta Conaire* are very infrequently recorded in the toponymic record. Hogan suggests that they were somewhere in the vicinity of *Tara* from the context of this passage in *SnR*. TCD H.3.17 provides a different orthography and different names in this interpolation. Instead of *Mag Feci* the name is recorded as *Mag Fichche* and it is not *Ferta Conaire* but *Ferta Conaill*. In TCD H.3.17 these sites are recorded to be in *Mag mBreg*, but unfortunately, even the difference in names does not help with the identification.

If *Mag Feci* (*Fichche*) were in the vicinity of *Tara*, I find it difficult to believe that a *mag*-name in this very well documented region around *Tara* would have gone unnoticed. Though the nearby place-name *Ferta Fer Féicc* (which was

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76 ‘The Destruction of Dá Derga’s Hostel’, 326-327 (§164): [Thereafter Mac Cecht, having cleansed the slaughter, at the end of the third day, set forth, and he dragged Conaire with him on his back, and buried him at Tara, as some say.]
77 CGH, 147 ab 4.
78 OG, 414.
probably located near Slane, Co. Meath) appears to be similar to Feci in SnR, this is misleading because Ferta Fer Féice means ‘the burial mound of the men of Fiacc’. 79

Mag Feci and Ferta Conaire are, however, found in a passage in the LG listing the battles Túathal Techtmar fought:

γ cath Muigi Fheigi, andorchair Conairi Cerba, do Gailianchaib, diadá Ferta Conairi i Muigi Feigi. 80

From this attestation we must assume that the place-name Ferta Conaill seen in the TCD text is probably a scribal error for Ferta Conaire. In the above passage, the person whom Mag Feci and Ferta Conaire are said to be named after is Conaire Cerba, not Conaire Mór or Conaire Carpraige as we are informed in H’s entry and in TCD. Though this passage states that Conaire Cerba was of the Galióin, this does not necessarily imply that Mag Feci and Ferta Conaire were in Leinster.

VI. Tailtiu and the Cemetery of the Ulaid and the burial of Conchobor mac Nessa

SnR column b of page 51 (written in M’s hand) states that the Ulaid were buried in Tailtiu from Ollam Fótla to Conchobor mac Nessa, who was buried at a place between Slea and the sea ‘with his face to the east’ because he believed in Christ. Conchobor’s reception of Christianity is mentioned earlier in SnR in I (4049-50). Both ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan have similar statements, but only SnR records

Conchobor’s grave at Slea. The cemetery of the Ulaid in Tailtiu is also attested in the poem attributed to the poet Dóban in ANÍ (LU 2893-98), where it is stated that the Ulaid used to be buried in ‘in rush-strewn Tailtiu’, and that ‘Before Conchobor the true Ulaid were previously buried in Tailtiu’.

Though it is not explicitly stated, the personal names in this section of SnR and the related texts imply that the author was envisioning the genealogy of the Ulaid. This may have simply been obvious to an Irish readership through the names of the two kings included. The Ulaid, according to the mythological tradition of LG were descended from Ír, another son of Míl Espáine. According to the genealogy, Ollam Fóthla is placed five generations after Ír. In Irish literature Ollam Fóthla, a legendary king of Tara, is credited as being the one who divided Ireland into five provinces and was also renowned as the institutor of the Feis Temrach ‘the Feast of Tara’. According to LG, Ollam died a natural death in Tara. Conchobor is also associated with the region of Tara in the Middle-Irish text Dindgnai Temrach, which records a ráith named after him:

Rath Conchobair mic Nesa hi taeb in Tredumi γ atúaidh γ a dorus soir a comardus Corusa cind γ meide Conculainn.

Conchobor mac Nessa, the king of the Ulaid in the TBC, had his capital at Emain Macha modern Navan Fort, Co. Armagh. According to SnR, Conchobor accepted the Christian faith, and was buried between Slea and the sea. The only other

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81 Byrne, Irish Kings and High-Kings, 202.
83 LG, V, 234-235 (§ 518).
84 ‘The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas’, Stokes, 283 & 287 (§ 30): [The Fort of Conchobar Mac Nesa beside the Triple Mound with its door in the east, near the Adjustment of Cúchulainn’s Head and Neck.]
reference to Conchobor’s grave at (Sliab) Slea is found in a *dindshenchas* poem by Cináed húa hArtacáin, and this is a separate poem from the *dindshenchas* following *SnR*. In another MS edition of Cináed’s poem cited above (Egerton 1782, fol. 52) this place-name is glossed: *hi Shléib Slea os Loch Láigh hi Semne* ‘on Sliab Slea above Loch Lóigh (Belfast Lough) in Semne (Island Magee)’.

The location of Sliab Slea has been convincingly identified by Kay Muhr as Muldersleigh Hill on Island Magee near Belfast Lough.

It is not explained in *SnR* or *ANÍ* why the Ulaid chose Tailtiu to be their ancestral cemetery, and indeed, this is slightly peculiar, as Tailtiu (modern Teltown, Co. Meath), is located firmly in Uí Néill territory in Brega. Tailtiu was also the site of the famous *óenach* of the Uí Néill (discussed below). Though the Ulaid were traditionally a very powerful kingdom prior to Connacht expansion in the mid-fifth century (with the possibility that their territory did extend as far south as the Boyne), by the late prehistoric period their tribal capital was at Emain Macha in the north, and there is no mention of this site in *SnR*, *ANÍ*, or *Reléc Carmuin*. Only TCD H.3.17 records the name Aenach Eamna, but this is a significantly later edition.

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87 I am especially grateful to Dr. Kay Muhr for her assistance and to Paul Tempan who informed me of Dr. Muhr’s identification. Though Muldersleigh Hill is not very high (130 metres), as Muhr has demonstrated, Muldersleigh Hill is the only place on Island Magee which would have a commanding view of Belfast Lough. The historical forms of the name possibly suggest that the first element is Irish *mullach* ‘hill’.
88 In *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, ed. Knott, § 165 (*YBL*) and ‘The Destruction of Dá Derga’s Hostel’, Stokes, 327 (§ 165) Amairgin, the father of Conall Cernach, was said to reside in Tailtiu. Amairgin was Conchobor mac Nessa’s poet and warrior. In the *TBC* he is also associated with Tailtiu. See *TBC*, 3394-5; 3402; 3486.
89 On the traditional boundaries of the Ulaid: O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 346-7; Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 106-10, 113.
This section concerns Brug na Bóinne, the first of the famous cemeteries discussed in I and II above, but here explains that the Tuatha Dé Danann buried in the Brug and that Cremthand Nia Náir (or Náire) chose to be buried with them because his wife, Nár, was of the Tuatha Dé Danann; and that is why from the time of Cremthand his descendents chose Brug as their ancestral cemetery. This also explains why Cormac mac Airt’s familial cemetery was at Brug, for though it is not explicitly stated in SnR, Cormac mac Airt is about six generations after Cremthand according to the genealogical tradition (see Figure 4.3). Above the prose Tuatha Dé Danann (LU 4107) is a lengthy gloss added by M listing the nobles of the Tuatha Dé: the Dagda with his three sons, Lugaid, Oe, Ollam, Ogma, Etain, and her son Coirpre. The section in ANÍ which recounts the Tuatha Dé burying in Brug is nearly identical to this passage in SnR, except many of the specific personal names only recorded in the gloss of SnR are included in the text of ANÍ (LU 2901-2904). It is very likely that the information in the text of ANÍ influenced M’s gloss here since ANÍ precedes SnR in LU. ANÍ also states that many nobles of the Fir Bolg were buried in the Brug. We find a more complete record of this account in Ráith Crúachan, which lists all of the personal names and tribal names found in both SnR and ANÍ; Ráith Crúachan also records that the Fir Bolg and the Domnand buried in the Brug (see Appendix II.3). It should be noted here that Ráith Crúachan describes Brug as an óenach, and includes Brug in the list of óenaige.

According to literary tradition, the Tuatha Dé Danann were descendants of Nemed, and were the final mythological people to invade Ireland before the arrival of the Milesians, or the Gaels (see Figure 4.4). Their name means ‘the people of the
Figure 4.4  The Tuatha Dé Danann, the descendants of Nemed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Brug na Bóinne: cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the kings of Tara from Creimthand Nia Náir to Lóegaire mac Néill</strong></th>
<th><strong>Crúachu: cemetery of the Clann Érimón</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dagda</td>
<td>Cobthach Cóel Breg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aed, Oengus (i.e. Mac ind Óc), Cermait</td>
<td>Labraid Loingsech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lug</td>
<td>Eocho Fedlech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Óc</td>
<td>(Findemna) Bres, Nar and Lothor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollam</td>
<td>Eocho Airem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogma</td>
<td>Lugaid Riab nDerg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etaín</td>
<td>Medb, Clothru, Muresc, Doche, Ele (Eithne)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corpre mac Étaíne</td>
<td>Ailill mac Mata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creimthand Nia Náir</td>
<td>Cet, Anlón, Doche (and four un-named)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Matha</td>
<td>*and the kings of Tara to the time of Creimthand Nia Náir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Boann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Cellach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Fintan Feradach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Tuathal Teachtmar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Fedelmid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Conn Cétcatach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Cairpre Lifechair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Fiachu Sraptine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Muiredach Tírech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Eochu, father of Niall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5  The mythological people believed to be buried at Brug na Bóinne and Crúachu according to Senchas na Relec (LU). Those said to be buried at Brug in the following dindshenchas poem are indicated by a *.
goddess Danu’, and they are frequently associated with magic, poetry and the arts in medieval Irish literature.\(^{90}\) They feature prominently in the \(LG\) and in the two tales of \textit{Cath Maige Tuired}, where in the first account they defeat the Fir Bolg and in the second they defeat the Fomorians.\(^{91}\) The Dagda (also known as Eochaid Ollathair), the first of the Tuatha Dé Danann to be glossed by name, is regarded as one of the primary deities of Old-Irish mythology; his name means ‘the good god’, and it has been suggested that he may have had an early role as a sun god.\(^{92}\) The Dagda is always associated with \textit{Brug} in literary sources, and in some cases the building of the \textit{Brug} is attributed to him, and in other instances it is said that the men of Ireland built the \textit{Brug} over the Dagda and his sons (in the sense of a sepulchral mound).\(^{93}\) His three sons are not named in the gloss by \(M\), but they are included in a gloss of \textit{ANÍ} added by \(H\) as: Aed, Oengus and Cermait. This is paralleled in \textit{Ráith Crúachan} which lists these names in the text. Oengus is frequently depicted by his alternative names: Oengus Óc, Mac Óc or Mac ind Óc. In many instances in early Irish poetry and literature, his name is synonymous with \textit{Brug} and the surrounding landscape (e.g. \textit{mag mic ind Óc} ‘the plain of Mac ind Óc’); this is also seen in the \textit{dindshenchas} poem following \textit{SnR} (4117-4120 and 4125-4128).\(^{94}\) These three sons are similarly

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\(^{90}\) For a general discussion: Ó hÓgáin, \textit{The Lore of Ireland}, 478-481.


\(^{92}\) For example, ‘Tochmarc Étaíne’, 142-3: [He was also named the Dagda (i.e. the good god), for it was he that used to work wonders for them and control the weather and the crops.]; ‘The First Battle of Moytura’, tr. Fraser, 16-17: [They (the Tuatha Dé Danann) had a god of wizardry of their own, Eochaid Ollathir, called the Great Dagda (\textit{Dagda Mor}), for he was an excellent god (\textit{uair ba diagdia}).]

\(^{93}\) The Dagda is said to have built the Brug in a poem attributed to Macnìa mac Oengusa, \textit{MD}, II, 18-19: [Behold the fairy mound before your eyes; | it is plain for you to see, it is a king’s dwelling, | it was built by the harsh Dagda], but an alternative interpretation in the \(LG\), IV, 120-1 (§ 313) states: [Eochna Ollathair, that is the great Dagda, son of Elada, eighty years in the kingship over Ireland. Over him did the men of Ireland make the mound of the Brug, and (over) his three sons, Oengus, Aed and Cermad Coem.]

\(^{94}\) \textit{MD}, II, 18-19. Another \textit{dindshenchas} poem attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin, which focuses on Brug, mentions Mac ind Óc (as well as many of the other sons of the Dagda). This poem is based on \textit{Tochmarc Étaíne}, and was dedicated to Cináed’s patron, Oengus, to whom the Brug belonged, at a festive event. This poem would have been important for Cnogba (Knowth), the seat of the kingship of
named in a passage of LG. The Dagda’s other sons not mentioned here were Bodb Derg and Midir Mongbuide. In most accounts, the Dagda’s wife was Eithne whose alternative name was Boand (the river-goddess from whose name the Boyne is derived). This union is elaborated upon in the Tochmarc Étaíne, where the tale begins with the conception of Oengus (i.e. Mac Óc) by the Dagda and Boand, who was the wife of Elcmar of the Brug; Mac Óc was subsequently hidden because of his adulterous conception. Later Oengus assists his father, the Dagda, in evicting Elcmar from Brug, and Elcmar received Cleitech as compensation.

The remaining members of the Tuatha Dé Danann mentioned in M’s gloss include: Lug, Óe, Ollam (Óe mac Olloman in ANÍ), Ogma, Étaín and her son Corpre. Lug was said to be the son of Cían of the Tuatha Dé and Eithne, a daughter of Balor of the Fomorians. Lug is accepted into the Tuatha Dé Danann by beating Ogma, the champion of the Tuatha Dé, in a contest. In the second battle of Mag Tuired, it is Lug who leads the Tuatha Dé against the Fomorians. Ogma was a chief warrior of Núadu, king of the Tuatha Dé Danann; in the first battle of Mag Tuired he was one of the chieftains fighting for the Tuatha Dé, and in the second battle of Mag Tuired he features frequently as a champion. In Tochmarc Étaíne, the Dagda, Lug and Ogma are known as the tri dei Danand ‘three gods of Danu’ (i.e. the Tuatha Dé Danann).
Plate 4.4 Entrance to the passage-grave at Newgrange. (Photograph by Jill Hughes).

Plate 4.5 The reconstructed white quartz facade around Newgrange. (Photograph by Jill Hughes).
In the first battle of *Mag Tuired*, Óe mac Olloman, Étaín and Corpre mac Étaíne are three poets of the Tuatha Dé Danann.\(^\text{102}\)

Though *Brug* is not described in great detail in *SnR*, it is still possible to glean some of the medieval Irish perceptions of *Brug* from the statement that *Brug* was the cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann. Since the Tuatha Dé Danann were viewed as pre-Milesian, then *Brug* was surely regarded with a sense of antiquity by the medieval Irish.\(^\text{103}\) In the literature one cannot divorce the Tuatha Dé Danann and the *Brug*: the Tuatha Dé were the builders of *Brug*, it was their hostel, and according to *SnR*, *ANÍ* and other *dindshenchas* tracts it was also their cemetery, the elaborate tomb of the mythological invaders. Furthermore, many of the Tuatha Dé Danann may have had their origins as pre-Christian deities (e.g. Dagda ‘good god’), and *Brug*, therefore, was likely to have been interpreted as the house of the ancient gods. *Brug na Bóinne* was almost certainly regarded as an awe-inspiring and magical site by the medieval Irish.\(^\text{104}\)

VIII. *Óenach Albi*, *Temair Érand*, *Óenach Culi*, *Óenach Colmán* and *Feci*

The final verse in *SnR* reiterates and elaborates on the remainder of the *prímreilce* first mentioned in II. There are similar passages in TCD H.3.17, *ANÍ* and *Ráith Crúachan*, which suggests that they stem from the same tradition:


\(^{104}\) This perception might not have been shared by the Vikings. See AU 863.4: [The caves of Achad Aldai, and of Cnodbha, and of Boadán’s Mound above Dubad, and of Óengoba’s wife, were searched by the foreigners—something which had never been done before.] ‘Cnodbha’ is Knowth and ‘Boadán’s Mound above Dubad’ refers to Dowth. See C. O’Kelly, *Illustrated Guide to Newgrange and the Other Boyne Monuments*, 80-3.
The first site mentioned in both *SnR* and *ANÍ* is Óenach Ailbe ‘the fair of Ailbe’. In *SnR* it is glossed to be the burial place of Cathar (Mór), the pseudo-historical king of Tara, who is the traditional ancestor of the Laigin. According to the genealogies his thirty sons founded numerous dynasties in Leinster.\(^\text{105}\) We have already established that this is not the same place as Luachra Ailbe (see II above). Óenach Ailbe was located in the territory of the Laigin, and it is referred to in *ANÍ* as the cemetery of the Galióin (i.e. the Galióin). This is also paralleled in Ráith Crúachan, except in this text

\(^{105}\) CGH, 120 b 52, 124 a 22 and especially 121 a 19 where Cathair’s descendants include the Úi Chennselaig, Úi Dúnlainge, Úi Bairrche, Úi Crimthainn, Úi Fhaílgi, Úi Enechglais, Úi Timmine, Úi Chéthig, Úi Dergmosaich, Úi Nicc, etc. See O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 19.

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*SnR* (4111-4113)
Laigin i nOenuch Albi. (i. Catair cona chlaind γ na rig rempo [M]) Cland Dedad (i. sil Conaire γ Ernai [M]) hi Temair Érand. Fir Muman (i. Dergthene [M]) i nOenuch Culi γ i nOenuch Colman.

*SnR* (TCD H.3.17 col. 732, 13-19)
Laigin an Aenach Ailbe .i. Cathair cona chlaind γ na righa rompu. Clanda Deghadh a Temair Erand .i. Sil Conaire γ Enna .i. Daire i Degadh γ Cu Rui mac Daire γ im Dorri)n mar γ im .uii. caeca sil Daire mic D(egaidh). Fir Muman a nAenach Chuile γ a nAet(n)ach Colmain .i. Dergtine.

*ANÍ* (LU 2904-2907)
Rigrad cócicd Galiam i nÓenuch Ailbi. Rigrad Muman i nÓenuch Cúli i nÓenuch Colman γ Feci. Cland Dedad hi Temair Erand.

*Ráith Crúachan* (22573-77)
Rigrad coicid Galian i nÓenuch. Carmuin. Rigrad Muman i nÓenuch Cuili γ i nÓenuch Colmain. I Temair Erand γ i Temair Luachra Dedaid féci cland Dedaid .i. Daire mac Dedaid. im Cu Rui mac Dairi γ im Dornmar γ im .uii. coicdu síl Daire meic Dedaid.
the cemetery of the Galióin was Óenach Carmuin, synonymous with the famous Relec Carmuin, the focus of the dindshenchas poem by that title. This suggests that Óenach Ailbe and Óenach Carmuin were alternative names for the same site; this has often been overlooked in modern scholarship, and therefore they have been perceived and subsequently located as separate places.\textsuperscript{106} The location of Óenach Carmuin (alias Óenach Ailbe) has caused great debate over the past two centuries, and suggested locations have ranged from Lough Garman in Co. Wexford to Ballon in Co. Carlow and the Curragh in Co. Kildare, the latter being the most widely accepted.\textsuperscript{107} It has often been presumed based on the second element of Óenach Ailbe that it was located in Mag nAilbe, a plain which extended north-east of the Barrow in northern Co. Carlow to the Curragh in southern Co. Kildare.\textsuperscript{108} In the literature, Carman is affiliated with the River Liffey, Almu and Dún nAilinne, but as Ó Murchadha has pointed out:

> The arrangement of the Dindshenchas, whereby Almu, Ailenn and Carman are treated in succession, obviously points to their being in the same area, but again it has to be stressed that however fictitious the eponyms supplied for notable places, the very fact that separate poems commemorate Carman and Ailenn must indicate that these were distinct sites.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{106} Ó Murchadha, ‘Carman, Site of Óenach Carmain,’ 66-7: where the same conclusion is reached. The record of these names in the YBL recension of AN\textsuperscript{I} has added further confusion, stating: ‘Rigrad didu coicid Gailian in Oenach Colman no Ailbi.’ [The princes, moreover, of the fifth of the Gáleoin in Óenach Colmán or Ailbi]. However, in the YBL recension, Óenach Colmán is afterwards listed as the cemetery of the Mumu.

\textsuperscript{107} See Orpen, ‘Aenach Carman,’ 11-41 for the identification of Carmuin with the region of the Curragh and Co. Kildare, and at 25 where it is suggested that Óenach Ailbe may be at Ballon near the confluence of the River Barrow and the Burren, near the royal centre of Dind Rig (near Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow). See Ó Murchadha, ‘Carman, Site of Óenach Carmain,’ 61-4 for a review of previous scholarship on the location of Carmuin.

\textsuperscript{108} Smyth, Celtic Leinster, 39.

The most recent suggestion for the location of Carma (and therefore also for Óenach Ailbe) is in the parish of Carnalway, Co. Kildare.Ó Murchadha has demonstrated that Carnalway may stem from an earlier Carn Ailbe, and furthermore, in a fifteenth-century document relating to this parish Ó Murchadha has discovered the place-name Carmaneshyll (though now unidentified), which he interprets to be an older spelling of ‘Carman’s Hill’. Considering all of the evidence proposed over the past two centuries, it seems irrefutable that Óenach Carmuin was located in the political heartland of Leinster in Co. Kildare, near the Curragh and near Dún nAilinne. This also accords well with Óenach Carmuin and Óenach Ailbe being the cemetery of the Galióin seen in both ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan, and though they are no doubt synonymous with the Laigin in SnR, traditionally the territory of the Galióin is believed to have been in northern Leinster, in Co. Kildare.

The next cemetery in SnR is Temair Érand, which was the cemetery of the Clann Dedad (often spelled Degad). In ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan the order is reversed and the cemeteries of Mumu are listed first, though here we shall continue with the structure of SnR. A gloss above the Clann Dedad by M states that this was the people of Conaire and Ernai (from earlier Érainn); an alternative name for the Ernai was Dáirine, and this is reflected in the Ráith Crúachan version. A practically identical passage to the Ráith Crúachan edition can be found in TCD H.3.17. The Clann Dedad were primarily located in Co. Cork and parts of Co. Kerry in Munster. They were renowned as a warrior tribe, and Ernai is also a descendent of Érimón in the genealogies. Temair Érand, also the royal residence Clann Dedaid, had an alternative name as Temair Lúachra (Temair Lóchra) and it was located in the

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110 Ó Murchadha, ibid., 64-70.
111 Ibid., 64-70.
112 O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 189.
district of Lúachair Dedad. The region of Lúachair Dedad probably extended from the barony of Magunihy, Co. Kerry to Dunhallow, Co. Cork. Based on toponymic evidence, the location of Temair Érand has been suggested to be represented in the townlands Taurbeg and Taurmore in north-west Co. Cork. Temair Érand was also likely to be the royal seat of the Clann Dedad.

The next cemeteries, Óenach Cúli and Óenach Colmán, were the cemeteries of the Munstermen according to SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan (the poem Relec Carmuin only mentions Óenach Cúli). This passage is almost identical in both ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan, except ANÍ lists an additional cemetery of the Mumu, Feci (discussed below). In SnR above Fir Muman (‘the men of Munster’) M has added the gloss ‘i.e. the Dergthene’; this gloss in included in the text of TCD H.3.17 following Aenach Colmain. The Dergthene were the ancestors of the Eóganachta, the ruling dynasties of Munster and the Dál Cais; they were descendents of Éber mac Míl, and some of their illustrious members included Mug Núadat, the son of Lug Fedlech.

The genealogies indicate that the sovereignty of Munster alternated between the Dergthene and the Dáire, or the Dáirine (i.e. the Érnai mentioned above, part of the Clann Dedad) and the Corcu Loígde. The Dergthene and the Dáire became important with the rise of the Dál Cais in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

117 E. MacNeill, Phases in Irish History (Dublin, 1919), 104.
119 O’Rahilly, Early Irish History and Mythology, 189. A passage in the genealogies explaining the joint sovereignty of these dynasties can be found in CGH 147 b 6 [11-19]: ‘Dáire γ Dergthene hi comflaith i. Síl Lugdach γ Síl nÉbir amal bítí do grés acht is uaisliu Síl nÉbir; nó is hé Dárfine ro báe i n-agid Deirgthene i. Órnai γ Déarfín do rúd fríu-side ó Dáire mac Dedaid a patre Con-ruí γ ní Corco Laigde ut alii putant. | Ar is ó hÉrnaib cech dara rí aness co Conaire mac Moga Láma γ ó Dergthene in
Óenach Cúli is suggested to have been located at Monasteranenagh near Croom in Co. Limerick, though Westropp has identified Monasteranenagh with the site of another óenach, Óenach Cairbre, later known as Óenach Beag.121 The name Monasteranenagh is derived from Mainistir an aenaigh ‘Monastery of the Fair’.122 In the Acallam na Senórach, Óenach Cúli is recorded as: d’aenach Cuile mná Nechtain re [a]nabar aenach sétach senclóchar.123 Óenach Cúli is very likely to be the same as Óenach Cuile mná Nechtán, and the Acallam further implies that it was also known as Óenach Sen Clochair. The following place-names in the passage of the Acallam suggest that Óenach Cuile mná Nechtain was located between modern Cullen and Ardpatick, Co. Limerick.124 The tale Mesca Ulaid further locates Óenach Sen Clochair between Knockainey and Slieveraugh.125 Westropp suggests that Óenach Sen Clochair (which he also identifies with Óenach Clochair) was located near Dromin, and that the name is probably preserved in the modern place-names Clogher East and West, Co. Limerick.126 Óenach Sen Clochair is listed in TCD H.3.17 along with the prímréilce of Ireland (col. 730, line 45 spelled as [Ae]nach sean Clochair), and it is one of the additional place-names found in this MS. Óenach Sen Clochair and Óenach Cúli (Aenach Chuile col. 731, line 1) are

121 OG, 558. For information on the Cistercian Abbey of Monasteranenagh: Stalley, The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland, 248; T. J. Westropp, ‘The Assembly Place of Óenach Cairbre and Sid Asail at Monasteranenagh, County Limerick,’ PRIA, 35, Sec. C, no. 10 (Dublin, 1920), 371.
122 OG, 559.
123 Acallamh na Senórach, ed. W. Stokes & E. Windisch, Irische Texte, 4 (Leipzig, 1900), 20 [705-7].
124 O’Grady, Silva Gadelica, II, 118.
125 Mesca Ulad, ed. J. C. Watson (Dublin, 1941), 15 (336-43).
Map 4.4  Óenach Cúli
and additional óenach-sites in Munster.

Legend

Modern Place-Names
Mentioned in Discussion

1. Monasteranenagh
2. Croom
3. Cullen
4. Ardpatrick
5. Knockainy
6. Slievereagh
7. Dromin
8. Clogher East
9. Clogher West
listed as separate sites in TCD H.3.17 and in a charter of Monasteranenagh (c. 1186), however, and this has led to criticism of Westropp’s identification. In a poem in LL headed Oenach indiu luid in rí, the name Óenach Clochair is recorded (which Stokes identifies as the site near Croom in Co. Limerick), but from context it appears to be associated with the Liffey. Óenach Clochair and Óenach Sen Clochair have generally been assumed to be one and the same, though MacNeill warns of the possibility that they ‘were distinct’ sites. In a second recension of this poem seen in the Acallam na Senórach, MacNeill has pointed out that Óenach Clochair is associated with Lough Gur. Lough Gur is not very far north from the location of Óenach Sen Clochair or Óenach Cúli mná Nechtain according to other place-names in the Acallam and Mesca Ulaid. As Westropp has argued in defence of his identification, it is possible that Aenach sean Clochair was ‘a later marginal note inserted out of place’ in H.3.17, and that it is the same site as Óenach Cúli, and after review of the other sources where these place-names are recorded, this is a strong possibility. Nevertheless, in the later medieval period there appears to have been much òenach-activity in the eastern region of Co. Limerick in Mag Cliach, and Óenach Cúli was certainly located in modern Co. Limerick. There is always the possibility that these òenaige ‘assemblies’ changed locations and names throughout history.

The location of the second cemetery of the men of Munster, Óenach Colmán, has also been debated in the past century. It has been suggested that Óenach Colmán

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127 Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1171-1251, ed. H. S. Sweetman, 1 (London, 1875), 21-22: ‘Enachchuli in Corbali’ and ‘Clughur’ (i.e. Óenach sen Clochair). Corbali (modern Corbally, Co. Limerick), is also associated with Cúillean in this charter. Cúillean is identified with modern Cullen, Co. Limerick. Westropp, ibid., 182 (Notes added in Press).
130 Ibid., 345.
131 Westropp, ‘The Earthworks, Traditions,’ 183.
was a later name for Óenach Carmuin, but this theory is now rejected.\textsuperscript{132} There are two references to Óenach Colmán in \textit{AU}, one in 826 recording that the Laigin Desgabair under Muiredach disturbed the Óenach Colmán, and the second in 940, recording that Fáelán mac Muirchertaig, king of the Laigin, died from a fall at Óenach Colmán.\textsuperscript{133} The ninth-century \textit{Triads of Ireland} names the three great fairs of Ireland as: Óenach Tailten, Óenach Crúachan and Óenach Colmán Ela.\textsuperscript{134} Óenach Colmán in our texts and Óenach Colmán Ela are almost certainly one and the same. The record of the qualifying name \textit{Ela} attached to this \textit{óenach} is very specific, and it must refer to St Colmán Ela, the patron saint of Lann Ela in \textit{Tír Cell} ‘Land of Churches’ (modern \textit{Lynally} parish near \textit{Tullamore} in Co. Offaly).\textsuperscript{135} The assembly (\textit{óenach}) of Colmán Ela is also a predominant feature of the saint’s \textit{Betha}, and in this text the men of \textit{Fir Chell} ‘men of Churches’ (another term for the region of \textit{Tír Cell}) are commanded by the saint to hold his \textit{óenach} at Lann Ela or else suffer a number of defects, a theme which is also paralleled in the introduction to \textit{Relec Carmuin} if the kings of Leinster do not hold the \textit{óenach} of Carmuin.\textsuperscript{136} In the \textit{Betha Cholmain Eala} the three main \textit{óenaige} of Ireland are listed as: \textit{aonach Taillten} \textbar\textit{aonach Cluana meic Nois} \textbar\textit{Lainn Eala} (i.e. the Óenach Tailten, Óenach Cluana meic Nois and Óenach Colmán Ela).\textsuperscript{137} In this \textit{Betha} there are also numerous references to the famous cemetery (\textit{relec}) of Lann Ela, and this may be one reason

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{AU} 827.6, \textit{AFM} 940.5. Desgabair refers to the territory south of Gabar, and is frequently used to describe south Leinster. See Chapter Two above and Cogitosus, \textit{Vita II} § 19; \textit{BH} (58-60).
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Triads of Ireland}, ed. K. Meyer (Dublin, 1906), 4-5 (§ 35).
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., I.178 (§ 30) & II. 171.
why Óenach Colmán (alias Óenach Colmán Ela) was considered one of the prímreilce in our texts.\textsuperscript{138}

Tír Cell was in the former lands of the Cenél Fíachach of Mide during the medieval period.\textsuperscript{139} In one passage in the genealogies, however, Óenach Colmán is said to be in Mag Liffi.\textsuperscript{140} One possibility is that an óenach under the patronage of a saint (e.g. Colmán Ela) was mobile: it could have been at Lann Ela but it could also have been in Mag Liffi or in Munster. This may explain why the kings of Leinster were participating and disturbing this óenach in the annalistic record. On the other hand, Lann Ela was located in Tír Cell and this district sometimes acted as a border-region between the men of Mide, the Laigin and the north-east territory of Munster. In the Betha Cholmain Eala the óenach of Colmán Eala appears to have been convened by the men of Tír Cell, and there is no reference to Mumu. On the other hand, a passage in the genealogies states that Fiacha Fidgente built a wooden horse for the Óenach Colmán in Mag Liffi.\textsuperscript{141} The Uí Fhidgeanta were a sept of the Éoganacht who lived south of Limerick, and this demonstrates that the men of Munster did have a connection to the Óenach Colmán.\textsuperscript{142} In TCD H.3.17 the Derghthene was said to bury at Óenach Colmáin (see Appendix II.1). It is peculiar that SnR and the related texts assert a major cemetery of the men of Munster was not actually within the confines of Munster. According to literary tradition, the region of Tír Cell was once believed to have been part of Munster and was captured by Tuathal Teachtmar, the grandfather of Conn Cetcáthach and a legendary member of the Uí Néill pedigree.\textsuperscript{143} These texts may be asserting that a cemetery of Mumu was in Uí

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., I. 172 (§ 15), 173 (§ 18) & II.166-7, at 167 (§ 18).
\textsuperscript{139} Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 298.
\textsuperscript{140} CGH 152 a 11: ‘Circe Colmáin hi ILíphu’ & 10a-a: ‘Āenach Colmáin a Maig Lifi.’
\textsuperscript{141} CGH 152 a 11.
\textsuperscript{142} Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 257.
\textsuperscript{143} Orpen, ‘Āenach Carman,’ 36.
Néill territory, a similar scenario as was observed with Tailtiu, which, though firmly in Uí Néill territory, according to SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan was the cemetery of the Ulaid.\textsuperscript{144}

The order in which the cemeteries of Munster are described in these texts may indicate the conventional geographical perception of Munster. The list of these names in the prímreilce of SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan goes in the order of Óenach Cúli, Óenach Colmán and Temair Érand, but in the latter half of SnR where these names are discussed in more detail the order is reversed, and Temair Érand (i.e. Lúachair Dedad) is mentioned before Óenach Cúli (located in Mag Cliach) and Óenach Colmán (probably located in Tír Cell). This may represent the traditional perception of the route of Munster from the south-west going north-east towards Mide. This should be compared with a passage in LG where this same route is taken:

Mad far Muinnechaib, is iad a n-imtechta. Tá nic farom Íth i Corco Duibne i Ciarraige Luachra, i l-Luachair nDedaid, i mMaig Cliach, i nÉile, hi Tír Chell, for fut Midi...\textsuperscript{145}

The additional name in the ANÍ recension of the cemetery list is Feci. I regard this name with a degree of suspicion, however. The same element is preserved in the name Mag Feci (discussed above), but this place-name is likewise poorly attested. There was a place-name known as Mag Fece in the territory of the Uí Ingair who dwelled in the area of the Óoganacht Glendomnach (located around modern Glanworth, Co. Cork), who according to the genealogies were descendants of

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{145} LG, V, 12-13: [If we follow the Munster authorities, this is their route. Íth came thereafter into Corcu Duibne, into Ciarraige Luachra, into Luachair Dedad, into the plain of Cliú, into Éile, into Tír Cell, along Mide...]

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Éber. Therefore, if this name in ANÍ does refer to an additional cemetery of Mumu, Mag Fece somewhere in the region of modern Co. Cork must be the identification. However, in comparison with this passage in Ráith Crúachan, I am concerned that Feci in ANÍ may be a scribal error. In the line immediately following the cemeteries of the Mumu in Ráith Crúachan (see above or Appendix II.2-3), there is the statement i Temair Luachra Dedaid féci Clann Dedaid ‘in Temair Luachra Dedaid, the summit of the Clann Dedaid’. The syntax of this statement is, however, more coherent if féci Clann Dedaid is disregarded and the passage translated as: ‘the Clann Dedaid are in Temair Luachra’. Féci generally meaning a ‘ridge pole, summit, or pinnacle’ is not a commonly attested word, and the same is true of this element in place-names, yet incidentally it is recorded with more frequency in these texts. If the scribe of ANÍ (i.e. M) were copying the material from a precursor to the same text preserved in Ráith Crúachan, it would be easy to see how his eye could have skipped to the next line and mistook féci for a place-name. Since Feci, or rather Mag Fece, is attested as a place-name in Munster, then here we must assume (though with some degree of caution since this place-name is not attested in any of the other related sources) that Feci might be an additional cemetery of the men of Munster.

IX. The Cemetery of the Connachta at Crúachu

The final cemetery mentioned in SnR is the cemetery of the Connachta at Crúachu. This site has been analysed in great detail in II and III, and the previous discussion concerned the Clann Éremóin. SnR does not provide any further detail here, but this passage in ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan elaborate on later pseudo-historical individuals

\[146\] OG, 408, 520; CGH, 147 b 29; 148 a 26. For the Éoganacht Glendomnach: Koch, An Atlas for Celtic Studies, § 20.2; Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 532 (Map 13).
said to be buried at Crúachu. In both the YBL recension of ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan, Crúachu is called Óenach Crúachan. The fullest reading of those reputed to be buried in Crúachu can be found in Ráith Crúachan (see Appendix II.3). This final passage is a list of famous poets and rulers of Connacht buried at Crúachu (with the exception of Medb, who was said to be interred in Fert Medba according to Ráith Crúachan), and this text concludes with Nath Í, the last pagan king to rule in Ireland, and refers to the poem by Torna Éces cited in all versions of ANÍ. Ráith Crúachan and ANÍ end with a direct correlation to Crúachu, whereas SnR concludes the prose senchas by focusing on Brug na Bóinne.

X. Introduction to the Dindshenchas Poem

The final section of SnR is the dindshenchas poem attributed to Cináed hú hArtacáin, which has a narrative introduction:

Conid d’innisin na ríg ro gabsat Temraig iar Cremthand do neoch ro adnacht isin Brug ro chum Cináed hua hArtacan in laid sea. .i. dia fallsigud na mathi ro n-adnacht isin Brug. 147

Many of the place-names in this poem have been highlighted throughout this discussion, and will not be considered here.

There is a different ending in the TCD H.3.17 edition of SnR. This text finishes with the phrase: ro chum Torrna Eigeas cecinit, and though an additional poem is not included, this demonstrates that the compiler of H.3.17 intended the poem seen in ANÍ (which is also alluded to in Ráith Crúachan) to follow this version of

147 [So it is to tell of the kings who gained (the kingship of) Tara after Cremthand, of those who were buried in the Brug, that Cináed hú hArtacáin composed this poem, i.e. to reveal the nobles who were buried in the Brug.]
SnR. Though a number of the place-names and marginal notes (by both H and M) are seen in the sixteenth-century TCD H.3.17, this text I suspect, though it is primarily based on the *LU* version of *SnR*, may be at one or more stages removed. This may account for the additional place-names and other textual differences. It would also not be unlikely that a different recension of *SnR* included the poem attributed to Torna Éces seen in *ANÍ* and not the poem by Cináed húa hArtacáin.

The *dindshenchas* poems appended to these *senchas* may have been interchangeable because their subject matter is similar. The inclusion of *dindshenchas* poems attributed to well-known poets was a way in which the medieval authors of *senchas* authenticated the contents of their prose.\(^\text{148}\) As Toner has observed, ‘verse was seen as an appropriate medium for preserving *senchas* and thereby of commemorating the past.’\(^\text{149}\) There is, however, one significant difference in the poets: Torna Éces was a legendary poet who fostered Níall Noígíallach, whereas Cináed húa hArtacáin was an historical poet of the tenth century.

§ III. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PLACE-NAMES

The Locations and Landscapes of the *Prímreilec*

The place-names of *SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan* and *Relec Carmuin* are for the most part consistent in these texts. This implies there was an existing tradition on the subject and the place-names that was probably well-known in scholarly circles in medieval Ireland. These place-names are included, as the authors themselves inform us, because they were believed to be the *prímreilec* (‘chief cemeteries’) before the

\(^{148}\) For a detailed study on this subject: G. Toner, ‘Authority, Verse and the Transmission of *Senchas,*’ *Ériu,* 55 (2005), 59-84.

\(^{149}\) Ibid., 62.
arrival of Christianity. This well-defined perception is reflected in each text and is further highlighted by the affiliated personal names.

The *prímreilce* and the associated territorial names illustrate the geography envisaged by the authors of these texts. Because at least one cemetery is named for each province of Ireland, we may assume that these place-names represent major pre-Christian cemeteries of the traditional five-fold provinces of Ireland, namely, the *cóiceda*. For example, SnR records one relec for Connacht (*Crúachu*), two for Brega (*Lúacair Ailbe* and *Brug*), one for the Laigin (*Óenach Ailbe*) three for the *fir Muman* (*Temair Érand* for West Munster, *Óenach Cúli* for central Munster and *Óenach Colmáin* for North-east Munster, though the latter was located in the former south-west region of Mide) and one for the Ulaid (*Tailtiu*, though this is located in Brega). In TCD H.3.17 a *prímrelec* is recorded in Ulaid territory, *Óenach Emma*, but this is a later edition, and may have been incorporated from an earlier gloss. Though a relec is not attested in the medieval territory of the Ulaid in these texts apart from TCD H.3.17, nevertheless, because the Ulaid are included in the list of those who had an *historical cemetery* even if it was in Brega, this still suggests that the authors were inclusive of the traditional divisions of Ireland. Though these texts focus on selected sites and personal names, they do attempt to demonstrate an awareness of the other pre-Christian cemeteries of Ireland.

The place-names of the *prímreilce* in these *senchas* texts have many common features. The majority of these places are located at sites represented in the medieval literature as emblematic centres of political power, many of which were prehistoric ritual centres spanning the periods from the Neolithic to the medieval. These are also sites where settlement has been continuous from the pre-historic period, and where

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the human impact on the landscape can be observed from the monumental remains, many of which survive today. The prehistoric monuments that were constructed within these vicinities also imply that these were ritual landscapes in the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, and this association is reflected to an extent in the early medieval literature.

For example, **Brug na Bóinne**, a *primrelec* and the cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the kings of **Tara** after Cremthand in *SnR, ANÍ, etc.*, is identified with the monumental complexes and the elaborate passage-graves of the **Boyne Valley**. Though **Brug** specifically refers to the passage-grave of **Newgrange**, there are a number of instances in the medieval literature in which it may refer to the monumental landscape of the bend of the **Boyne** as a whole. Situated on higher ground above a bend in the **River Boyne**, the passage-grave of **Newgrange** dominates the surrounding countryside. There are over fifty archaeological monuments in the **Boyne Valley**, at least thirty of which are passage-graves, including **Newgrange** itself.151 **Newgrange** was constructed c.3000-2900 BCE, and it was most likely a religious and ceremonial centre, as the mound was designed to capture sunlight during the winter solstice.152 In the medieval period **Brug**, though not in itself a royal centre, was associated with the nearby passage-grave of **Cnogba** (modern **Knowth**), the capital of the Úí Chonaing, a branch of the Síl nÁedo Sláine, in the eighth century.153 **Brug** is also in the heartland of **Brega** and not too distant from the early royal centres of **Tara** and **Tailltúi**. Regardless of the political association of the **Brug**, the

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significance of this ancient monument for early medieval Irish society is clear through its prominence in medieval legend and mythology.

Crúachu or Óenach Crúachan, the cemetery of the Clann Éremóin and the Connachta according to our texts, is certainly identified with the monumental complexes of Rathcroghan and Carnfree in Co. Roscommon. The complex at Rathcroghan consists of over sixty archaeological monuments, surviving in a four mile radius encompassing six townlands.\(^{154}\) The Rathcroghan area also preserves many prehistoric burial-mounds, for example, at the sites of Caran Fort, Rathbeg, Rathscrag, Flanagan’s Fort, and Carnfree.\(^{155}\) In the Rathcroghan complex are two linear earthworks or cursus-type monuments known as the Mucklaghs.\(^{156}\) Rathcroghan continued to be an important ceremonial centre in the Iron Age and into the medieval period. Evidence of the continued importance of this site is also reflected in the archaeology. For example, in the late Iron Age dominating structures were added onto the main Rathcroghan Mound and the landscape continued to be reused in a fashion suggesting that the monuments played a high-status role, perhaps as inaugural mounds or for another ceremonial purpose.\(^{157}\) Rathcroghan was important in early literary sources as well, and Crúachu was the symbolic capital of the Connachta in tales such as the Ulster Cycle.

In each text Tailtiu, the third of the prímréilce, was said to be the cemetery of the Ulaid. This may indicate that the Ulaid were remembered to have been kings of

\(^{154}\) Waddell, Rathcroghan: Archaeological and Geophysical Survey, 1.

\(^{155}\) J. Waddell, ‘Rathcroghan in Connacht,’ *Emania*, 5 (Autumn 1988), 5-6, 10, 12, 15.

\(^{156}\) Mucklagh (‘piggery’) place-names are associated with feeding pigs. See P. W. Joyce, *The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, 3\(^{rd}\) ed. (Dublin, 1871), 462. The Mucklaghs near Rathcroghan were believed to have been made by a magical pig, and the name must have derived from their shape, which is similar to the tracks boars or pigs make with their snouts when foraging. J. Waddell, ‘Rathcroghan: A Royal Site in Connacht,’ *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 1 (1983), 33.

Map 4.5 Monuments in the immediate vicinity of Rathcroghan Mound

Legend

Modern Names of Monuments
1. Rathcroghan Mound
2. Misguan Medb
3. Rath Beg
4. Rath na Darbh
5. Owennyat
6. Mucklaghs
7. Mucklaghs
8. Cashelmannaman
9. Relig na Ree
10. Dathi’s mound
11. Rathmore

- Ring-fort or mound
- Monument of archaeological interest (i.e. standing stone, cursus, cave, etc.)
Tara before they were deposed by the Uí Néill. This statement may reflect the political reshaping of this region in the popular imagination of the Uí Néill. In the medieval period Tailtiu was likely to have become the Uí Néill capital and ceremonial centre when the focus shifted from nearby Tara, probably shortly after the introduction of Christianity. Tailtiu was one of the most important political centres in Brega. Though much of the landscape around Tailtiu has been altered in the modern period, earthworks and a number of other field monuments such as Rathdhú, Ráith Airthir and a site known as the Knockauns (a cursus-type monument) are still visible, which invites comparison of Tailtiu with the landscapes of other prímréilce such as Rathcroghan.

The cemetery of the Laigin (or the Galión according to different texts) was Óenach Ailbe, also known as Óenach Carmuin or Relec Carmuin, which is well-documented in the medieval literature and chronicle references. Though there has been much discrepancy regarding its precise location in scholarship over the past two centuries, we can now say with relative security that it was located in Co. Kildare, near the ancient void-landscape of the Curragh and in the vicinity of the royal centres of Dún nAilinne (modern Knockaulin), Almu (the Hill of Allen) and the ecclesiastical centre of Kildare. It must have been linked to the symbolic and political heartland of Leinster and probably shared many socio-political attributes as the other prímréilce Crúachu, Brug and Tailtiu.

The remaining place-names in these texts are also likely to be at sites of similar early medieval importance. Óenach Emna, though it is only included in TCD H.3.17, is probably identified with the ritual mound at Emain Macha (modern Navan Fort, Co. Armagh), the political seat of the Ulaid in early literary sources. Temair Érand or Temair Lúachra Dedad, the cemetery of the Clann Dedad, was also regarded as their political capital. Though a fortification has not been found at the identified site around modern Taurbeg and Taurmore, further landscape investigation may prove that this site was indeed similar to the other prímríelce. The nearby place-name of Clonfert, which appears to be derived from Irish Cluain ferta ‘meadow of the burial-mound(s)’, may be a clue. Though I am not familiar with this landscape, the place-names to the south of Taurbeg and Taurmore, Glenmucklagh West and East, should certainly be compared with the similar place-name applied to two linear earthworks in the Rathcroghan complex known as the Mucklaghs. If the cemetery Lúachair Aíbe (only attested in the LU recension of SnR) is identified with modern Lougher, it may have been in the vicinity of Lia Aíbe, a prehistoric monument near modern Duleek that was still visible in the medieval landscape. Though the precise location of the Munster cemetery of Óenach Cúli is uncertain, it was probably located in the region of Mag Cliach in modern Co. Limerick, somewhere between Dromin and Lough Gur, and this entire area is awash with Neolithic monuments. Óenach Colmáin, the other burial-ground of the Munstermen, may be the one unusual outlier in the list of prímríelce, for if it is correctly identified with Óenach Colmán Ela, then this suggests it was probably associated with the Church and not with a major early ritual or political centre. Near Lynally is the townland Mucklagh, and though Mucklagh is a common place-name

162 Aitchison, Armagh and the Royal Centres, 131-97.
163 Cooney, Landscapes of Neolithic Ireland, 9, 79; E. Grogan, The North Munster Project: The Prehistoric Landscape, vol. 2. (Bray, 2005), 47-88.
in Ireland, again this may be worth comparing with the Mucklagh at Rathcroghan and Glenmucklagh near Temair Érand. The place-name Óenach Dúní Fintain included in Relec Carmuin and TCD H.3.17 might also be associated with the Church, as the phrase preceding this place-name, martra muntrie (‘martyrdom of the household’) implies a Christian-religious element to this site.

The Landscape and Mythology of the Prímreilce: Interpretations of Monuments and the Names of SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and Relec Carmuin

The monuments in the ritual landscapes of these prímreilce and early symbolic centres surely had a serious influence on the reception of these sites in medieval Ireland, and probably conditioned and defined their interpretations. In SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and to some extent in the introduction of Relec Carmuin, we are given the impression that these sites were believed to be elaborate burial-mounds housing the remains of ancient, mythological people. They were not entirely incorrect in their assumptions either, for almost all of these sites are comprised of landscapes where passage-graves, ring-barrows and tumuli burial-mounds are very common. The medieval viewers of these sites were aware that these were monuments built to house the dead, and this is well attested in the literature. For example, a line in H’s colophon of ANÍ (also seen in Ráith Crúachan) reads:

Cóeca cnoc in cech óenuch díb sin. Cóeca cnoc ém i nÓenuch Cruachan γ .l. cnoc i nÓenuch Taillten γ .l. i nÓenuch in Broga.\[^{164}\]

\[^{164}\] [There are fifty burial-mounds at each Oenach of these: fifty mounds at the Oenach of Croghan, fifty mounds at the Oenach of Taillten, and fifty at the Oenach of Brugh.] See C. Swift, ‘Óenach Taillten, the Blackwater Valley and the Úi Néill Kings of Tara,’ in Smyth (ed.), Seanchas, 114-5.

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Plate 4.6  Newgrange, the cemetery of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the cemetery of the kings from Cremthand Nia-Náir to Lóegaire meic Néill.

Photo 3 @ Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland.
These *cnuic* are beyond a shadow of a doubt the monuments in the immediate vicinity of these sites, many of which are large Neolithic passage-graves and other types of prehistoric burial-mounds. In *Tochmarc Étaíne*, for example, *Newgrange* is referred to as *Cnuc Sída in Broga*.\(^{165}\) Modern surveys also suggest that the numbers assigned to the mounds in the above passage are perhaps not too great an exaggeration, and this fact must have facilitated their interpretation as *prímreilce*.\(^ {166}\)

Another reason why these sites were known as cemeteries may be the nature of pre-Christian burial customs, especially the practice of constructing a mound or flat circular area enclosed by a ringed-ditch or fosse (similar to a ring-barrow). This custom began in the Bronze Age, but continued in practice through the Iron Age and into the early medieval period (for an example see Plate 4.8).\(^ {167}\) These types of burials were still recognised as grave-sites and cemeteries in the medieval period, and the practice was gradually abandoned with the influx of Christianity when it became more common to bury the dead in consecrated grounds.\(^ {168}\) These ring-ditched monuments are called in Old Irish *fertae* (Middle Irish *ferta*). An example of the early Christian interpretation of a *ferta* can be found in Tírechán’s *Collectanea*, where the death of Lóegaire’s daughters and their manner of burial on the eastern slope of *Crúachu* is described:

And the days of mourning for the king’s daughters came to an end, and they buried them beside the well of Clébach, and they made a round ditch after the manner of a *ferta*, because

\(^{165}\) ‘Tochmarc Étaíne,’ § I.6.

\(^{166}\) The complex at Rathcroghan, for example, has sixty identified archaeological monuments: Waddell, *Rathcroghan: Archaeological and Geophysical Survey*, 1. In the Boyne Valley near Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth there are nearly forty monuments (passage-graves, barrows, enclosures, etc.): O’Kelly, *Illustrated Guide to Newgrange*, 44-7.


\(^{168}\) Ibid., 136.
this is what the heathen Irish used to do, but we call it *relic*, that is, the remains of the maidens.\(^{169}\)

*Relec* literally means ‘remains, relic, body’ and also ‘burial-place’, and in medieval Irish literature it was used in connection with both pre-Christian and Christian cemeteries.\(^{170}\) Tírechán indicates *fertae* was used to denote pre-Christian burials, whereas *relec* applied to Christian burials, though the Christian burial in this passage was constructed in the manner of a *fertae*.\(^{171}\) In Tírechán’s account, *relec* (in the singular) specifically referred to the ‘remains’ of an individual, and therefore the place where the deceased were buried was literally interpreted as their *relec* or their physical ‘remains’. If this interpretation of *relec* was applied to the place-names in our texts, then this suggests a medieval audience would have viewed these places as sites where the ‘remains’ of the mythological people mentioned in context were located. The interpretation of *fertae* and *relec* (in the singular) as overlapping terms may also explain why these sites were viewed as historical *cemeteries*. *Fert* is primarily used to denote the burial-mound of a single individual, e.g. *Fert Medba* in *ANÍ* (*LU* 2915). *Fertae* is generally used to denote a burial-mound of one or many individuals (e.g. in the *fertae* of the king’s daughters described above by Tírechán and *Fertae Fer Féicc* (‘the burial-mound of Fiacc’s Men’), and is generally not used in the plural sense to define a cemetery or larger area of land set apart for burial.\(^ {172}\)

*Relec*, on the other hand, in the plural is frequently used to indicate a ‘cemetery’. The landscapes of these sites are characterised by numerous prehistoric burial-mounds, passage-graves, cairns and ring-barrows, and if many of these monuments were

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\(^{169}\) Tírechán, *Collectanea*, §26. 20-1.

\(^{170}\) SC, 98. See *DIL*, 503, col. 35.

\(^{171}\) Charles-Eddwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, 263.

Plate 4.7 An example of a *fertae*. Pictured above is the burial mound from Clogher, Co. Tyrone. (*Photograph by author*).
interpreted as *fertai* in medieval Ireland (which the corpus of local place-names suggests), then this indicates these places were also perceived as ‘cemeteries’ because of the prevalence of *fertae*-type monuments at each respective site. This demonstrates a connection between the monuments in these landscapes and the medieval understanding of them as the ‘remains’ of mythological people.

The names of the people who originally constructed these monuments at sites such as *Rathcroghan* and *Newgrange*, and the individuals for whom these monuments were first built to commemorate had long since been forgotten by the medieval period. Their testament, however, was inherited in medieval Ireland where in many places these monuments were still dominating features in their respective landscapes. In medieval Ireland, they too were aware that these sites were ancient. In order to explain the role of these places in the distant past, a mythology developed around them to illuminate their relevance in Irish history and to explain their presence in these socially significant landscapes. Though today we may refer to the medieval Irish literature of ‘prehistoric’ as mythology, history and myth are equally a way of explaining the past and a way of comprehending the world, and the medieval literature of these place-names demonstrates that these sites were believed to have had a very rich history and that they played a significant role in Ireland’s pre-Christian past. The landscapes of these places certainly affected and perhaps fashioned the medieval mythology that developed about them, and in the words of Cosgrove, we must consider that ‘myths may both shape and be shaped by landscapes’.  

In our texts the mythological people believed to be ‘interred’ at these sites and the narrative contexts in which they are recorded reflects the mythology of the people associated with these places in the medieval Irish historical perspective. Whether the mythology

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developed as a result of the landscape or whether this mythology later came to be applied to the landscape we may never know, but this fantastic tradition nevertheless reveals many contemporary medieval interpretations of these places.

The individuals associated with the place-names in SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and Relec Carmuin are all mythological or pseudo-historical. These characters feature in texts such as LG, Cath Maige Mucrime, Cath Maige Tuired, Tochmarc Étaíne and in the dindshenchas tradition, all of which are sources concerned with legends of the medieval reconstructed view of the Irish prehistoric and pre-Christian past. In the medieval literature, one simply cannot separate these mythological people from these places. Brug na Bóinne is a primary example. The Tuatha Dé Danann, the people whom each text agrees were buried at Brug, were believed to be the second mythological invaders of Ireland. The Tuatha Dé were also believed to be the original people who constructed and inhabited Brug, which suggests that in the medieval Irish chronological understanding of history, Brug dated to the second major invasion of Ireland, which would make it very ancient from their standpoint.

The Tuatha Dé, however, were not mere mortals, and according to tradition when they were defeated by the Milesians (i.e. the Gaels), many of the Tuatha Dé retreated to a subterranean kingdom. The physical evidence of their underground kingdom manifested itself in the sídé ‘fairy-mounds’, which were also identified in medieval Ireland as prehistoric monumental features, especially burial-mounds. The Tuatha Dé Danann were immortals, so when they retreated beneath the earth, in the medieval Irish imagination they were not dead but lived underground much as they would have in the human world. They also continued to have relations with mortals. This is

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174 The majority of the personal names in Relec Carmuin belong to mythological individuals, but it is possible that the reference to Diarmait in line 96 may be Diarmait mac Mael na mBó, King of Leinster (died 1072): MD, III, 471 [96].
Plate 4.8  Aerial Photo of Newgrange.

Photo: 2 @ Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland.
reflected in the literature, for there are numerous instances where the spirits of the underworld play a vital role in aspects of kingship, warfare, exploits and daily activities.\(^{175}\) The underground world of the Tuatha Dé was not only perceived of as a magical spirit world in which the immortal Tuatha Dé lived, but also as the land of the dead.\(^{176}\) The passage-grave of Newgrange is frequently referred to in medieval literature as a síd (i.e. Síd in Broga ‘the fairy-mound of the Brug’), and the same is also true of Crúachu (i.e. Síd Crúachan, which probably refers to Rathcroghan mound itself).\(^{177}\) The medieval identification of these monuments as reilce, fertai and also side implies that they would have been interpreted as the houses and palaces of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and as the entrances to the underworld wherein dwelled these mythological beings.

The association with the landscape may run much deeper, however. From analysis of three dindshenchas on Brug na Bóinne (one of which includes the dindshenchas following SnR in LU), it becomes strikingly obvious that the names of many mythological beings associated with the Boyne Valley in the literature were also synonymous with the monuments therein (see also Map 4.5). The prose dindshenchas on Brug best highlights this concept (included below in translation):

Of the remarkable things of Brug, this: The House (Bed?) (Long) of Forann’s daughter. The Monument (Lecht) of the Dagda. The Rampart (Mur) of the Morrígain. The monument (Lecht) of the Máta: from its colptha (shinbone) Inber Colptha is called. The Barc of


\(^{176}\) For a discussion of the Tuatha Dé with the world of the síd and the land of the dead: G. A. Smith, The Function of the Living Dead in Medieval Norse and Celtic Literature, Death and Desire (Lampeter, 2007), 23–32.

\(^{177}\) Brug is commonly juxtaposed with síd in Irish literature. For example, in the LL is an entire tract dating to the Old-Irish period known as De Gabál in t-Síd ‘The Taking of the Síd’ (i.e. Brug na Bóinne), and it was one of the remscéla ‘fore-tales’ to the TBC. See J. Koch, Celtic Culture (Santa Barbara, 2006), 573. Brug is also referred to as Síd in Broga in the Bodleian dindshenchas on Cnogba: ‘The Bodleian Dindshenchas’, Stokes, 506.
Crimthann Nia Náir, for he was buried therein.\textsuperscript{178} The Tomb (\textit{fert}) of Fedlimid the Lawgiver.

The Cairn (\textit{Carngal}) of Conn of the Hundred Battles. The Grave (\textit{comfot}) of Cairbre Lifechar.

The Cooking-place (\textit{fulacht}) of Fiacha Sraibtine, etc.

The story of the Brug still: The Bed (\textit{Imdae}) of the Dagda in the first place. Thereafter the Two Paps (\textit{Da Cích}) of the Morrígain. The place wherein Cermaid of the Honey-mouth, son of the Dagda, was born. The Tomb (\textit{fert}) of Boind wife of Nechtán son of Nuada. 'Tis she that brought with her the little hound named Dabilla, whence Dabilla’s Hill (\textit{Cnoc Dabilla}) is so called. The Mound (\textit{Duma}) of Tresc. The Tomb (\textit{fert}) of Eslam the Dagda’s brehon, which is today called \textit{Ferta Patraic}. The Comb and Casket (\textit{Cír & Cuirrell}) of the Dagda’s wife, i.e. the two hills (\textit{da cnoc}). The tomb (\textit{Ferta}) of Aed Luirgnoch the Dagda’s son. The Cave (\textit{derc}) of Bualc the Little. The Monument (\textit{lecht}) of Cellach son of Mael-coba. The Monument (\textit{Lecht}) of the steed of Cinaed son of Írgalach. The Prison (\textit{Carcar}) of Liath Macha. The Glen of the Máta, that was a tortoise, as some say. The Stone (\textit{Leac}) of Buide son of Muirid, the place where his head is. The stone (\textit{Leac}) of Bénn (?), that is, the monument on which the Mata fell: seven score feet had he and seven heads. \textit{Duma na Crám} ‘The Mound of the Bones (of Mata)’. The Stone-wall (\textit{Caisel}) of Oengus son of Crundmael. The Shot (\textit{Rout}) of Mider’s Eye, etc.\textsuperscript{179}

The personal names recorded in this \textit{dindshenchas} are mythological characters, except for two individuals, Cellach mac Mafle Coba and Cináed mac Írgalig, who were historical kings of Tara.\textsuperscript{180} Similar references to these monuments and the personal names associated with them are also recorded in the two metrical \textit{dindshenchas} of \textbf{Brug}. In the \textit{dindshenchas} poem by Cináed húa hArtacáin following \textit{SnR}, the Grave of Matha, the bone of Inber Colptha, the burial-place of Tuathal Techtmár, Conn

\textsuperscript{178} Stokes, ‘The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas’, 292-3 translates \textit{barc} as ‘palace’. \textit{Barc} means ‘ship, boat-shaped’. It may referred to a boat-shaped mound.


\textsuperscript{180} Cellach mac Mafle-Coba († 658) belonged to the Cenél Conaill, and Cináed mac Írgalig († 728) was a king of Tara from the Síl nÁedo Sláine. See \textit{AU} 658.1; 728.1. On Cináed mac Írgalig see Swift, ‘\textit{Óenach Tailten}, the Blackwater Valley and the Uí Néill Kings of Tara,’ 111-12.
Monuments in the Boyne Valley. Archaeological inventory of sites based on O’Kelly, *Illustrated Guide to Newgrange*, map 44. The names of these monuments (e.g. A, B, etc.) are the standard archaeological references to these monuments.
Cetcáthach and Cairbre Lifechair are also recounted, and in the other metrical dindshenchas on Brug attributed to Macnia mac Oengusa, burial-sites such as Fert Escláim and the grave of Cellach are mentioned.\footnote{181} Though unfortunately we cannot identify all of the monuments in the area north of the bend in the Boyne associated with the mythological beings mentioned in the prose dindshenchas above, we can at least identify a few. The Lecht in Dagda was certainly another name for the passage-grave of Newgrange. The Da Cích na Morrígna ‘two paps of the Morrígán’ (synonymous with the Dá Cích rígnai ind ríg ‘the two paps of the king’s consort’ in the metrical dindshenchas of Macnia mac Oengusa), the site where Cermait the son of the Dagda was born, is certainly identified with the two satellite mounds immediately west of Newgrange referred to in modern archaeological surveys as sites K and L.\footnote{182} Identifying the remainder would be sheer guesswork.

The above dindshenchas illustrates that the Boyne Valley monuments were regarded as the houses, ramparts, monuments and tombs of mythological characters in the medieval Irish mindset. Close examination suggests that the names of these monuments in this dindshenchas and the two related metrical dindshenchas on Brug were in actuality micro-toponyms. In other words, the Lecht in Dagda, Mur na Morrígna, Fert Feidlimthi Rechtmaier, Fert mBoinne, etc. were names applied to specific monuments in the region around Newgrange north of the bend in the Boyne. Furthermore, these monument-names seem to be derived from the names of the mythological people associated with them. The individuals said to be interred in Brug in SnR may also have been the names of monuments in the Boyne Valley. This association would have been important when recounting the legends of these

\footnote{181 MD, II, 10-25 (Brug I and II).} \footnote{182 O’Kelly, Illustrated Guide to Newgrange, 71.}
mythological characters, in that stories and histories could be conveyed with reference to particular monuments in this landscape.

A similar interpretation of the monuments around Rathcroghan is paralleled in the texts ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan. The mythological people believed to be buried beneath Crúachu, however, were the Clann Éremóin. In the first poem of ANÍ attributed to Torna Éces, each stanza is dedicated to a famous individual said to be buried beneath Crúachu. In this poem the poet implies that the individuals named were all buried in the Rathcroghan mound itself. For example, it is said of Mac Cuill, Mac Gréni and Mac Cecht: *i rRáith Cruachan donoscelt | ni cheil úathad in óenlec[ht] ‘In the Rath of Crúacha they are concealed. | Not a few does the single grave conceal!’ (LU 2833-4). A following stanza states that *tóeb fri tóeb atá in rí ‘side by side reclines that king’ (LU 2839), and Eocho Airem and Eocho Fedlech were said to be buried *isind leith túaid a Chrúacho ‘In the north side, O Chrúachú!’ (LU 2842). The poem concludes that there were ‘fifty mounds around the hill of Crúachan’ and that there were fifty people buried in each mound. But not everyone said to be buried at Crúachu was interred in the Rathcroghan mound, and Nath Í’s grave from context appears to be distinct (LU 2845). The second poem of ANÍ attributed to Dorban when he is crossing the óenach of Crúachu follows a similar theme, except in this poem we find the statements that beneath every mound in the óenach (discussed in greater detail below) are buried kings and queens, and that the nobles of Mide were buried in Brug, and that the ‘true’ Ulaid were buried beneath Tailtiu.

It would also appear from ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan that many of the monuments in the Rathcroghan complex were micro-toponyms qualified by the
names of famous individuals believed to be buried beneath them.\textsuperscript{183} In the literature where numerous people are said to be buried beneath a particular monument, it may have been considered a poetic skill to enumerate these names, such as in the poem by Torna Éces in ANÍ. By recounting the names of these mythological characters, this invokes the memory of their genealogy. This is illustrated by the lists of the people named in ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan, and also in the lists of the mythological individuals said to be buried at Brug in SnR, such as the Dagda, his three sons (Oengus, Cermaid and Aed), Lug, Ollam, Étaín, etc. The association of multiple individuals (each of whom are related to a particular dynasty in the mythological genealogies) indicates that when telling the legends about these monuments entire genealogies and mythological histories could be elaborated upon. Medieval Irish society still relied on oral transmission, and as Cooney observes about oral societies, ‘the main way to recount history is by genealogy and the most important memory prompt is the landscape, the landscape is history.’\textsuperscript{184} SnR, ANÍ and the dindshenchas tracts indicate these places were not only viewed as the burial-grounds of mythological people, but as the cemeteries of entire dynasties rooted in mythographical tradition. In comparison with the genealogies from external sources and the brief list of names recorded alongside each respective place-name in SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan, it is clear that the authors’ of these texts had these genealogies in mind during composition, for they demonstrate the chronological relationship of these individuals to these sites, and they generally agree with the personal names and the locations of their burials. The tradition in medieval Ireland on this subject was a form of teaching and transmitting history.

\textsuperscript{183} Cf. Waddell, Rathcroghan: Archaeological and Geophysical Survey, 222, where the same conclusion is suggested.  
\textsuperscript{184} Cooney, Landscapes of Neolithic Ireland, 90.
Though our texts state that Tailtiu was the cemetery of the Ulaid, they provide little more narrative except that the descendants of Ollam Fotla were buried there. In comparison with a dindshenchas on Tailtiu, however, it would appear that the interpretation of the monuments followed the same pattern as those of Brug and Crúachu. In this dindshenchas it is stated that Eocho Garb and his wife, along with many other deceased, were buried beneath the stone walls of Tailtiu. Many of the monuments around Tailtiu were also named after individuals, such as Coirthe Colmáin ‘the pillar of Colmán’ (which was probably a standing stone) and Carn Conaill ‘the Cairn of Conall’.\textsuperscript{185} Relec Carmuin suggests that there may have been a similar interpretation of the enclosures at Carman:

\begin{quote}
One and twenty raths—theyir fame endures— | where lies the host under earth’s sod, | and their count of graveyards (railec) right famous | where lies the beloved of noble Carmun.\textsuperscript{186}
\end{quote}

The folk-etymology of place-names preserved in medieval Irish literature (such as the dindshenchas) demonstrate that place-names containing a personal name were commonly believed to have been derived from the name of the person believed to be buried there. This form of folk-etymology is attested from the earliest sagas such as the TBC to the later dindshenchas. In many instances the personal names included in SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and the dindshenchas tracts were probably micro-toponyms or names applied to monuments in these landscapes in medieval Ireland.

The landscapes and the prehistoric monuments of the prímreilce were probably viewed as distinctly pagan landscapes in medieval Ireland, except possibly for Óenach Colmán Ela and Óenach Dúni Fintain which had ecclesiastical

\textsuperscript{185} MD, IV, 154-5.
\textsuperscript{186} MD, III, 24-4.
associations. This interpretation is not only emphasised by the personal names associated with these places, but also by specific glosses and references. For example, in the introduction to SnR when Cormac expresses his intent not be interred in Brug, scribe M records the gloss ‘because it was a cemetery of idol-worshippers’. This implies that a medieval Irish audience would have regarded Brug and the associated monumental complexes as pagan in nature. The descriptions of Cormac’s burial also seem to highlight the interpretation of the area within the bend of the Boyne and the landscape of Brug as a pagan landscape, as was previously discussed concerning Cormac’s burial at Ros na Rig. This interpretation is further highlighted in SnR by the following statement in the list of the primreilce ‘before the coming of the Faith’, which signals that they were distinctly viewed as the burial-grounds of pre-Christian dynasties. This medieval perception is further bolstered by the fact that ecclesiastical sites are not found at these places. At Rathcroghan, it is significant that the nearest ecclesiastical site is situated at Templemoyle on the very fringes of the complex.187 There are likewise no early or later ecclesiastical sites in the region of Brug. In contrast to this, the early ecclesiastical site of Donaghpatrick is located just south of Tailtiu, and was intricately associated with Tailtiu at an early date.188 It is possible that some of these sites were regarded with a sense of superstition, and this may be supported by the fact that they are also known as sǐde in the literature. It would not be unlikely that superstition of the subterranean spirit-world hindered the foundation ofecclesiastical sites in these areas, and they essentially became separated as landscapes assigned to the pre-Christian spirits who still inhabited them in the popular imagination.

188 Swan, Teltown. On the relationship of Donaghpatrick to Óenach Tailten and Patrick’s blessing to Óenach Tailten in the Patrician material, see Swift, ‘Óenach Tailten, the Blackwater Valley and the Úi Néill Kings of Tara,’ 109-116.
It seems conclusive that one of the many interpretations of the *prímreilce* was the belief that mythological beings were ‘buried’ beneath the monuments in these ancient landscapes. In many instances, the names of these mythological individuals were probably applied to certain monuments and used as qualifiers in micro-toponyms. This firmly associates these legendary people and their pedigrees with specific monuments in the medieval Irish imagination, which is reflected in the contemporary literature and mythology. It further defines these places as *prímreilce* ‘chief cemeteries’, not only in terms of the monumental complexes preserved at these sites, but also because they were believed to be the familial cemeteries of the mythological ancient royal dynasties of Ireland. These *prímreilce* in many cases were not only the symbolic capitals of their respective regions, but they were also the places where the individuals renowned in mythology once ruled from and were buried, and the notion that their remains were forever entombed within the monuments at these places demonstrates their relevance to these landscapes in the medieval Irish view of their historical past.

**The Irish Óenach and Place-Names of the Prímreilce**

The most obvious feature these place-names have in common is that almost all of the *prímreilce* place-names are at some stage or another in the literature associated with the descriptive term *óenach*. Therefore, we must assume that at the time these texts were composed many, if not all of them, were likely to have been *óenach*-sites. Because the *óenach* is frequently depicted in medieval sources, we have a relatively good idea of their function in society, and this immediately signposts a number of medieval social customs that would have taken place at these sites. These customs should be analysed alongside the place-names, for these practices would have
certainly conditioned the interpretations of these places. The Irish óenach, pl. óenaige (later aenach, modern aonach), generally translated as ‘fair, assembly, theatre, games’, were large, popular assemblies for the entire túath, several túatha, a province, or even, in theory, the whole of Ireland.\(^{189}\) The modern Irish understanding of aonach is a fair with a market. The medieval óenach supported a number of activities, such as: business transactions (commercial and legal), political forums and debates, markets, an alehouse, games and races (especially horse and chariot races), as well as dancing, musical, poetical and theatrical performances.\(^{190}\) These were all common features of the medieval Irish óenach. From the literature it would appear that most óenaige were held annually, or in the case of Óenach Carmuin, every three years.\(^{191}\) A passage from Críth Gablach implies that an annual óenach should be convened by the king of one or many subject túatha, and that it had to be done by the request of the people.\(^{192}\) The people of the túath were also responsible for the arrangement of the óenach, and every person was entitled to attend it.\(^{193}\) The major óenaige such as Óenach Carmuin (in the territory of the Laigin), Óenach Crúachan (in Connacht), Óenach Tailten (in the Uí Néill province of Brega), Óenach Cúli (in Munster), Óenach Colmán (in Tír Cell but also associated with Munster), and Óenach Emna (in the territory of the Ulaid) were held for each respective region. They were probably the largest of the óenaige in these territories. They were almost certainly convened by the high-kings of each respective kingdom.\(^{194}\) The óenach of Tailtiu was


\(^{190}\) S. L. Fry, Burial in Medieval Ireland, 900-1500 (Dublin, 1999), 40-63.

\(^{191}\) MD, III, 10-11 (120). See Binchy, ’The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara,’ 125.

\(^{192}\) Críth Gablach, ed. D. A. Binchy (Dublin, 1970), 20 [499-501].

\(^{193}\) B. Jaski, Early Irish Kingship and Succession (Dublin, 2000), 51.

\(^{194}\) Relec Carmuin lists the number of sub-kings who attended Óenach Carmuin as: eight from Dothra, twelve from Maistiu, five from Fid Gaible and six from Raigne. This implies that Óenach Carmuin was for the entirety of Leinster. See Joyce, A Social History of Ancient Ireland, 441-2.
overseen by the **Tara** monarchs, and it was a required function intricately connected with the kingship of **Tara**.Óenach Carmuin was also connected with the Leinster kingship and according to the verse introductions in *Relec Carmuin* the Leinster kings were expected to hold Óenach Carmuin or else suffer a serious set of defects (*LL* 25118-20). It is also recorded in a poem that the kings of Connacht oversaw the òenach of **Crúachan**.Óenach Carmuin was also connected with the Leinster kingship and according to the verse introductions in *Relec Carmuin* the Leinster kings were expected to hold Óenach Carmuin or else suffer a serious set of defects (*LL* 25118-20). It is also recorded in a poem that the kings of Connacht oversaw the òenach of **Crúachan**.Óenach Carmuin was also connected with the Leinster kingship and according to the verse introductions in *Relec Carmuin* the Leinster kings were expected to hold Óenach Carmuin or else suffer a serious set of defects (*LL* 25118-20). It is also recorded in a poem that the kings of Connacht oversaw the òenach of **Crúachan**.Óenach Carmuin was also connected with the Leinster kingship and according to the verse introductions in *Relec Carmuin* the Leinster kings were expected to hold Óenach Carmuin or else suffer a serious set of defects (*LL* 25118-20). It is also recorded in a poem that the kings of Connacht oversaw the òenach of **Crúachan**.

Some of the Irish òenaige are well-documented throughout the medieval period, particularly Óenach Tailten and Óenach Carmuin, and the records of these sites provide a glimpse of the functions and events at these fairs. Óenach Tailten is probably first attested in the *Lives of St Brigit* and in the *VSC*. It is recorded frequently in the Annals from the eighth century onwards, and it was often noted in the ensuing centuries when it was not held or disturbed, particularly in the ninth century. As Binchy has described, Óenach Tailten must have been ‘a genuine historical institution’. In the poem of *Relec Carmuin* details of the events of the òenach of Carmuin are recorded. In six stanzas of *Relec Carmuin* the primary events of the seven days of the fair are listed: the fair of the saints on the first day, the fair of the high-kings on the second, on the third the game of the women of Leinster, the fourth was dedicated to the Loígsi and the Fothairt (principal Leinster families), the fifth day (or here termed the cōiced cluchi ‘fifth game’) was for the princes, the sixth for the ‘honourable companies of Erin’, and the last game held was a horse race of the Clann Conda. We are told in the following stanza that each day of the week were

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196 E. O’Curry, *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, 2 (Dublin, 1873), 343-5.
197 *Vita I*, § 39; *BB* § 40 and *VSC*, iii.3.
198 For disturbances of Óenach Tailten: *AU* 717.6, 827.5, 831.5, 873.6, 876.3, 878.7, 888.10, 889.3. Óenach Tailten was convened again by the Tara king Niall mac Aedha in the tenth century: *AU* 916.5, and was disturbed again in 927: *AU* 927.4. It was revived in the eleventh century by Máel Sechnaill II: *AU* 1007.10.
199 Binchy, ‘The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara,’ 115.
200 *MD*, III, 14-17 (170-188).
seven distinct games, and these formed the primary events of the óenach.\textsuperscript{201} The
*dindshenchas* on Óenach Tailten implies that there must have been a similar
programme of events at the óenach of Tailtiu.\textsuperscript{202} Games appear to have been an
integral part of the óenach, and this is reflected in the literature (fact and fictional). In
the tale *Fled Bricend*, for example, Cú Chulainn won a victory three times at the
games of Óenach Crúachan.\textsuperscript{203} Games such as horse racing (perhaps the most
widely attested óenach event) are frequently associated with óenach-places in
medieval literature. There are a number of references to races and horse-racing in
Relec Carmuin, and in the LL poem Óenach indiu luid in rí, horse-races form the
setting of events, and the prizes distributed are weapons.\textsuperscript{204} Chariot-racing may also
have been one of the games performed at the óenach, as this is attested in the
*dindshenchas* on Tailtiu.\textsuperscript{205}

It would also appear that the óenach generally coincided with the agricultural
cycle, and according to Relec Carmuin, the *dindshenchas* of Tailtiu and other sources
we know that they were held on the first of August, namely, at the beginning of
harvest time when the first crops were ripened, but not when the harvest was
complete.\textsuperscript{206} This coincides exactly with the date of the Lugnasad ceremony, one of
the quarterly Celtic festivals of the year.\textsuperscript{207} Lugnasad is derived from the name of the
Celtic deity Lug, and means something like ‘Lug’s assembly’, and one account

\begin{footnotes}
\footnoteref{MD. III. 16-7 (189-192).}
\footnoteref{MD. IV, 150-1.}
\footnoteref{Fled Bricend, ed. & tr. G. Henderson, ITS 2 (London, 1899), 84-5 (§ 66).}
\footnoteref{‘Find and the Phantoms’, Stokes, 291. Cf. MD. III, 12-13 (152) for a reference to glan-armaib ‘pure
weapons’, though this stanza does not explicitly state that they were prizes for the games; ibid., 14-15
(159-60): [a fair rich with streamers, | with saddles, with bridle-horses.]; ibid., 18-19 (211-12): [they
would hold seven races, for a glorious object, | seven days in the week.]; ibid., 22-3 (286) ‘and horse-
racing of Ossory’. For references to horse-racing at Óenach Clochair: LL, IV, p. 994 [29101-112].}
\footnoteref{MD. IV, 150-1: ‘co ceol charput’ [with music of chariots].}
\footnoteref{MD. III, 18-19 (209); MD. IV, 150-1. See MacNeill, *The Festival of Lugnasa*, 43-66.}
\footnoteref{The other quarterly agricultural festivals included Imbolc at the beginning of spring, Beltaine the
first summer festival when the flocks were taken to summer pastures, and Samhain, when the harvests
were completed on the first of November.}
\end{footnotes}
suggest the name *Lugnasad* was interpreted as ‘Lug’s commemoration, remembering, recollection or death-feast’. These assemblies were probably pre-Christian in origin and it is likely that they had a religious element to them. It would appear from the medieval literature that they continued in practice well into the Christian era, and in many cases elements of these assemblies were simply brought within a Christian context. For example, the first day of *Óenach Carmuin* was known as ‘the fair of the saints’. The *óenach* of *Tailtiu* also served as the occasion for a synod in medieval Ireland, and there are many instances in the literature where the Church played a vital role in the *óenach*. For example, in the *Lives of St Brigit*, Brigit helps to resolve an ecclesiastical matter involving one of St Patrick’s bishops before a gathering of the Uí Néill at *Tailtiu* (almost certainly the *óenach* of *Tailtiu*). In *VSC*, Columba is excommunicated at *Tailtiu*, and had to return the following year to the same assembly to defend himself. In one instance in 811 the *óenach* of *Tailtiu* was not held and ‘neither horse nor chariot arriving there’ because of a boycott by the community of *Tamlachtae* (modern Tallaght) after the Uí Néill ‘violated the sanctuary of *Tamlacht* of Mael Ruain’ (for which they had to pay many gifts to this community in retribution). This account illustrates that the Church played a vital role in the staging of the *óenach* of *Tailtiu*, and that they had the power to thwart these assemblies.

A recent study of the term *óenach* in the *dindshenchas* and other literary sources by Hicks and Ward Elder suggests that the term *óenach* (and the *óenach*...
games) is primarily used in connection with *Lugnasad* celebrations. This is further supported by the definition of *Lugnasad* in Cormac’s Glossary:

\[\text{Lughnasad .i. násad Loga maic Ethlend .i. aonach nofertha lais im \(t\)h)aite foghmairin gach bliadhain im thoidecht Lughnasad. Cluiche nó aonach, is dó is ainm násad.}\]

Many *óenaige* and the games of an *óenach* are possibly connected to the *Lugnasad* festival. To clarify these concepts: *Lugnasad* is the name of the festival, and these festivals and games were celebrated at an *óenach*, many of which were held in *primreilce*. This association is crucial, and from this we might assume that the *óenach*-place-names in *SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Cruachan, Relec Carmuin* and in other sources where the term is affiliated with a place-name were sites where an *óenach* took place during the annual (or tri-annual as with *Óenach Carmuin*) *Lugnasad* festival. The exception may be an *óenach* associated with a saint’s feast day, such as *Óenach Colmáin Ela*.

The *Lugnasad* festival and the *óenaige* are almost always represented as death-related in the literature, and in all accounts they are said to have originated from

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213 Hicks & Ward Elder, ‘Festivals, Deaths, and the Sacred Landscape,’ 312-3. The term *óenach* is seen in the introduction to *Serglige Con Culainn* and is associated with the festival of *Samhain*, but from context though games (*cluchi*) are mentioned there seems to be a greater concentration on feasting (*longad \(\gamma\) tomalt*), which suggest that this celebration was similar to the *Feis Temro* ‘the feast of Tara’, which was traditionally held during *Samhain*. See *Serglige Con Culainn*, ed. M. Dillon (Dublin, 1975), 1.

214 SC, 66-7. [Lugnasad: that is the gathering of Lug mac Ethlend, i.e. an assembly held by him around the beginning of autumn every year about the arrival of Lugnasad. The games or the *óenach*, from these is the name of the festival].

215 The only cases in which I would question this connection is when the term *óenach* is prefixed to the name of a monastery or a saint, which may indicate that it was held around the saint’s feast day. Some examples of this may be *Óenach Colman Ela, Óenach Dúni Fintain* (both discussed above), and *Óenach Cuana meic Nois*. Colman Ela’s feast day is traditionally on 26 September, so if this *óenach* was associated with the saint’s feast day then it could not have been affiliated with *Lugnasad*. See Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 557: ‘Colmán Ela’s feastday, 26 September, was followed exactly a week later by the feast of his nativity, 3 October. It may be suggested that the *óenach* was held at Lynally in the week between the two feasts. This fits the annalistic evidence, since the entry under 827 on the *óenach* of Colmán follows the one about the *óenach* of Tailtiu, and the latter was probably held at the beginning of August.’ For the death of St Colman Ela: *AU* 611.3; *AT* 611; *CS* 611.
lamenting the deceased. This may also explain why the óenach or Lugnasad assemblies were held on the sites of historical cemeteries, or vice versa, in that these landscapes where monuments to the dead are everywhere invoked the practice of commemorating the ancestors through lamentation.\footnote{Binchy, ‘The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara,’ 124.} Hicks and Ward Elder have demonstrated that the death-motif is present in all tales involving Lugnasad with one exception.\footnote{Hicks & Ward Elder, ‘Festivals, Deaths, and the Sacred Landscape,’ 312.} They have observed that characters in tales concerning Lugnasad and the óenaige are generally the same, the two most common being Eochaid (whose name is synonymous with the Dagda) and Lug (renowned as the founder of Lugnasad).\footnote{Ibid., 320-23: The third are Cú Chulainn, Dáire, Midir and Oengus.} They have also pointed out that the ‘deceased’ whose name is preserved in the place-name and whom the óenach was held in honour of was generally a woman or a group of people.\footnote{Ibid., 320-23.} Many of the characters associated with the Lugnasad and the óenaige in medieval literature were the Tuatha Dé Danann or individuals affiliated with them.

According to literary tradition, the famous Óenach Tailten and the games associated with this event were instituted by Lug after his foster-mother (named Tailtiu) died from clearing the Wood of Cuan, which was the site of the óenach afterwards:

\begin{quote}
Conerbait iarst Tailtu hi Taltin, co tordad a hainm fuirri, \(\gamma\) conid hí a fert fil ond forud Thailten sáirthúaid: condénta a cluiche cach a bliadain ic Lug, .i. cóícthiges ria Lugnasad \(\gamma\) cóícthiges íar Lugnasad. Lugnasad, .i. noasad Loga meic Eithnend, ainm in cluiche.\footnote{LG, IV, 116-9: [Thereafter Tailtiu died in Tailtiu, and her name was given to the place, and it is her grave which is north-east from the Seat of Tailtiu: and the games were made every year by Lug, a fortnight before Lugnasad and a fortnight after Lugnasad. Lugnasad, the ‘assembly’ (?) of Lug son of Eithne, is the name of the games.]} \end{quote}
In a *dindshenchas* poem on **Tailtiu** by Cúán úa Lothcháin († 1024) it is specifically stated that the *óenach* was held around the grave of Tailtiu, Lug’s foster-mother, every August on the ‘Lugnasad of Lug’.²²¹ According to the *dindshenchas* of **Nas** (modern **Naas**, Co. Kildare), Lug founded the *óenach* of **Tailtiu** to lament the death of his two wives Nas and Bui, the daughters of Ruadri mac Caite (Nas being buried in **Naas**, and Bui buried in **Cnogba**, modern **Knowth** near **Newgrange**):

> Tancatar slúaig Gáidel nglan | do cháined na mban don brug; | ó Thaltin i tócab tein, | assin dollótar la Lug.

> Máidiud is assin roáis: | ní hé in fáidiud fás fri fés: | óenach Talten, talci gleós, | la cach n-antem beós din bés.²²²

In both instances the games of **Óenach Tailten** were initiated to lament the deceased. Their association with Lug in the literature may further demonstrate the relationship between the *óenach* and the **Lugnasad**. In the verse introduction to *Relec Carmuin* in the **Book of Ballymote** recension are two versions of how **Carman** came to be named. In the first, Carman is held hostage by the Tuatha Dé Danann whilst her sons fled Ireland, and she died of grief: Carman had commanded her captives (the Tuatha Dé) before she died to hold a fair in her honour around her grave, which they upheld. Lug

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²²¹ *MD*, IV, 150-1: [About the Calends of August she died, | on a Monday, on the Lugnasad of Lug; | round her grave from that Monday fourth is held the | chief Fair of noble Erin]. On Cúán úa Lothcháin see C. Downey, ‘The Life of Work of Cúán ua Lothcháin,’ *Ríocht na Midhe*, 19 (2008), 55-78;

²²² *MD*, III, 50-1 (29-44): [The hosts of the pure Gaels came | to bewail the women from the Brug; from Tailtiu where he raised a fire | thence they came with Lug. || They lifted a cry of lamentation perpetually | for the women free from guilt and guile; | the game of wounds was waged by them | untimely, in no merry wise. || Thence grew the boasted gathering—[it is not an empty lamentation with the lips] | the assembly of Taltiu with mighty preparations, | held by every hero moreover according to custom.] On Bui see: T. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The Eponym of Cnogba,’ *Éigse*, 23 (1989), 27-38.
Plate 4.9    The passage grave of Knowth. (*Photograph by Jill Hughes*).

Plate 4.10    Knowth. (*Photograph by Jill Hughes*).
(Laebech), the son of a druid, features in this tale as well as in the *dindshenchas* poem. In the second tale on the origin of the name *Carman*, Carman died whilst driving Eochaid’s seven cows (this latter story is summarised in the *LL* recension of *Relec Carmuin*). If the names Óenach Cúli and Óenach Cúli mná Nechtain are synonymous, then the latter implies that Cúl was a wife of Nechtain and this óenach was named after her, though unfortunately nothing else survives about her in the literature. In the tale *Noínden Ulaid* and in the *dindshenchas* of *Ard Macha* and *Emain Macha*, Macha was forced to an óenach to race against horses because her husband believed she was swifter. Macha was pregnant and after winning the race gave birth to twins, but subsequently cursed the Ulaid with labour pains. In the *dindshenchas* of *Ard Macha*, Macha was buried at *Ard Macha*, and that ‘to bewail her’ the óenach of Macha was held by the Ulaid.

The *dindshenchas* literature on the subject associates death, lamentation and mourning with these assemblies, and implies that their origins began in antiquity with the death of a notable woman. There is the possibility, however, that the death-tales associated with the óenach-sites in the medieval literature may actually reflect practices that were common to the *Lugnasad* festivals during the medieval period. This may have been a prehistoric custom which continued into the Christian period. The *Lugnasad óenaige* were held on the sites of famous ‘historical cemeteries’ rich in prehistoric monuments, and though keening is not included in the list of óenach activities in *Relec Carmuin* (the source which sheds the most light on the events of the

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223 Hicks & Ward Elder, ‘Festivals, Deaths, and the Sacred Landscape,’ 325.
224 Westropp, ‘The Earthworks, Traditions,’158-9. An early king of the Munster dynasty Uí Fidgente was known as Nechtan mac Bréáin. His daughter, Lasair, was the wife of Diarmait mac Cerbaill, and an early queen of Tara. See CGH 152 a 4; A. Connon, ‘Prosography II: A Prosography of the Early Queens of Tara,’ in Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, 294. Lasair was Nechtan’s daughter, so she cannot be identified with the mná Nechtain in this place-name.
226 *MD*, IV, 124-5: [To bewail her—it was a worthy beginning—was held by the Ulaid’s host in full numbers yonder, to all time, the Assembly of Macha (óenach Macha) on the wide plain.]
óenach), it still may have been one aspect of these gatherings. In the dindshenchas of Tailtiu, which we know was composed by Cúán Ua Lothcháin for Máel Sechnaill II at the óenach of Tailtiu in 1007 (see below), we are told mór marb rochaín a chéile | hi relic na rath-Féine ‘many a dead man his mate bewailed in the graveyard of the wealthy Féni’.227 If this passage represents contemporary affairs, this may imply that keening was an actual occurrence at the óenach of Tailtiu, and that it was not necessarily for Tailtiu herself. The ‘graveyard (relic) of the Féni’ may refer to one of the specific earthworks in the area around Tailtiu.228 We are also informed of another peculiar custom in the dindshenchas on the óenach of Tailtiu:

Aisneis do chorthib fer fadb, | fulang caindel d’airi marb; | cnuicc for allmachaib ánnaib | ocus múir for mór-phlágaib.229

The second line ‘bearing of candles to watch the dead’, could possibly refer to a Lugnasad/óenach custom involving the burial-mounds and prehistoric monuments in the places where these gatherings were held: these monumental landscapes may have facilitated such a practice. One stanza in particular in Relec Carmuin also indicates similar customs at the óenach of Carman:

Secht ndumai cen taidliud de | do cháiniud marb co mence, | secht maige tarmain cen tech | fo chluiche Charmain cháintech.230

227 MD, IV, 152-3.
228 For a map of the earthworks in the vicinity of Teltown: Swan, Teltown.
229 MD, IV, 152-3: [Records from pillars over graves decked with arms, bearing of candles to watch the dead, mounds over noble foreigners, and walls built over the dead of great plagues.]
230 MD, III, 24-5: [Seven mounds next, unvisited, | for frequent keening of the dead, | seven plain, purlieus without a house, | under the funeral games of Carman]
Keening is also associated with the óenach of Tailtiu in the dindshenchas poem on Naas. In this poem, we are told that when the people gathered for the assembly of Tailtiu: *ní hé in fáidiud fás fri fés* ‘it is not an empty lamentation with the lips’ and:

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Ba hed násad Loga láin | cásad sona, sáim nach súail, | fáidiud find-gel fúamnach Fáil, |
cáiniud ingen Rúadrach rúaid.\(^{231}\)
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The *dindshenchas* of Relec Carmuin focuses primarily on the games of the óenach and history of this assembly, but it also refers to keening and funeral-games. The *dindshenchas* poems on Naas and the Tailtiu óenach paint a similar picture of the nature of these assemblies, and depict them as being intimately connected to keening and conducting such activities around the prehistoric burial-mounds in these landscapes. The association of death and lamentation is emphasised in the sources on Lugnasad and the óenach. These poems not only give us an indication of the perception of these sites by the medieval Irish viewers, but they also allow us to glimpse some of the customs that may have been common practice at these places during the period in which these texts were composed, and these traditions may have further facilitated the interpretation of these place-names as prímreilce.

**Political Affairs, Toponymic Propaganda and the Óenaige**

The majority of the sources which describe the Irish óenach are Middle Irish, and only provide evidence about these fairs in the periods in which these texts were composed. We know very little about the nature of the óenaige in the Old-Irish

\(^{231}\) *MD*, III, 50-1: [That was the gathering of accomplished Lug, | happy satisfaction, no small pleasure, | the lamentation of the fair-skinned vocal women of Fáil, | the keening for the daughters of Ruadri the red (i.e. Nas and Bui).] Fáil refers to Lia Fáil ‘the stone of Fáil’.
period, though many of these fairs were certainly held during this era and continued to be a traditional practice. The *dindshenchas* poets clearly believed these fairs were ancient institutions.\(^{232}\) The annals frequently note when these events were not held, so presumably the *óenaige* were regular annual assemblies for most of the early medieval period. There are numerous references in the chronicles to the disturbance of the *óenach* of *Tailtiu* in the ninth and tenth centuries, and the *dub-óenach nDonchada* the ‘Black Fair of Donnchad’ (also mentioned in the poem by Cúán úa Lothcán), which took place in 927 essentially halted this fair, and it was not held for nearly a century afterwards.\(^{233}\) The *óenach* of *Tailtiu* was revived in 1007 by Máel Sechnaill II (c. 980-1022), the last Southern Uí Néill high-king of *Tara*. This was noted in the Annals not only for the revival, but also because it must have served as a public synod, because Ferdomnach was consecrated abbot of nearby *Kells* ‘by the counsel of the men of Ireland in that assembly’.\(^{234}\) The *dindshenchas* poem of *Tailtiu* by Cúán úa Lothcán was composed specifically for this event, and he praises his patron, Máel Sechnaill, at the end of the poem and credits him with reviving the *óenach* of *Tailtiu* by claiming ‘he raised the Fair of *Tailtiu* from the sod’.\(^{235}\) Máel Sechnaill may have chosen to re-institute the *óenach* of *Tailtiu* to assert his dominance in Irish political affairs. He and his contemporary rival Brian Boru of Munster had conducted numerous expeditions into one another’s territories in the

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\(^{232}\) *MD*, III, 8-9 & 12-13: for example, the *óenach* of Carman was believed to have been held for at least ‘five fair hundred and four score years’ before the birth of Christ and fifty from Érimón until Patrick, ‘five times forty’ from the time of Bresal Broenach. The poet dates the origin of this fair to the period of the Tuatha Dé Danann. *MD*, IV, 158-9: the *dindshenchas* of *Óenach Tailten* by Cúan also states that there were ‘five hundred fairs’ of Tailtiu from the *óenach* of Patrick in Macha to the *dub-óenach nDonchada* ‘the Black Fair of Donchad’.

\(^{233}\) Binchy, ‘The Fair of Tailtiu and the Feast of Tara,’ 118-120 has pointed out that between 717 and 927 there are eight instances of the *óenach* of Tailtiu not being held, and in five cases it was due to internal strife between the Northern and Southern Uí Néill. In 916 the *óenach* of Tailtiu was briefly renewed by Niall mac Aed when he became king of Tara (*AU* 916.5), but halted by the ‘Black Fair of Donnchad’ in 927: *AU* 927.4 and *MD*, IV, 158-9.

\(^{234}\) *AU* 1007.10.

\(^{235}\) *MD*, IV, 160-1.
decade before the eleventh century. By the turn of the century an agreement had been struck between them to divide the high-kingship, Máel Sechnaill taking the northern half and Brian taking the southern half; afterwards the two often collaborated on military efforts.\textsuperscript{236} In the year prior to the revival of the \(\text{oënach}\) of Tailltiu in 1006, Brian Boru took his army on circuit of Ireland to impose his overlordship on the northern kingdoms, and one of his stops included the \(\text{oënach}\) of Conailli (in Ulaid territory), and by the time of Lugnasad they reached Belach Dún in west of Kells.\textsuperscript{237} Three years after the revival of the \(\text{oënach}\) of Tailltiu in 1010 Brian Boru took the pledges of Leth Cuind ‘the northern half of Ireland’.\textsuperscript{238} Is it possible that Brian Boru was present at Máel Sechnaill’s revival of the \(\text{oënach}\) of Tailltiu in 1007? In the end of the poem by Cúan in the list of kings who did not attend the \(\text{oënach}\), Brian is not included, and in the stanzas concerning the seats of the royal dynasties of Ireland, the ‘chamber for mighty Munster’ left of the kings of Tara (i.e. the Uí Néill kings) is mentioned first in the list.\textsuperscript{239}

In fact, from context it seems very likely that SnR and possibly ANÍ were composed during the reign of Máel Sechnaill II. Though there is no indication or contexts in which we can specifically attribute SnR to the reign of Máel Sechnaill II, the place-names and the concern with the dynasties of Leth Cuind, the northern-half of Ireland, and Máel Sechnaill’s direct descendants according to tradition, may be a clue. If this text were intended to be used at an \(\text{oënach}\) (discussed below), and considering the date of the language and the MS history of the text, the most likely

\textsuperscript{236} AU 1002.8: Brian and Máel Sechnaill jointly led an army to Dún Delca to demand hostages. See M. Ni Mhaonaigh, Brian Boru: Ireland’s Greatest King? (Stroud, 2007), 35.

\textsuperscript{237} AU 1006.4. The \(\text{oënach}\) of Conailli in this entry may have been an occasion rather than a place-name. Hogan, OG, 558: suggests it was located in Conaille Muirthemne.

\textsuperscript{238} AU 1010.4.

\textsuperscript{239} MD, IV, 154-5 &162-3. Bhreathnach & Murray, ‘The Airgíallia Charter Poem: Edition’, 128-9 (3): [the king of Munster presided over the great south of the banqueting-hall (mòrdescert fleutaige), the king of Leinster facing him…]. Many kings who did not attend the \(\text{oënach}\) were Máel Sechnaill’s enemies. For example, Flaithbertach (úa Néill), a king of Ailech, invaded Brega two years later as far as the River Boyne: AU 1009.6.
time of composition would have been during the reign of Máel Sechnaill II, possibly even for the revived *óenach* of 1007. It has also been suggested that the tale *Baile in Scáil* was composed during Máel Sechnaill’s reign, and many of the place-names in *SnR* are also included in *Baile in Scáil*.\(^{240}\) In the words of Ni Mhaonaigh, ‘Imaginative writing flourished, therefore, in Máel Sechnaill’s time.’\(^ {241}\) It is also worth pointing out that Máel Sechnaill was from the Clann Cholmáin (located in Mide), who traced their descent from Níall Noígíallach, whose burial at Ochan is given special, distinct attention in *SnR*. As the ruler of Tara, it would not be unlikely that Máel Sechnaill would have been interested in the history of Brug and the burial-sites of other famous kings of Tara in Brega. Brug and the associated landscape may also have been traditionally connected in some way to the *óenach* of Tailtiu. A line in the *Rennes Dindshenchas* on Naas states:

\[
\text{Targlaim Lug slogu Gaidel leis o Tailltin co fiad in Broga do cained na mban sin im kalaind august cacha bliadana...}^{242}\]

This implies that the mourners who gathered to lament Nas came from the region between Tailtiu and Brug. Whether or not an *óenach* was also held at Brug we can only speculate, though this term is used in association with Brug in *Ráith Crúachan*.

It is also possible that the *óenach* of Carman may have been revived at about the same time as Tailtiu, perhaps in imitation of Máel Sechnaill’s great revival in 1007. *Relec Carmuin* reflects a number of different reigns of kings of Leinster, but Gwynn has suggested that the *óenach dédenach* ‘the last fair’ referred to in the poem

\[^{240}\text{Ni Mhaonaigh, }\text{Brian Boru, 49-50. Cf. C. Downey, ‘Intertextuality in Echtra mac nEchdach Muigmédnein,’ in Carey et alii (eds.), Cín Chille Cáile, 88.}\]
\[^{241}\text{Ibid., 50.}\]
\[^{242}\text{‘The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas’, Stokes, 317-8: [Lug gathered the hosts of the Gaels from Tailltiu to Fiad in Broga “the land of the Brug”, to bewail those women on the first day of August in each year...].}\]
may be the óenach of Carman that was convened by Donnchad mac Gilla Pátraic after he became king of the Laigen in 1033, and that the poem itself may have been composed for the óenach of Conchobar úa Conchobair Fhailge held in 1079.\textsuperscript{243}

The place-names, the contents associated with them and the emphasis on certain names may also provide clues about the respective audiences of each text, which can be related to political events of the period. Relec Carmuin, for example, clearly has a Leinster bias, as it primarily focuses on Carman itself and Leinster kingdoms. From comparing the place-names recorded in SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúaechan, it is noticeable that the primary sites these texts focus on are Crúachu and Brug, two of the major ceremonial centres in Leth Cuind. Brug is the primary focus of SnR followed by Crúachu. In ANÍ and Ráith Crúaechan, Crúachu is the main place-name. In each text very little emphasis is placed on the cemeteries of the Laigin, Mumu and the Ulaid. This implies these texts have an Uí Néill and Connachta bias. Brug was in the territory of the Úi Chonaing, a branch of the Síl nÁedo Sláine, and Connacht with its capital at Crúachu was viewed as the original heartland of the Uí Néill in the fourth and fifth centuries.\textsuperscript{244} The Uí Néill and the Connachta were related according to the genealogies and mythographical tradition, and trace their descent to Êrimóin. As the ruling dynasty of Ireland in the early Middle Ages, the Uí Néill, in the words of Ó Corráin, ‘paraded illustrious ancestors and their claim to precedence was expressed in an elaborate mythography that passed for history’.\textsuperscript{245}

Other evidence of the Uí Néill and Connachta bias can be gleaned from the treatment of the personal names in these texts. Though the primreilce of the

\textsuperscript{243} Gwynn, \textit{MD}, III, 471; \textit{AU} 1033.4; \textit{AFM} 1079.7. See Ó Murchada, ‘Carman, Site of Óenach Carmain,’ 59-60.

\textsuperscript{244} Byrne, \textit{Irish Kings and High-Kings}, 230.

traditional cóiceda of Ireland was part of the authors’ scheme, there is less focus on the descendents of Éber. The Clann Dedad are included amongst the men of Munster in this list, but according to the constructed genealogies they were descendents of Érimón, and therefore were related to the Clann Éremóin or the people of Leth Cuind.

The only cemetery noted for the Laigin (or in some cases the Galióin) is Óenach Ailbe/Carmuin, but, all of these senchas agree that Labraid Loingsech, the legendary founder of the Laigin, was buried at Crúachu. This can be attributed to the rhetoric of the genealogies, in which Labraid is a descendant of Érimón and directly related to the kings of Tara. The notion that Labraid was buried at Crúachu might not have been pleasing to a medieval Leinsterman, however, especially considering the medieval Irish association of the dead with place-names and place-lore. The treatment of the Laigin in SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan may also reflect events during Máel Sechnaill’s reign. There was much contention during the early eleventh century between the Úi Néill and the Leinstermen, and it could be that this political tension manifested itself in the treatment of place and personal names in these texts.²⁴⁶

The Ulaid receive similar treatment in these texts. Though special attention is given to Conchobor’s grave at Slea in SnR, these texts all agree that the burial-ground of the Ulaid was Tailtiu. The Ulaid trace their descent from Ollam Fotla, who was a king of Tara according to tradition, but the emblematic political and ritual centre of the Ulaid in the early medieval period was at Emain Macha and Ard Macha. Tailtiu, considerably further south in Brega, was the principle location of the óenach of Tailtiu convened by Úi Néill kings of Tara. So why would these texts claim that the Ulaid were buried beneath the ramparts of Tailtiu? An Úi Néill declaration of dominance may be implied through this rhetoric, in asserting that they were holding

²⁴⁶ For expeditions led by Máel Sechnaill II against the Laigin: AU 999.5, 1000.7, 1009.1: ‘Great and predatory vengeance was taken by Máel Sechnaill on the Laigin’, 1013.2, 1014.2, 1015.2, and 1017.7.
one of the largest óenaige of Ireland above the remains of their traditional enemies, the Ulaid.\footnote{In the prologue of the Airgíalla Charter Poem which describes the seating plan of the óenach of Táiltiú, it is noticeable that the Ulaid are not included. See Bhreathnach & Murray, ‘The Airgíalla Charter Poem: Edition’, 128-9. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Airgíalla Charter Poem: The Legal Contents’, 103-4 at p. 104 points out: ‘The absence of the Ulaid from Táiltiú in the Prologue is to be explained, therefore, on the grounds that conflict between “the men of Ireland” and the Ulaid, was, in the poet’s mind, the background to the northern conquests of the Airgíalla to which he alludes in §8.’ The Kings of the Ulaid were known to have held the kingship of Tara and in some instances in the literature noble Ulstermen were associated with Tara. See above, n. 81: Amairgin, Conchobar mac Nessa’s poet and the father of Conall Cernach, was said to reside in Táiltiú.} An alternative interpretation is that the cemetery of the Ulaid at Táiltiú may represent the period before Conchobor, when Ulaid leaders such as Ollam Fóthla were kings of Tara.

Here we might also want to ask why the Munstermen are assigned at least three cemeteries in each text, namely, Óenach Cúli, Óenach Colmán (Ela) and Temair Érand (\textit{ANÍ} also records the name Feci and TCD H.3.17 includes the additional name Aenach sean Clochair, which may be in Munster). Temair Érand must represent the district of west Munster, Óenach Cúli central Munster in the area around Limerick and Óenach Colmán was probably not even in Munster at all, but in Tír Cell. Óenach Colmán Ela was a significant óenach and frequently recorded in the chronicles, and it forms a major theme in the \textit{Betha Cholmain Eala}. The men of Munster, however, are only specifically associated with it in these texts and in one external source.\footnote{\textit{CGH} 152 a 11.} The Uí Néill bias seen in these texts is possibly reflected in the place-name Óenach Colmán, because it was formerly in the region of the Cenél Fiachach, a sept of the Southern Uí Néill. Tír Cell, on the other hand, was a border-region. Colmán Ela, according to the outset of his \textit{Betha}, was of the Clann Éremóin.\footnote{\textit{Betha Cholmain Eala}, I. 168 (§1) & II. 162. This passage is complicated: it claims Colmán Ela was of the Uí Néill, but in actuality Colmán Ela belonged to the Dál Sailní. See VSC i.5; Charles-Edwards, \textit{Early Christian Ireland}, 61.}
It is safe to assume that there was an underlying Úi Néill and Connachta partiality behind SnR, ANÍ and Ráith Crúachan. In SnR the place-names not only exhibit a strong Úi Néill and Connachta bias, but the perspective may be narrowed down to Brega. This is suggested not only by the focus on Brug, but also because the author was concerned with the burial-sites of illustrious individuals in the Úi Néill genealogies who were interred outside of their family cemetery at Brug. For example, a considerable portion of SnR is dedicated to explaining the death and burial of Cormac mac Airt at Ros na Ríg. Special attention is also given to Art mac Conn’s grave at Duma Dergluachra and Níall Noigíallach’s grave at Ochan. These sites are also near centres in Brega, for example, Duma Dergluachra (modern Trevet) is near Tara and even closer to Loch ngabor, which was ruled over by the Úí Chernaig. Brug and Ros na Ríg are near Cnogba (Knowth), the capital of the Úi Chonaing. The only additional anomalous burial noted in SnR which is not in Brega is Slea, the grave of Conchobor mac Nessa. One of the only other references to this site is in the dindshenchas poem attributed to Cináed húa hArtacáin following SnR, so it may have been incorporated into SnR from this text.

Cináed húa hArtacáin may have played a crucial role in shaping the dindshenchas of Brug, and his poetry may have conditioned the place-names and contents of SnR. In SnR, the individuals Cormac mac Airt, Art mac Cuinn and Níall Noigíallach are disentangled from the gods and the land of the Brug, and their grave-sites are given special attention. These burial-sites of Cormac mac Airt at Ros na Ríg, Art mac Cuinn at Duma Dergluachra (or Lúachair Derg), and Níall Noigíallach’s grave at Ochan are all mentioned in dindshenchas poems attributed to Cináed. In the dindshenchas appended to SnR, the grave of Art at Lúachair Derg (4172) and the grave of Cormac mac Airt at Ros na Ríg (4176) are both mentioned.
and Niall’s grave is also alluded to (4184), though in a separate *dindshenchas* on Ochan attributed to Cináed, Niall’s death and his tomb at Ochan are elaborated upon.\(^{250}\) Duma Dergláucha, also known at Treoit (modern Trevet), was located in the heartland of South Brega. It was ruled by the Uí Chernaig, to whom Cináed belonged by descent, and was located about six miles from the Uí Chernaig seat of kingship at Loch nGabor (modern Lagore).\(^{251}\) The place-name Achall noted to be one of Cormac’s residences in the first part of *SnR* (glossed as Scrín Choluim Cille) was also the focus of a *dindshenchas* poem by Cináed, patronised by Amlaíb Cúarán, the Norse king of Dublin, who was defeated by Máel Sechnaill II in 980 at the Battle of Tara.\(^{252}\) Because *SnR* is rooted in a *dindshenchas* tradition, the poems composed by Cináed may have played a pivotal role in shaping the *dindshenchas* of Brega in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The era of Cináed and his patron Amlaíb Cúarán immediately precedes the reign of Máel Sechnaill II, and if *SnR* were composed around this time the most recent material the author of *SnR* likely used to draw information from concerning the burial places of famous mythological people was the poetry of Cináed húa hArtacáín. This is further supported by the fact that a *dindshenchas* on Brug attributed to Cináed is appended to the prose *senchas* of *SnR*.

With the exception of Conchobor’s grave at Slea, the graves of specific individuals in *SnR* such as Cormac mac Airt and Níall Núgíallach were located in Brega. The people believed to be buried beneath these monuments were famous characters in the Uí Néill genealogy, and they are intimately connected with the Tara region. The focus on Brug in *SnR* and the concern with other individual graves in Brega imply this text had a Southern Uí Néill focus, and the targeted audience may have been the Síl nÁedo Sláine, Cíannacht Breg, Uí Chonaing (whose power base

\(^{250}\) *MD*, II, 36-41.
\(^{252}\) *MD*, I, 46-53; Bhreathnach, ibid., 40-1. *AU* 980.1.
was at Cnogba), the Úi Chernaig and perhaps the Clann Cholmáin who were located in the heartland of Mide (if SnR were composed during the reign of Máel Sechnaill II). The Úi Néill relation to Brug and its importance is further supported by the constructed genealogies, which imply the Úi Néill were related to the Tuatha Dé Danann through the descendants of Cremthand Nia Náir, whose wife Nár, was of the Tuatha Dé.

The Purposes of SnR, ANÍ and the Related Dindshenchas Tracts

The date of the óenach revivals also coincides with the earliest possible compositions of SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and Relec Carmuin. It is very likely that much of this material was composed specifically for the revived óenaige, such as the poem by Cúan úa Lothcáin on Tailtiu. References to artistic performances at Óenach Carmuin in Relec Carmuin indicate that the recitation of tales, poems and sagas was one of the ‘fair’s great privileges’:

... poets and meek musicians. | Tales of Find and the Fianna, a matter inexhaustible, | sacks ( togla), forays ( tána), wooings ( tochmorca ), | tablets, and books of lore, satires, keen riddles:

Proverbs, maxims of might, | and truthful teachings of Fithal, | dark lays of the dindshenches for thee, | teachings of Cairpre and Cormac:

The feasts around the mighty Feast of Tara, | the fairs, round the Fair of Emain ( óenach Emain ); annals there, this is true; | every division into which Erin has been divided:
The tale of the household of Tara, that is not scanty, | the knowledge of every cantred in Erin, | the chronicle of women (bansenchas), tales of armies (buidne), conflicts, | hostels, tabus, captures (gabála):

The ten-fold Testament of hundreded Cathair | to his right pleasant offspring kingly of stature: | [assigns] the estate of each man as is due, | so that all my listen to it.²⁵³

This section is concluded by the statement that ‘the king ... pays for each art its proper honour’.²⁵⁴ The above stanzas suggest these genres were forms of entertainment at the Óenach. It is possible that the genres noted above could allude to well-known literary sources, such as: Togail Bruidne Da Derga, Tochmarc Emire, feis or ‘feasting’ tales, such as Fled Bricrend, bansenchas or tracts on the genealogies of famous women, and gabála such as the LG. If we were to compare the genres recited at the Óenach quoted above with the other sources from which the information in SnR and ANÍ were likely compiled, we find that there is a significant parallel. For example, in SnR a significant proportion of the introduction on Cormac mac Airt stems from Geneamuin Chormaic and related material, and the other legendary characters mentioned throughout SnR and ANÍ are the foci of stories such as LG, Tochmarc Étaíne, Cath Maige Mucrama, Cath Maige Tuired, Togail Bruidne Da Derga and the later dindshenchas tradition. In the words of Jaski:

The dindshenchas of Carman refers to the telling of tales and stories and the reciting of the royal pedigree and of gnomic texts ... at an Óenach. This is perhaps a fabrication, but if this indeed happened at assemblies, it would place the function of these texts in a clear social and political context.²⁵⁵

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²⁵³ MD, III, 20-1.
²⁵⁴ Ibid.
²⁵⁵ Jaski, Early Irish Kingship and Succession, 52.
This is a strong possibility, and this may also explain the purpose of texts such as *SnR*, *ANÍ*, and the *dindshenchas* material discussed throughout this essay. Since it seems safe to assume that public recitation was common-place at the medieval *óenach* (perhaps from texts committed to writing or memorized from oral tradition), then it would seem natural to also inform the public of the tradition and *history* of the *óenach* itself. If *dindshenchas* were recited before a public audience at these assemblies (especially if it concerned the place of the assembly) the recitation would be an event the audience could relate to the landscape and sights around them. Public performance may explain the need to recite the names and places of the mythological people believed to be buried beneath the monuments in the places where these *óenaige* were held (which would provoke the memory of the dynastic genealogies). This would have been something an audience hearing this recitation would be able to experience as they participated in the *Lugnasad* festivals. They would be able to see the monuments and could specifically associate the features with the mythological beings, and they could have understood these myths in comparison to the historical and sacred landscape around them. These recitations of *senchas* consisting of place-lore and historical genealogies would not only have rooted this history in the landscape, but it was a history interpreted by a local audience as their history, and thus these recitations would have been an integral aspect of preserving social memory and communal identity. *SnR*, for example, exhibits a Southern Uí Néill focus, and if a text such as this were recited at the *óenach* of *Taintiu* or even an *óenach* of *Brug*, a local audience would have been able to specifically relate the place-names, micro-toponyms and genealogies to features within the *óenach* landscape. It would also seem appropriate in reciting legends about a particular *óenach* to mention other
famous óenai̊ge of Ireland, perhaps even ones that were taking place elsewhere in Ireland around the time of the Lugnasad festival, and this may explain the list of *primreilce* in our texts.

These texts were also almost certainly for entertainment and educational purposes. They are essentially concerned with the pre-Christian period, and this is reflected in their contents and in most of the place-names, which were located at significant prehistoric, non-ecclesiastical sites. *SnR*, however, does attempt to bring some of the subject within a Christian context. References to anomalous burials in *SnR* in each instance are because the individual was renowned for accepting the Christian faith or the God of the Old Testament. The audience was perhaps aware of the tales of these individuals accepting Christianity, and therefore it would have been necessary to specify this detail in *SnR*. The concern with place-names where the Tuatha Dé Danann and many individuals from the Clann Éremóin were buried also implies that these texts fall within the category of mythology, which would not only serve as entertainment, but also as a method with which to explain the prehistory of these sites.

§ IV. CONCLUSIONS

From analysis of contemporary literature, many of the interpretations of these places can be pieced together to provide a clearer picture of just how these sites functioned in medieval Irish society and how they were perceived. The association of the term óenach with the place-names in *SnR*, *ANÍ* and the *dindshenchas* texts was probably entirely obvious to a medieval Irish audience and required no further elaboration, and fortunately due to a considerable corpus of surviving literature on the subject, we too
can envisage some of the customs that occurred at these sites during the medieval period. There were also many factors that applied to the overall perceptions of these place-names, such as: the locality of these places, the monumental features and the prehistoric and ritual landscapes, the interpretation of these monuments as graves, assemblies which were held in these places and their intimate connection with a practice of lamentation which may have been influenced or perpetuated by the landscape of these sites. The physical features in these ancient landscapes, coupled with the nature of the òenach and Lugnasad festivals, also neatly fits the potential purposes of texts such as SnR, ANÍ, Ráith Crúachan and Relec Carmuin. If they were indeed composed to be recited at the òenach, then the purposes of these texts and their contents becomes clearer. It has also been demonstrated that each of these texts exhibits an underlying political affiliation, which is reflected in the greater concern for some place-names over others and through the mythological people included and where they are said to be buried. This political element may also imply that they were first composed during the late tenth or early eleventh century. This would not only make sense in comparison to events of this period, but it also fits the general picture of their transmission and language. In conclusion, though each text subject to toponymic analysis in this essay is short, the amount of toponymic information gathered from them in comparison with contemporary sources reveals a wealth of information about these sites and the various ways in which they functioned and were interpreted in medieval Ireland.
Plate 4.11  Decorated kerbstone in front of the entrance to the passage tomb of Newgrange.

Photo: © Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland.
APPENDIX II

Chapter Four

II.1 Senchas na Relec

Edition of MSS from RIA 23 E 25 = Lebor na hUidre, ed. Best & Bergin, 127-132 and TCD TCD H.3.17(=1336). TCD H.3.17 is a sixteenth-century MS. Each page of TCD H.3.17 has two columns and there is space for 45 lines in each column. The bottom corner of the MS has been badly damaged, and this has affected some of the text of SnR in Col. 730. The primary edition used for this tract will be LU as edited by Best and Bergin. Glosses added into the LU tract by Scribe M and H will be included in [[ ]] adjacent to the words they gloss and will not follow Best and Bergin’s method of footnoting the marginalia; where an interpolation belongs to Scribe H’s hand this will be denoted by [ ]. Textual variants from TCD H.3.17 will be included in the footnotes cited by column number and line number. In some instances to facilitate comparison between LU and TCD, the entire passage will be cited in the footnotes. Where there are differences in names (including later spellings for place-names), these will also be included in the footnotes. The edition of SnR will be followed by a translation of the LU version.
Mórí mórbrethach ro gab os Herind. i. Cormac mac Airt meic Cuind Cetchathaig Bá maith iarom baí ind Eriu ria lind fó déig ro scalled breth rechtgae fo Érind acciseom. Conná laimtheá guin duni i nHérind fri ré íúbili bicci i. uii. mbliadna. ar baí cretim in óenDé oc Cormac do réir rechta. ar ro ráidseom na aidérad clocha ná crunnu acht no adérad intí dosroní γ ropo chomsid ar cul na uli dúla i. in t-óenDia nertchomsid ro crutaig na dúlí is dó no chreitfed. Conid eseom in tres ro creti i nErind ría tíachtain Patraic i. Conchobor mac Nessa diáro innis Altus dó cesad Crist. Morand [[i. mac Maín M]]1 mac Corpri Cind Chaitt indarna fer. Cormac in tres.2 γ ane is doig co ndeochatár drem aile fora slíocht imón cretim sin. Is and trá3 no gnátaiged [[i. Cormac M]] a dodgnos hi Temraig ar slíocht cech rig remi. no coro milled a rosc Óengus Gai buaphnec mac Echach Find Fúath Airt. I nAchaill [[marg. i. tulach hi fil Sérín Choluiim Cille ind(iu) M]] imorro γ i Cenandas γ hi Tíg Cletig no bídson iar tain ár níbhá hada rí co n-anim hi Temraig. Tánic trá bús dia innaigidseom hi Tíg Cletig isin bliadain tanaise ar coll a roirc iar nglenamain cnáma bratan ina bragit. [[1 it siabra (marg.) ron ortsat i. T(uatha) D(é Danann ar it friu as)berthea sia(bra) M]]4 Ro ráidseom [[i. Cormac M]] imorro fria muintir cena adnacul [[i. dái g bá relec idaladartha M]]5 isin Brug daig ní hinund Día ro adairseom γ cech oen ro adnacht isin Bruig acht a adnacol i rRos na Ríg6 γ a aiged sair.

Fúairseom bás iar sin γ ro ferad comarli oca áes gráda γ iss ed ro chinset a adnacol isin Bruig áit i mbátar ríg Temra romiseom. Ro tócbad iarom corp ind ríg fo thri día breith issin Bruig | γ hitracht in Boand fó thri i n-arda conná fétais a techt Co tucsat

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1 Most of this marginal note is found in Col. 730 (16-17), though the beginning of line 17 is badly damaged: Morann mac Main inda ---- (ara fer?).
2 730 (17) Cormac mac Airt in tres fear
3 730 (20) IS andsin tra baí Cormac a Temraig an slíocht cach
4 730 (28-9) no siabhra ro hort i. Tuatha De Danann airit friu ad-berta siabhra.
5 730 (29-31) Cormac ria muinntir gan adhnacul isin bruigh tiair ba releg idal adhartha
6 730 (33) Rus na Ríg
dílna n-uid cor fhíachtain dar breith flatha techt dar timna in rig. Ferait a fert iarom i rRos na Ríg amal asbert féin.

Roptar iat so trá príomhreachta Herend rá creitim .i. Cróachu. in Brug. in Talltiu. Lúacair Ailbe. Óenach Ailbe. Óenach Cúl. Óenach Colman. Temair Erand.7 Óenach Cruachan chetus iss and no adnaictís clanna Heremoin .i. ríggrad Temrach. no co tánic Creimthand mac Lugdech [[.i. iss eside cétri dúb ro adnacht isin Brug M]]8 Riab nDerg .i. Cobthach Cóel Breg [[.i. is iat so ro adnaitc hi Crúachain M]] Þ Labraid Loingsech Þ Eocho Fedlech cona tri maccaib.[[.i. na tri Find Emma .i. Bres Þ Nar Þ Lothor M]] Þ Eocho Airem. Þ Lugaid Riab nDerg Þ sé ingena Echach Fedlig [[.i. Medb Þ Clothru Muresc Þ Drebriu Mugain Þ `Ele M]] Þ Ailill mac Mata cona secht mbratrib [[.i. Cet Anlon Dóche. Þ relíci M]] Þ ind ríggrad uli co Creimthand.9

Cid fotera nach isin Bruig no hadnaictís [[.i. síl Cobthaig co Creimthand M]]10 na rig. Ni handsa. ar roptar iat da cóiced ro techsat cland Heremoin .i. cóiced nGáleoin [[.i. cóiced Laigen M]] Þ cóiced Ól nÉcmacht. [[.i. cóiced Connacht M]] Coiced nGálióin chetus ro gabsat síl Labrada Loingsig. Cland Cobthaig Coíl Breg imorro bá he a flesc láma side cóiced Connacht. Conid airi iss é thucaid do Meidbh ré cech cóiced. [[.i. cóiced Connacht (in marg.) is airi tuccad orba do Meidb ar ni boí do slí Echach nech bad túalaing a gabáil acht sisi ar nirb ingníma Lugaid in tan sin. M]] Þ dano in tan na bid rígi

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7 730-731 (43.- | 3) [Roptar] uad so prim relge Erenn ria credeam [A]enach Cruachan Þ brugh mic in Oic Þ Tailtu Þ [Ae]nach sean Clochair Þ Luachair Ailbe Þ Aenach Ailbe Þ Aenach Eamna Þ Aenach Chuile Þ Aenach Cholmain Þ Temair Érann Þ martra muintriri Phimintraí naítheac cland. Cf. the final line of Relec Carmain, LL, IV, 842 (4-5). In TCD H.3.17 below cols. 730 and 731 is a marginal note, some of which is barely legible: (Aenach Brug?) no adnaicdais iat o aimsir crimtaind nia nair co hainsin laegaire mic neill cennomat [.......................]cormac mac airt Þ niall nogh- (no[i]ghiallaich?) roh in dseadh tra in fath a roadhnaclt cormac mac airt don.
8 731(6-7) ise sin cét righ dúbh ro-hadh naiccceadh isin brugh. Is iad roadh-nacht annsin Chruachain 731 (8-15) Cobthach Cael Breagh Þ Labraigh Loingseach Þ Eochu Fedlech cona tri macaibh .i. na tri Finn Eamhna Þ a ingena .i. Medbh Þ Clothru Þ Muresc Þ Derbri Þ Mugain Þ Eile Þ Eochaid Eirem Þ Lugaid Riabhenderg Þ Ailill mac Madach cona .iii. mbratriuir .i. Ceat Anluan Doiche Mog Corb Þ reliqui Þ in ríghraithd uile o Chrimthann.
9 731 (16) rígha síl cobthaigh ní ansa

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nÈrend o claind Chobthair Coil Breg ba cóiced Connacht a ruidles. [[i. flesc láma M]]. 11
Conid airí sin no adnaictís i nÓenuch na Cruachna fáth. Issin Bruig imorro no adnaictís fáth o amsi Chríthaind [[i. Niad Nair M]] co amsir Lóegaire meic Neill cenmothát trfar .í. Art mac Cuind γ Cormac mac Airt γ Niall Noigiallach. Ro innisemmar tra in fath ar nách and ro adnacht Cormac.

Is airí dano nach and ro adnacht Art. ar ro chreit in lá ría tabairt chatha Muccrama 12 γ tharngir in creitim γ asbért combad and no beth a fert i nDuma nDergluácha áit hi fail Troeit indiu 13. diaro dechtsom isin duain [[í. dúan dorigní Art γ is e a toissech. Cain do Denna Den. γ h. M]] dorigní sin .í. Cain do Denda Den.

In tan roucad [[í. co Duma nDergluácha M]] a corp [[í. Airt M]] sair iar tain dia mbéitís fir Herend 14 oca sreing ass ni fetfaitís coro adnacht isin inud sain. fo déig ar rop eclas [[í. Troeit indiu M]] cathalacda 15 iar tain bali in ro adnacht. fo déig na firinni γ na cretmi ro mbí ar ro faillsiged tria fir flatha dó.

Niall imorro iss and ro adnacht i nOchaín. 16 Conid de atá Ochaín forsin telaig .í. och caíni .í. ind ochfadh γ ind écaíni dodrónsat fir Herend oc caíni Neill and.

Conaire Mór dano [í. mMaig Feci [[í. oc Ferta Conaire H]] i mBregaib ro adnacht acht chena iss é Conaire Carpraige ro hadnacht andside γ ni he Conaire Mor. Combad he dano in tres ri no hadnaicthe | hi Temraig hé .í. Conaire γ Lóegaire γ ] 17 Hi Talltin imorro no hadnaictís Ulaid .í. Ollom Fóitla cona chlaind co tanic Conchobor .í. ar is and ro thogsíde a thabairt eter Slea γ muir γ aiged sair fo déig na creitim ro mbóf.
Uasli Tuathi Dé Danand [[.i. in Dagda γ a thri meic γ Lug γ `Oe γ Ollam γ Ogma γ Etan γ Corpre mac Etaine M]] issin Brug no adnaicteís.\(^{18}\) γ fora slickt side dochóid Crimthand. ar ba do Thúaith Dea a ben .i. Nár γ is si ro aslaig fair combad he bad reilec adnaicthi dó γ dia chlaind in Brug conid hé fáth a nnemadnaicthi hi Crúachain.

Laigin i nÓenuch Albi. [[.i. Catair cona chlaind γ na rig rempo M]] Cland Dedad [[.i. sil Conaire γ Ernai M]] hi Temair Èrand.\(^{19}\) Fir Muman [[.i. Dergthene M]] i nOenuch Culi γ i nOenuch Colman.\(^{20}\) Connachta hi Cruachain. Conid d’innisin na rig ro gabsat Temraig iar Cremthand do neoch ro adnacht isin Brug ro chum Cináed hua hArtacan\(^{21}\) in laid sea. .i. dia fallsigud na mathi ro n-adnacht isin Bruig.

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(1) Án sin a maig Meic ind Óc 
faireisng do rót rethaib cét 
forolgais mór flathe fir 
do aicme cech ríg mó rót 4120
(2) Rot brecai cach n-ingnad n-án
a clár findglan fictib slúag
a thir ferach fénach féig
a fath n-énach n-indsech n-úag
(3) Tech Meic ind Óc ós do dind
rigda fót fri féile find.
taircet éim os do lind duind
geill a sidib Hérend ind
(4) Ingen Araind fort lár luind
[caín mál] bá molbthach in mind 4130
furri ro lád in tor thall
ni gand i[n] gnod ós do chind
(5) Atchúu lind find Féic na Fian
frit aniar ni tım in gním
co lá brátha brígach bág 4135
méraid hi fán rátha ríg
(6) Lánamain contuiled sund
ria cath Maigi Taired tall
in fre mór in Dagda dund
ní duachnid a n-adba and 4140
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\(^{18}\) 732 (5-9) Uaisle Tuath De Danann isin Bruigh noadhnaicdais .i. in Dagda γ a tri meic γ Lug γ Eithleam γ Ollam γ Odhna γ Etan γ Cairpri mac Etaine.
\(^{19}\) 732 (13-17) Laigen an Aenach Allbhe .i. Cathair cona chlaind γ na riga rompu Clanda Deghadh a Temair Èrand .i. Sil Conaire γ Enna .i. Daire i Degadh γ Cu Rui mac Daire γ im Dorrin mar γ im .uii. caeca șil Daire mic D(egaidh)
\(^{20}\) 732 (18-19) Fir Muman a nAenach Chule γ a nAenach Colmain .i. Dergtine
\(^{21}\) 732 (22) ro chum Torrna Eigeas cecinet.
(7) Cnoc in Máthai [[i. Matha Mallcosach H^2]]
    iarna guin | léir fort a Brug breccas graig
    a chnáim ro chorbai in muir
dia tá Inber Colbtha cain

(8) Sechi bó Boadain búain 4145
    os gruaid a líac budi bain
termond na fían feedéil féig
    im reid airthir Nemid nair

(9) Hi Fertai na Failend fand
    is and ro maided in glond 4150
    mór in gnim n-úalle do rind
echt Find for fein Lúagní lond

(10) Génair inneot mellach mac
    Cellach ro slat leirg for Lorc 4155
    bá túalnge trebe rot chacht
    co n-appad éc n-úalle fort

(11) A barc brainech na tor trom
    tathig trethan trom do dind
    otha Chremthand Níad co Níall
    bá tú relec na fían find 4160

(12) Fintan Feradach fecht fland
    ro thecht do thalam in trom
    Tuathal Techtmar tríath ar cland
    foluing do land leachtach lom

(13) Fedelmed Rechtach it rím 4165
    bá gein glecaich fri cech toir
    nidat éradach hi tír
    focheil Cond Cétchedach cóir

(14) Ni thoracht Art aidble uird
    immánaigh luirg for leirg 4170
    ro gab lige n-uachal n-ard
    arg na laech i ILúachair Deirg

(15) Ní thoracht Cormac cen lén
    déad na frínni rod fir 4175
    ro gab foss os Boind bún
    forsin tráig ic Ross na Ríg

(16) Corpri Liphechair fort lar
    Fiachra rán roiptine réil
    Muridach Tírech din Brí
    in rí Eochu [[gloss erased by H]] [[athaír Neil]] 4180

(17) Ní thoracht Níall núal nad gó
    dirsán dó in rian ro ra ||
    iar ndul do Elpa fo secht 52a
    rofes a lecht áit i tá.

(18) Iar sin tánc cretem glan 4185
    for mag Fáil bes nirbo rom
    co fail cách i reilecib nóem
    dia scarad fri clóen fri col
The LU edition of SnR (including the marginal notes) has been satisfactorily translated by J. O’Donovan in G. Petrie, *An Essay on the Origin and Uses of Round Towers of Ireland*, Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy 20 (Dublin, 1846), 98-101. This edition will be presented below. O’Donovan did not translate the final line of SnR or the dindshenchas poem. My own translation of the final line will be provided (in italics), and the dindshenchas poem has been edited and translated by Gwynn, *MD*, II, 10-17, and will be included here for the reader’s convenience. Stanza numbers and line numbers of the dindshenchas according to LU will be added alongside Gwynn’s translation for quick reference.

This is the History of Cemeteries

A great king of great judgements assumed the sovereignty of Erin. i.e. Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn of the Hundred Battles. Erin was prosperous in his time, because just judgements were distributed throughout it by him; so that no one durst attempt to wound a man in Erin during the short jubilee of seven years; for Cormac had the faith of the one

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(19) Focheil cúani colma cáin

a mag Meic in Dagdai déin

na der[n]sat adrad Dé móir

andso dóib hi tát hi péin.

(20) Iatsom dimbúan tussu búan

immótreide cech slúag slán

fatsom dosrogáed a mbés

tussu fogéba áes án.

(21) Boand bale roglas réil

mana sechut la séil slán

cen nindais ú úabrig úaib

Senbic a táaim immais án.

(22) Congalach culli cond fian

dían a buille dond a dál

is báale rantor co rían

is cúane n-ardchon is án.

TRANSLATION OF *SENCHAS NA RELEC*

This is the History of Cemeteries

A great king of great judgements assumed the sovereignty of Erin. i.e. Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn of the Hundred Battles. Erin was prosperous in his time, because just judgements were distributed throughout it by him; so that no one durst attempt to wound a man in Erin during the short jubilee of seven years; for Cormac had the faith of the one
true God, according to the law; for he said that he would not adore stones, or trees, but
that he would adore him that made them, and who had power over all the elements, i.e. in
the one powerful God who created the elements; in him would he believe. And he was
the third person who had believed in Erin, before the arrival of St. Patrick. Conchobor
mac Nessa, to whom Altus had told concerning the crucifixion of Christ was the first;
Morann, the son of Cairbre Cinncait, (who was surnamed Mac Main) was the second
person and Cormac was the third; and it is probable that others followed on their track in
this belief.

Where Cormac held his court was at Tara, in imitation of the kings who
proceeded him, until his eye was destroyed by Engus Gaibhuaiphnech, the son of
Eochaidh Finn Fuath-aith; but afterwards he resided at Acaill, (the hill on which Scrin
Colaim Cille is at this day). And at Cenannas [Kells], and at the house of Cletech; for it
was not lawful that a king with a personal blemish should reside at Tara. In the second
year after the injuring of his eye he came by his death at the house of Cletech, the bone of
a salmon having stuck in his throat. (Or it was the phantoms that killed him, i.e. the
Tuatha Dé Danann, for they were called the siabhra ‘phantoms’). And he (Cormac) told
his people not to bury him at Brugh (because it was a cemetery of Idolaters) for he did
not worship the same Gods as any of those interred at Brugh; but to bury him as Ros na
righ, with his face to the east. He afterwards died, and his servants of trust held a council,
and came to the resolution of burying him at Brugh, the place where the kings of Tara,
his predecessors, were buried. The body of the king was thrice raised to be carried to
Brugh, but the Boyne swelled up thrice, so as that they could not come; so that they
observed that it was ‘violating the judgement of a prince’ to break through this Testament
of the king, and they afterwards dug his grave at Ros nrigh, as he himself had ordered.
These were the chief cemeteries of Erin before the Faith, [i.e. before the introduction of Christianity] viz. Cruachu, Brugh, Tailltiu, Luachair Ailbe, Oenach Ailbe, Oenach Culli, Oenach Colmain, Temhair Erann.

Oenach Cruachan, in the first place, it was there the race of Heremonn, i.e. the kings of Tara, were used to bury until the time of Cremthainn, the son of Lughaídth Riabh-n-derg, (who was the first king of them that was interred at Brugh) viz. Cobhthach Coelbregh (i.e. these are buried at Crúachu), and Labhraidh Loingsech, and Eocho Fedhaech with his three sons (i.e. the three Fidhemhna, i.e Bres, Nar, and Lothar), and Eocho Airemh, Lughaídth Raibh n-Derg, the six daughters of Eocho Fedhlech, (i.e. Medh, and Clothru, Muresc, Doche, et ceteri), and Ailill mac Mada with his seven brothers (i.e. Cet, Anlon, Doche, et ceteri) and all the kings down to Cremhthann, (these were all buried at Cruachan). Why was it not at Brugh that the kings (of the race of Cobhthach down to Crimthann) were interred? Not difficult; because the two provinces, which the race of Heremon possessed, were the province of the Gaillian, (i.e. the province of Leinster), and the province of Olnecmacht (i.e. the province of Connaught). In the first place the province of the Gaillian was occupied by the race of Labhraidh Loingsech, and the province of Connaught was the peculiar inheritance of the race of Cobhthach Coelbregh; wherefore it (i.e the province of Connaught) was given to Medbh before every other province. (The reason that the government of this land was given to Medbh is, because there was none of the race of Eochaidh fit to receive it but herself, for Lugaidh was not fit for action at the time). And whenever, therefore, the monarchy of Erin was enjoyed by any of the descendants of Cobhthach Coelbregh, the province of Connaught was his ruidles (i.e. his native principality). And for this reason they were interred at Oenach na Cruachna. But they were interred at Brugh from the time of Cremthand (Niadh-nar), to the time of Loeghaire, the son of Niall, except three persons,
namely, Art, the son of Conn, and Cormac, the son of Art, and Niall of the Nine Hostages.

We have already mentioned the cause for which Cormac was not interred there. The reason why Art was not interred there is, because he ‘believed’, the day before the battle of Muccramma was fought, and he predicted the Faith, (i.e. that Christianity would prevail in Erin), and he said that his own grave would be at Dumha Dergluachra, where Treoit [Trevet] is at this day, as he mentioned in a poem which he composed, viz. *Cain do den da den*, (i.e. a poem which Art composed, the beginning of which is *Cain do denna den*, et cetera). When his (Art’s) body was afterwards carried eastwards to Dumbha Dergluachra, if all the men of Erinn were drawing it thence, they could not, so that he was interred in that place, because there was a catholic church to be afterwards at the place where he was interred (i.e. Treoit *hodie*) because the truth and the faith had been revealed to him through his regal righteousness.

Where Niall was interred was at Ochain. When the hill was called Ochain, i.e. och Caine, i.e. from the sighing and lamentation which the men of Erin made in lamenting Niall.

Conaire More was interred at Magh Feci in Bregia (i.e. at Fert Conaire); however some say that it was Conaire Cairpraige who was interred there, and not Conaire Mor, and that Conaire Mor was the third king who was interred at Tara, viz. Conaire, Loeghaire, and~

At Tailltin the kings of Ulster were used to bury, viz. Ollamh Fodhla, with his descendants down to Conchobar, who wished that he should be carried to a place between Slea and the sea, with his face to the east, on account of the Faith which he had embraced.
The nobles of the Tuatha De Danann were used to bury at Brugh, (i.e. the Dagda with his three sons; also Lughaidh, and Oe, and Ollam, and Ogma, and Etan, the Poetess, and Corpre, the son of Etan,) and Cremthan followed them because his wife Nar was of the Tuatha Dea, and it was she solicited him that he should adopt Brugh as a burial place for himself and his descendants, and this was the cause that they did not bury at Cruachan.

The Lagerians (i.e. Cathair with his race and the kings who were before them) were buried at Oenach Ailbhe. The Clann Dedad (i.e. the race of Conaire and Erna) at Temhair Erann; the men of Munster (i.e. the Dergthene) at Oenach Culi, and Oenach Colmain; and the Connacians at Cruachan.

So it is to tell of the kings who gained (the kingship of) Tara after Crimthann, of those who were buried in the Brugh, that Cináed húa hArtacáin composed this poem, i.e. to reveal the nobles who were buried in the Brugh~

(1) Bright is it here, O plain of Mac ind Oc!
wide is thy road with traffic of hundreds
thou hast covered many a true prince
of the race of every king that has possessed thee.

(2) Every bright wonder hath adorned thee,
O clear shining plain with scores of hosts,
O lucent land of grass and wagons,
O virgin mead of birds and islands!

(3) The house of Mac ind Oc above thy stead,
a royal sod with true hospitality;
there come in sooth above thy brown stream
hostages from the fairy-hills of all Erin thither

(4) The daughter or bold Pharoah [lies] on thy floor | a kind princess, precious was the diadem
over her was set the tower in that place,
not sparing was the dirge over her head.

(5) I see the clear pool of Fiacc of the warriors west of thee, —not feeble the deed—
till the day of Doom—mighty boast—
shall he abide on the slope of the royal rath.

(6) Here slept a married pair
after the battle of Mag Tuired yonder,
the great lady [and] the swart Dagda:
not obscure is their dwelling there.
(7) The Grave of the Matha after his slaying is plain to see on thee, O Brug, studded with horses: The sea has rotted his bone, whence pleasant Inber Colptha is [named].

(8) The Hide of the Cow of undying Boadan over the cheek of his yellow-white stone: the Precinct of the staunch keen warriors about the eastern level of noble Nemed.

(9) At the Trench of the gentle Seagulls it is there was wrought the deed— great the proud feat of the spear— the slaying of Finn whom the bold Luagne smote.

(10) In thee was born a beguiling boy, Cellach, who plundered the plain on his track; he was able to face a tribe, he captured thee, and died in thee a death of pride.

(11) O beaked bark of the strong towers, the sea-tide visits thy stead: from the days of Crimthand Nia to Niall thou wast the burying-place of the fair-haired warriors.

(12) Fintan Feradach, of bloody battles, possessed thy land, the strong prince Tuathal Techtmar, lord of our clans, thy bare sepulchral soil sustains.

(13) Fedelmed the Lawgiver is in thy tale; he was a warlike wight on every chase; they are not at enmity in the ground: thou hidest Conn the just, the hundred-fighter.

(14) There came not Art, highest in rank, round whom rode troops on the battlefield; he found a grave proud and lofty, the champion of the heroes, in Luachair Derg.

(15) There came not Cormac free from sorrow: after receiving the Truth (he affirmed it) he found repose above limpid Boyne on the shore at Rossnaree.

(16) Cairpre Lifechair lies on thy soil, Fiachu Srapine noble and famous, Muiredach Tírech from the Hill, the king Eochu father of Niall.

(17) There came not Niall (a cry that is not false) unlucky for him the course he rowed! after going seven times to Scotland 52a the place where he grave is was known.

(18) Thereafter came the pure Faith to Mag Fail, a law that came not too soon, so that each lies in burial-grounds of holy men, to sever them from iniquity and sin.
(19) Thou hidest a brood bold and kind,  
O plain of the son of the swift Dagda!  
let men not punish the worship of the great God;  
it is worse for them where they are in torment.

(20) They are transient, thou abidest:  
every believing band rides around thee:  
as for them, their wisdom has befooled them;  
though shalt attain a noble age.

(21) Boyne, a spot right green and bright,  
an omen with sound….beside thee  
…..from you of the proud grandson  
of Senbec from the stead of the noble poesy.

(22) Warlike and splendid is the centre of  
champions!  
swift their stroke, noble their assembly!  
it is a fold of glorious chieftains, with a track,  
it is a kennel of high-bred whelps, it is glorious.

II.2 Aided Nath Í γ á adnacol

MSS from RIA 23 E 25 = Lebor na hUidre, ed. Best & Bergin, 90-94, Book of Ballymote (248 a 42 - 249 a 30), YBL (facsimile) pp. 191-2b, cols. 909-911 headed Suidigud Tellaig na Cruachna. Due to spatial constraints, the Ballymote and YBL recensions of ANÍ will not be reprinted here, nor will textual variants be presented in footnotes. A satisfactory edition of both the Ballymote and YBL recension of ANÍ have been reprinted side by side along the LU version for comparison by Ó Concheanainn, ‘“Aided Nath Í” and the Scribes of Leabhar na hUidhre,’ 148-157. Presented here is a translation of the LU text, and the format will follow the structure of Appendix II.1 above. There is no complete published translation of ANÍ from LU, Ballymote or YBL, and selected parts of this text have been translated by different scholars over the past
two centuries.\(^1\) I am especially grateful to Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards for helping me with this translation.

TRANSLATION OF *AIDED NATH Í*

Here is the Violent Death of Nath Í and His Burial

Nathi, son of Fiachra, took power over Ireland, and he led an invasion to the Alps. Formenus, king of Thracia, came in exile to the Alps at that time. A fortified tower was made by him, and it was sixty feet in height and twelve feet from him to the light, and he himself was in the middle of the tower, and he did not see a ray of light. Then Nathi came to the tower. Nathi’s people demolished the tower and Formenus saw the wind coming towards him. Then God took Formenus in a ball of fire a thousand paces from the tower; Formenus prayed to the Lord that the reign of Dathi might not be any longer than that, and he prayed that his grave might not be well-known. The king’s life only lasted while he was destroying the citadel, when a flash of lightning came from heaven and hit him so that he died.

Amalgaid then took command of the men of Ireland, and carried the body of his father with him. As they came westwards they won nine battles. Amalgaid died among the Déissi of Tara. Then the body of Dathi was brought from the east, and he was buried in Crúachu. Four of his closest companions brought the body with them, i.e. Dúngalach and Flandgus, Tomaltach and Túathal, so that is was inside Óenach Crúachan, as Torna Éces revealed:

\(^1\) Selections from *ANÍ* have been translated in the following sources: S. Ferguson, ‘On the Legend of Dathi’, *PRIA*, Polite Literature and Antiquities 2, ser. 2 (1883), 171-3. This translation is reprinted in Hogan, *The Legend of Dathi*, 2-3; O’Curry, *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, II, 71-2; Joyce, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, 560; Ó Choncheanainn, ‘Aided Nath Í and Úi Fhiachrach Genealogies,’ 22-3.
Each one have you concealed, O Crúachu red with blood:

The comely king of Ireland, Da Thí son of Fíachu,

A noble king, by sea, by land.

Each friend took possession of a king.²

Lands are laid waste: no one conceals it.³

This was revealed to Torna Éces by means of his fisidecht (‘seer’s knowledge’) after the men of Ireland demanded of him to discover the place where Da Thí had been buried, so that it was then he made this ‘rhetoric’. And he recited these verses:

(1) Under you lies the king of the men of Inis Fáil, 
Da Thí mac Fíachra, the warrior. 
O Crúachu, you have concealed that 
From foreigners and from the Gaels!

(2) Under you lies swift Dúngalach, 
Who brought the king across the paths of the sea; 
Under you, a revealed gift, 
are Tuathal, [Flannagus], and Tomaltach.

(3) The three sons of Eochu Fedlech the fair 
Lie in your rampart, in your pleasant rampart; 
And Eochu Airem, prostrate, 
After he was killed by Mármáel.

(4) Eochu Fedlech is lord, 
is within, and Drebriu of lovely complexion, 
and Clothru, no disgraceful step; 
and Medb and Muresc.

(5) Ériu, and Fotla, and Banbha, 
Three young women, beautiful, splendid, 
Although they did not spend their wealth, 
It is Crúachu that conceals them.

(6) Mac Cuill, Mac Gréni, a clear step, 
Mac Cecht—whose grave is not less—
In the Ráith of Crúachan which concealed them.
Not a few does the single grave conceal.

² Professor Charles-Edwards has suggested emending cách (2806) to cach. Ferguson, ‘On the Legend of Dathi,’ 173 translates this line: ‘It has been testified to all that it was in royal land the king died.’
³ Charles-Edwards suggest iathra (2807) may be iatha. Ferguson, ibid., 173 translates this line: ‘From all I do not conceal it.’
(7) Labraid Loingsech, a king who was not feeble, Midir, of the Tuatha Dé Danann, Cobthach Cóel Breg—he arranged entertainment—The proud man lies under you.

(8) Side by side is the king And Eochu Fedlech of brilliant fame; And Eochu Airem here On the north side, O Crúachu!

[2851] Then Dorban the poet came across Óenach Cruachan, and he was giving counsel about the mounds of the Óenach and he was counting them through his fisidecht (‘seer’s knowledge’). This was the beginning he made of it: ‘Under you, O noble hill, are Fland, Dub, Dorcha, Eocho Fedlech the generous, his three daughters and his three sons, and the seven noble persons of the race of Ugaine, and the [three] sons of Rossa Rúad of the Leinstermen, including Ailill in the óenach, and the three sisters of Ailill, namely, Níam, Drucht and Dathe. [The three daughters of Ailill are indeed there, and so it was said: ] [2858]

(1) Níam and Drucht and Dathi, three daughters of Ross of Aiche, their seven great brothers, great their household, including Ailill across the fair plain of Brega.

(2) They are in the great mound which is in the óenach without sorrow, the three sons of the king of numerous Leinstermen together with three shapely daughters.

(9) The saint, after the destruction of his wall, said to him secretly, that his burial-place or his grave here would not be well-known, O Crúachu.

(10) Fifty mounds around hilly Crúachu, on the grassy, rich plain there are, both men and women, fifty for each mound.
(3) To recount or to mention
the warriors that lie beneath you
there exists no one among poets
and no one among the wise.

(4) Fifty mounds, I confirm,
are in the Óenach of Crúachan;
under every single mound of them
fifty truly splendid, keen men.

(5) The three pagan cemeteries are these:
the cemetery of Tailtiu for choice,
the cemetery of Crúachu of lasting splendour,
and the cemetery of the Brug.

(6) Every hillock that is within the óenach,
under it lie warriors and queens,
and poets and hunters,
and splendid brave women.

(7) The host of the Connachta, whose noble assembly,
truly, lovely, keen, was triumphant,
lovely the fierce army,
was buried in the fortress of Crúachain.

(8) In that place there is no
mound in the óenach of Crúachan
which is not the grave of a king or a kingly lord
or of a woman or of keen poets.

(9) The host of great Mide
was buried within the populous Brug;
the noble Ulaid used to be buried
in rush-strewn Tailtiu.

(10) Before Conchobor the true Ulaid
were previously buried in Tailtiu,
[[until the death of the raging man.]]
when their glory departed from them.

[2899] Before Conchobor the nobles of the Ulaid used to be buried in Tailtiu, namely,
Ollam Fótla and seven of his sons with him, and his descendants, and a band of the
nobles of the Ulaid. The nobles of the Tuatha Dé Danann [were buried] in the Brug,
namely Lug and Óe mac Ollam and Ogma and Cairpre mac Étaín and Étaín herself, and
the Dagda and his three sons and a great multitude besides the Túatha De Danann and of
the Fir Bolg and everyone besides. The nobles of the Galióin [were buried] in Óenach
Ailbi. The royalty of Munster in Óenach Cúli, in Óenach Colmáin and in Fece. The
Cland Dedad in Temair Érann. The royalty of the Connachta in Crúachu, as we have said

"Fifty mounds in each of these òenaige; fifty mounds in Óenach Crúachan and fifty
mounds in Óenach Tailten and fifty in Óenach in Broga. These are the poets of
Connachta: namely, Dorban and Flaithchius the poet, and Óengus the poet, those people
came from Gnó. Torna Éces and Scannlán mac Eogan the poet, and the poet Dathen,
whom the privileged tree killed—it was from that the name Bile Dathen in land of the
[Uí] Maine derives, and today it is called Bile Scathen.

All those people are in the òenach of Crúachan, and there is a high-king of the
province there, i.e. Ailill son of Mata of Muiresc and his wife, namely Medb daughter of
Eochu Fedlech, after she was brought from Medb’s grave by her people, because they
considered it more distinguished for her to be buried in Crúachu. I cannot count them all.
It is there that Da Thí, high-king of Ireland, was buried, and it is there that are those listed
by Torna Éces. Cíarraige was his compensation (?).

Fland, then and knowledgeable Eochaid, descendant of Cérin, they are the ones
who collected this from the books of Eochaid ua Flannacáin in Armagh and the books of
Monasterboice and from other selected books, namely, from the Yellow Book which was
lost from the prison of Armagh, and from the Short Book which was in Monasterboice,
and the book which the student stole and took with him across the sea and has not
subsequently been found. And that is the Senchas of the Cemeteries.[[}]

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II.3: The Ráith Crúachan Dindshenchas in LL.

This *dindshenchas* is found in *LL*, and the edition below is from the printed version *Leabor Laigneich*, ed. R. I. Best & M. A. O’Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 3 [Dublin, 1957]), 757-8. *Ráith Crúachan* is a combination of two distinct tracts, the first (22551-62) a prose *dindshenchas* of Crúachu based on the *Tochmarc Étaíne*, and the second (22563-85) a prose *senchas* on cemeteries. The first half of this *dindshenchas* is preserved in five other MSS, but in each of these the second half is lacking. The first half of this *dindshenchas* from the Bodleian and Rennes MSS have been edited and translated by Stokes, ‘The Bodleian Dindshenchas,’ 492-3 (§ 27) and Stokes, ‘The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas,’ 463-4. The *Rennes Dindshenchas* recension is identical (except for language modifications) to the first half of *Ráith Crúachan* (*LL*). Material in the second half of *Ráith Crúachan* (*LL*) is seen in the various recensions of *ANÍ*, and has very much in common with that tradition. The second half of the *Ráith Crúachan* has been reprinted (but not translated), and compared with two recensions of *ANÍ* by West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’s Position in the Manuscript History of Togail Bruidne Da Derga and Orgain Brude Uí Dergae,’ 86-7. For the first half of this *dindshenchas* the translation will be based on Stoke’s edition from the *Rennes Dindshenchas* cited above, and the second half is my own translation.

**LL fol. 170*-170b [225551-22585]**

RA[i]th Cruachan can asro hainmniged. Ni *handsa*. Cruachu ɫ Crochen Croderg inait Etaine. dodechaid for athiud la Midir Brí Leith a Fremaind a Oench Oengusa. Ba cara dano do Midir Sinech Sidi Cruachan. Taraill iarum ara dili dia acallaim coro
fostait i suidi fri i.x. tráth. Dorumenair dano Étain ba la Midir in sídsain. ind hí do threbsu in so ol Étain. acc són ol Midir is nessu do thurcháil grene mo threbsa ina so ol Midir. Ceist cia búaí dunni tadall in táníosa ḍ in maigeso ol Crochen Chroderg. Biaid t’ainmsiu fair i log th’astair a Crochen ol Midir.

Luid iarum Midir co Brí Léith conid and ro toglad fair la hEochaid Airemain.

Tosach Tochmaire Etaine ṭ Dindsenchus Cruachan.

ro marb in bili. γ a quo craeb Dathin nominatur. In rigrad immorro i. Ailill γ Medb iarna gait a feirt Medba γ Da Thí mac Fiachrach γ c. Ut Torná Eices cecinit.

Ata fotsu ri fer Fail.

Translation of LL fol. 170ª-170b [225551-22585]

Ráith Cruachan, why was it named?

(That is) not difficult. Cruachu or Cróchen Croderg was the handmaid of Étaín who eloped with Mider of Brí Léith from Fremann, from Óenach Óengusa. Now Sinech of Síd Crúacha was a relative of Mider’s; so because of his affection for her, he, Mider, went to converse with her, and there they were detained for nine watches. So Étaín supposed the elfmound belonged to Mider. ‘Is this your dwelling?’ says Étaín. ‘Nay,’ says Mider ‘my dwelling is nearer than this to the sunrise.’ ‘Query,’ says Cróchen, ‘what profit have we in visiting this elfmound and the plain?’ Says Mider: ‘O Cróchen, in recompense for your travel it shall bear your name.’

Then Mider went to Brí Léith, which was then destroyed by Eocho Airem.

There is the beginning of Tochmarc Étaíne and the dindshenchas of Cruachan.

Fifty hills in the Óenach Cruachan and fifty in the Óenach Tailten and fifty in Óenach in Broga. In the latter are buried the nobles of the Tuatha Dé Danann: the Dagda, Lug, Oengus. Ai mac Ollaman, Ogma, Cairpre the son of Ria and Étaín the female poet and the three sons of the Dagda, i.e. Áed, Cermaid and Óengus, and privileged Luchtinne. And others still of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fir Bolg and the Galióin and the Domnaind (are buried there). Before Conchobor, moreover, the nobles of the Ulaid (were buried) in Óenach Tailten, i.e., Ollam Fotla the son of
Fiachach Findolaid, and seven of his sons with him, and from his descendants, and a
band of nobles of the Ulaid. Seven persons from the Tuatha Dé Danann are still in
Tailtiu, namely: Boand and Bé Chuilli and Dinand and the three Fathecha and
Elcmaire and Crichinbél and Lug Láebach the son of Cachir. The royalty of the
province of the Galióin (were buried) in Óenach Carmain. The royalty of the
Munstermen in Óenach Cuili and in Óenach Colmáin. In Temair Érann and in Temair
Luachra Dedaid the féci (summit?) of the Clann Dedaid, namely, Daire the son of
Dedaid, around Cú Ruí the son of Daire and around Dornmar and around seven fifties
of the descendants of Daire the son of Dedad. The royalty of the Connachta in
Óenach Cruachan. And their poets, namely: Adna the son of Uthir and Caear and
Moen and Morand, Etna and Allgba, Dorbban and Flaithgius and Óengus the poet,
and the later was the foster-son of Torna Éces. And Sganlan the son of Eogain the
poet. And Becc the son of Gneae the son of Gollain the cryer and the poet, and
Dathen Éces. It is he whom the tree killed, from whence the Bile Dathin is named.
The royalty, namely, Ailill and Medb were afterwards taken from Fert Medb, and Da
Thí the son of Fiachrach, etc. As Torna Éces has sung.

There lies beneath the king of Fál.