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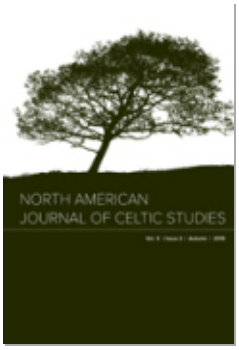

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Sources of Irish mythology. The significance of the *dinnṡenchas*

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ABSTRACT: *Dinnṡenchas Érenn* 'The lore of famous places of Ireland' contains within it a significant number of tales or mentions of tales whose main characters are of the Túatha Dé Donann. Consequently, this large and detailed corpus of aetiological stories and poems is an important source of mythological narratives and information. The relationships between the prose and poetry in the collection, and the earlier sources which they may have drawn upon, allow for very interesting and informative intertextual studies to be undertaken. In some cases, however, the *dinnṡenchas* corpus is the oldest—and sometimes the only—source for the narratives being related. Consequently, one of the aspects of the compilation of *Dinnṡenchas Érenn* which is most difficult to assess is the influence of the learned literary sources it draws upon versus the extent to which it reuses and reworks earlier traditional materials.

KEYWORDS: *Dinnṡenchas Érenn,* aetiology, etymology, mythology, literary sources, traditional narrative lore, Middle Irish, synthetic compilation

IN ANY ATTEMPT to interpret *dinnṡenchas* texts as documents of cultural memory, we must seek to identify the material preserved therein which has special meaning and which, in the words of Egeler 2018: 26, 'turns "space" into "place", creating a habitable,

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familiar world with a deep cultural significance out of mere locations'. In so doing, we must seek to distinguish in the corpus—where possible—between traditional materials passed down through successive generations and *dinnṡenchas* articles which may be later scholarly creations and which may not possess the same deep mythological and cultural meaning. Making such distinctions is all the more challenging as one of the key problems we have in dealing with medieval myth is that it can only be viewed through the imperfect lens of textuality, and, consequently, it is often difficult to understand fully the societal contexts which it once possessed.

These observations are of particular significance here because Ó Cuív 1989–1990: 103 has noted, with regard to the constituent material in the *dinnṡenchas* corpus, that 'legends from the so-called "Mythological Cycle" are by far the most numerous'; this has been quantified somewhat recently by Carey 2018: 40, who reckons that the *dinnṡenchas* includes at least 30 tales, or mentions of tales, whose main characters are of the Túatha Dé Donann.[1] He has made two pertinent comments on this state of affairs: firstly, he argues that 'the primary focus of *dindṡenchas* is onomastic, not "mythological", and [that] it draws its tales from every part of the narrative tradition' (2018: 6); and secondly, that some of these narratives are so abbreviated

> that it is hard to be confident that any authentic tradition lies behind them: they may well represent no more than perfunctory *ad hoc* fabrication. Others share so many characters or plot elements with better-known stories that it seems probable that they have been more or less directly based upon them. Elsewhere, however, we appear to have alternative versions of tales (Carey 2018: 40).

This second comment here about how *ad hoc* fabrication may underpin some of the corpus is in line with what has been claimed previously for the *dinnṡenchas* by a number of commentators; see, for example, Byrne 1967–1968: 386; Ó Corráin 2017: iii 1542–1546 §1144. More interesting to me, however, is the contention that 'the primary focus of *dindṡenchas* is onomastic', a statement which, on initial examination, would appear to be

[1] I follow Carey in loosely defining the mythological corpus as stories concerning the Túatha Dé (Donann) or 'people of the *síde*'. The definition of myth that I am using is that of 'a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events'. It will not be possible in this essay to scrutinise, or even itemise, all the mythological materials preserved in the *dinnṡenchas.*

One might mention as a further example of the type of story found in the collection the article on Duma Selga (Dinds. xv 470–472 §71; Metr. Dinds. iii 386–395) which provides a detailed narrative concerning six humans transformed into the swine of Derbrenn, their relationship with Óengus Mac ind Óc, and the killing of five of them in a hunt by Medb and the men of Connacht. These swine are mentioned again in the *dinnṡenchas* of Loch Nill (Dinds. xv 473–474 §73; Metr. dinds. iii 404–407) and in the *dinnṡenchas* of Corand [Céis Choraind] (Dinds. xv 477–478; Metr. dinds. iii 438–439).

Similarly, one of the anonymous readers has directed my attention to the article on Mag Muirtheimne (Metr. dinds. iv 294–295) which contains a fascinating account of the Dagda's encounter with a *muirṡeilche* 'sea-turtle, octopus?' while brandishing a weapon known as *lorg anfaidh* 'the cudgel of fury?'; its source is the passage on Mag Muirtheimne found in *Tochmarc Emire* 'The wooing of Emer' (Comp. CC 35–36 §34). All such tales would repay further in-depth investigation.

axiomatic and fundamental to the way that these texts are structured. The corpus engages with many different narrative materials which, 'though disparate in origin, have been largely harmonized in form, style, and purpose to create a distinctive genre, one famously if inaccurately referred to as "the mythological geography of the country"'.[2] While the organisation of these disparate materials into a distinct corpus—assembled as 'The lore of famous places of Ireland' (*Dinnṡenchas Érenn*)—is well understood, and while placenames purport to be at the heart of this collection, I am not sure that this, in fact, is always the case when the matter is subjected to further scrutiny. One reason for doubt on this point is because it has been pointed out that

> in the published volumes of the *Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames* (A–C), there are 135 distinct placenames quoted from the Rennes Dinnṡenchas. Of these, 52 are not otherwise attested outside of *dinnṡenchas* sources; only 7 of these 52 have been unambiguously identified with extant names, and some—though serving an onomastic function—would seem to be very doubtful examples of actual placenames (Murray, forthcoming).

Thus, from the sample examined, it would seem that a collection which purports to be onomastically focused has a large percentage of placenames which appear to be self-referential, and otherwise largely unidentified in texts or landscapes.[3] And all of this while significant sites, many of which are mentioned en passant in the corpus, have no dedicated articles of their own.[4]

When we examine the *dinnṡenchas* elements which are extant as parts of various stories and poems outside of the corpus, we find that they generally serve important narratological functions. Found in texts from the Old Irish period onwards, quite frequently these are used to name, and sometimes even claim, the landscape, a mode of expression also found in some hagiographical texts; see, for example, Doherty 1982: 309; Herbert 2004: 130. In certain cases, even greater assertions have been made about the significance of such narrative passages. For example, in his analysis of *De chophur in dá muccida* 'On the quarrel(?) of the two swineherds', Mac Cana 1970: 50 sees in the

> encounter of the two bulls . . . the original nucleus of myth around which the extant narrative of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* has been assembled. These animals are not of this world: they reached their present state, we are told, only after a prolonged series of metamorphoses . . . and in the beginning they were swineherds of two of

[2] Murray 2017: 14. The phrase quoted is from Sjoestedt 1949: 1.

[3] As one of the anonymous readers reminds me, this is reminiscent of what we find in the major Finn Cycle narrative, *Acallam na senórach* 'The colloquy of the ancients'. As Ó Coileáin 1993: 60 has remarked about such placenames, '[s]ome of these may never have had more than a potential existence, as it were, to be actualised only in the imagination of the hearer . . . And even when the placename is a "real" one, reality always being a relative term in this context, it still inclines towards narrative'. For further discussion, see Murray 2015.

[4] Examples include Áine Chliach, Airgeadros*, Caiseal, Cnámchaill, Cnoc Luinge*, Dinn Ríg, Druim Damgaire*, Ros Comáin*, and Síd Nenta (* = not mentioned at all in the corpus).

> the lords of the otherworld. Here the shapeshifting which is such a commonplace of Celtic tradition serves to link the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic aspects of the deity.

Consequently, it has been suggested that the distribution of the various parts of Findbennach Aí 'The Fair-Horned Bull of Mag nAí', across the landscape in *Táin bó Cúailnge* 'The cattle-raid of Cooley'—which leads to the naming of Áth Lúain among other places—may transcend the naming process and represent an Irish version of the myth of 'the creation of the cosmos' (Lincoln 1981: 87–88; see also Sayers 1985). However, this suggestion has not found much purchase in the field of Celtic studies.[5]

Many observations may be made on the way this narrative tradition (outlined above) has been reworked in the *dinnṡenchas* article on Áth Lúain; this of course is a very well-known placename in the centre of Ireland and an important fording point across the River Shannon. The prose of this text reads as follows in the *dinnṡenchas* preserved in Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole MS 598 (15489) [henceforth **R**]:[6]

> Āth Lūain canas ro*ainmniged?* Nī *ansa.* Āth Mōr a ain*m* ar tús co glic i*n* Duind Chūail[n]ge 7 i*n*d Findben*n*aigh. Is *ed* at-fēt a nEchtra Nera i*m*thūs na dā mucad bād*ur* i secht rectaib .i. blīad*ain* lān ca*ch* āo. 7 bāt*ar* hé-sin dā mac Chruind m*ei*c Aghnom*an,* Rucht 7 Ruicne a n-an*m*and. Éitce is Engan a dā n-ain*m* ina n-énaib. Cú 7 Cethen íad i*n*a conaib. Bledh īat 7 Blodh ina mbreacoib Bōin*n*e. Gruinniuc 7 Dubmuc īad dīamd*ar* duirb.
>
> Do-luid īar*um* in Cruindiucc co Glais C*r*uin*n* a Cūail[n]ge. Luid da*nó* Dubmuc co ndellic i nÚarán Garaig. Luid da*nó* bó do Dāire mac Fīach*na co*nos-ib digh a Glais C*r*uind 7 co tarrla in duirb ina broi*n*n co*m*bo lāogh īa*r* dai*n.* Luid da*nó* bó do Meidb *co*noss-ib dig a Tiprait Garaidh co tarrla dī in duirb eile 7 ba láog hé ina broind pos*tea.*
>
> Marba da*nó* na dí bāo dīa mbr*eith,* in tarb tai*r* don*n,* in ta*r*b tíar im*morro* tarb d*er*g fi*n*dbendach. Īar*um* do-rī*acht* bō Nero *co*na tarb ina dīaigh *co*ro gēis oc Ráith Crūachan coro moth*aig* in Fi*n*dben*n*ach *co*ro gleac dōib 7 ba fo*r*tail in dart*aid. Co* n-ērr*acht* Medb do gres*acht* a tairb co torcair in tarb tuc ben Aign*in co*nid and as-b*er*t ben Agni*n:* 'faichle lat, a ath*air* mo tai*r*b-se .i. Dond Cūailnge'.

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[5] The reluctance of scholars of medieval Ireland to engage with cosmogonic readings of such material may reflect their collective unease in dealing with mythology more generally (with some notable exceptions such as Rees & Rees 1961, Mac Cana 1970, and the contributions of scholars such as Tomás Ó Cathasaigh and Joseph Nagy), an unease which stretches back to the time when numerous criticisms were levelled against this aspect of T. F. O'Rahilly's otherwise wonderful *Early Irish history and mythology* (1946).

Evidence that this situation is changing may be deduced from the publication of a number of significant new works in the field: Grigory Bondarenko's *Studies in Irish mythology* (2014), Mark Williams' *Ireland's immortals. A history of the gods of Irish myth* (2016), and John Carey's *The mythological cycle of medieval Irish literature* (2018), alongside the establishment of the 'New Approaches to Celtic Religion and Mythology' series by the University of Wales Press.

[6] I focus mainly in this essay on the copy of the *dinnṡenchas* preserved in this vellum.

IS īarum do-luid co ceitrib cōicedhaib Ērenn hi crīch nUlad 7 Fergus d'eōlus rempu co rīacht Magh Coba conid andsin bátar Ulaid 'na ceis caicīs lán ina longport. Medb danó rīa trían ele dona slúagaib co rīacht Dún Soboirce co tuc [a]mnaī Conaill Cernaig[a].

Cechaing Buide mac Bāin Blāith co Glenn na Samaisce conid ann fūaratar in Dond Cūailnge co tuc leis coa longphort. Is ann bāo Concobur hi Cind Tíre in tansin. Ro bātar danó .iii. meic Fīachrach .i. Ros 7 Dāire 7 Imchad, .iii. ríg Cū[ai]lnge [b]7[b] Findtan mac Nēill 7 Cethern mac Findtain 7 Ilíach 7 Rochaid mac Faithemoin 7 Sūalatach mac Becaltaig athair Con Culainn ina ndíaigh. Conid īarum do-rīacht Cū Culainn coro marb ilmīle dīb ō Gáirig co hIlgāirigh 7 ō Ṡamhoin co cetaīn íar nImbulg foroib co toracht Concobur anoir. 7 cīa ro moid sīar postea is síar rucad Tāin Bó Cúailnge 7 ro-síacht |fo. 112[rb]1| in Dond Cúailnge co Tarbda coro gleacsat hi sechtmad ló erraig conid dē is-berar Tarbga. 7 do-rochair in Findbendach la Dond Cúailnge 7 ro foghail īar suidhiu ic Loch Derige 7 tuc a lōn co hÁth Lúain 7 a dā airrbe co Mucfhind 7 a cride co Dūn Croin 7 a drond co Droing nAsoil 7 a leas co hInis Glais 7 a lecnæ co Lecoin Mōir Midhe 7 cach airm hi ruc ní dē maraid fair a ainm in baill-sin. Unde Āth Lūain no[m]inatur.[7]

[a-a] superscript. [b-b] sic **B**; *om.* **R**.

Áth Lúain, why was it so called? Not difficult that. Áth Mór ('Big Ford') was its name at first until the contest of the Brown Bull of Cooley with the Fair-Horned One. It is this which [the poet] relates in *Echtra Nera* concerning the two swineherds who were in seven forms, i.e., a full year in each of them. They were the two sons of Crond mac Agnoman, Rucht and Ruicne their names. Éitce and Engan their two names when birds; Cú and Cethen when hounds; Bled and Blod when trout of the Boyne; Gruinniuc and Dubmuc when they were water beetles.

Cruindiucc came thereafter to Glas Cruind in Cooley. Dubmuc went, moreover, and lay down in Oran. Then a cow belonging to Dáire mac Fíachna went and took a drink at Glas Cruind so that the water beetle went into her womb so that it was a calf after that. A cow belonging to Medb took a drink at Tiprat Garaid and the other water beetle entered her and was a calf in her womb thereafter.

The two cows died while calving; the bull in the west was brown, the bull in the east, moreover, was red and fair-horned. Then Nera's cow came with her calf following and bellowed at Ráith Chrúachan, and the Fair-Horned One perceived him; they fought and the young calf was victorious. Medb arose to incite

[7] Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole MS 598, f. 112[ra]1–112[b]9; the poetry for this article follows at f. 112[rb]10–112[va]35. The prose is printed in Dinds. xv 464–467 §66. A version of the poem which draws upon multiple manuscript witnesses is printed in Metr. dinds. iii 366–375. As Stokes has only edited the prose from this codex, I provide new semi-diplomatic editions and translations of the articles under discussion. Word division, addition of macrons, and the formatting of the verse (based on the layout in the manuscript) is editorial, as is most of the punctuation and capitalisation. No nasalisation or lenition has been added or removed; no macrons have been placed over the æ ligature. Words and letters omitted are added in square brackets; superfluous letters and words are enclosed in round brackets. Variant readings offered throughout are from the Book of Ballymote (henceforth **B**).

her bull, and the bull which the wife of Aignen gave [her] fell and then Aignen's wife said: 'let you beware the father of my bull, i.e., the Brown Bull of Cooley'.

Then she came with four provinces of Ireland into the territory of the Ulstermen with Fergus guiding them until they reached Mag Coba, for it was there that the Ulstermen were in their debility for a full fortnight in their encampment. And Medb then came to Dún Sobairce at the head of another third of the hosts and took the wife of Conall Cernach.[8]

Buide mac Báin Bláith proceeded to Glenn na Samaisce and there they found the Brown Bull of Cooley and he took him with him to his encampment. Conchobor was in Kintyre at that time. There were besides three sons of Fíachra, i.e., Ros, Dáire, and Imchad, three kings of Cooley, and Findtan mac Néill and Cethern mac Findtain, and Ilíach and Rochaid mac Faithemoin and Súalatach mac Becaltaig father of Cú Chulainn after them. And then Cú Chulainn approached and killed many thousands of them from Gáirech to Ilgáirech and from Samain to the Wednesday after Imbolg until Conchobor came from the east. And although he defeated them in the west thereafter, it is westward that the cattle-raid of Cooley was brought and the Brown Bull of Cooley reached Tarbga and they fought on the seventh day of spring and that is why Tarbga is so called. And the Fair-Horned One fell by the Brown Bull of Cooley and he despoiled him after that at Lough Derg and he brought his loin to Athlone and his two ribs to Mucfhind and his heart to Dún Croin and his chine to Drong Asail and his haunch to Inis Glais and his cheeks to Lackin and every place in which he took part of him it remains as the name of that place. Thus Áth Lúain ('The Ford of Loin') is named.[9]

Within Irish narrative tradition, it is clear that the article on Áth Lúain draws on both *De chophur in dá muccida* (here erroneously referred to as *Echtra Nera* 'The adventure of Nera', which is a different tale entirely)[10] and the most famous saga in medieval Irish literature, *Táin bó Cúailnge.*[11] The nature of this relationship is not entirely clear, however. For ex-

[8] As Gwynn 1903–1935: iii 545[44] points out, '[n]othing is heard of Conall Cernach's wife in any version of the Táin . . . perhaps Conall is here confounded with Celtchar, whose wife Findmór was carried off by Medb from Dun Sobairche'. The incident in question is found in TBC[1] 47.1531–1536. This confusion may reflect the fact that numerous sources name Níam, daughter of Celtchar mac Uithechair, as Conall's wife.

[9] The possible links between this narrative nexus (i.e., of *De chophur in dá muccida* and the *dinnṡenchas* of Áth Lúain) on the one hand and the presentation of Þórólfr Twist-Foot in Chapter 31 of the Old Icelandic *Eyrbyggja saga* on the other have been profitably analysed recently by Egeler 2018: 221–249. He highlights parallels between the Irish and Norse sources including the transformations of Þórólfr Twist-Foot and the swineherds; their conceptions through ingestion of ashes/water-worms by a cow; their rebirths as bulls; and their putative naming of places dealing with water and (perhaps) light: Glæsiskelda 'Spring of Brightness' in the Norse sources and Áth Lúain 'The Ford of Loin/Brightness' in the Irish ones. The existence of such comparanda suggests that the composers of the Norse material may have been familiar with at least some of these Irish sources.

[10] However, the later reference in the text to Nera's cow bellowing with her calf at Ráith Chrúachan, the mention of the wife of Aignen (recte Aingen), and the warning concerning the Brown Bull of Cooley are all found in *Echtra Nera;* see Ech. N 224–227 §15.

[11] Further comparisons with this narrative tradition may be made with the *dinnṡenchas* article on Mag Tarbga (as pointed out by Thurneysen 1921: 245–246) and with that on Luimnech (see Metr. dinds. iii

ample, when we compare the evidence of the two manuscript witnesses to *De chophur in dá muccida* (Roider 1979: 40 & 58)—the Book of Leinster and British Library MS Egerton 1782—with that found in the article on Áth Lúain, we find that even such pertinent information as the various names of the main characters is inconsistently transmitted:

Book of Leinster	Egerton 1782	Rennes Dinnṡenchas
Names: Rúcht 7 Runce (also Friuch)	*Names:* Rūcht ˏ Ruiccni (also Friuch)	*Names:* Rucht 7 Ruicne
Birds: Ingen 7 Eitte	*Birds:* Ingen 7 Ette	*Birds:* Éitce 7 Engan
Underwater creatures: Bled 7 Blod	*Underwater creatures:* Bled 7 Blod	*Hounds:* Cú 7 Cethen
Fighters: Rind 7 Fāebur	*Fighters:* Rinn 7 Fōebar	*Trout of the Boyne:* Bledh 7 Blodh
Phantoms: Scáth 7 Scíath	*Phantoms:* Scīath 7 Scāth	*Water beetles:* Gruinniuc 7 Dubmuc
Water beetles: Crunniuc 7 Tuinniucc	*Water beetles:* Cruinniucc 7 Tummucc	*Bulls:* Findbennach Aí 7 Donn
Bulls: Finnbend Aí 7 in Dond Cūalngi	*Bulls:* Finn 7 Dubh	Cúailnge

Furthermore, a couple of the stages of the transformations—those as fighters and phantoms—are missing in the *dinnṡenchas* account, though it does interpose an extra category of change with the two swineherds appearing as hounds. However, while these might be significant oversights if the aim of the author was the retelling (or copying) of *De chophur in dá muccida,* they do not seem as important within the context of the creation of a *dinnṡenchas* article on Áth Lúain. The use of *De chophur* here is primarily to sharpen the narrative focus: used in conjunction with discrete elements of the *Táin,* it calls to mind for the audience the large body of tradition present in this epic, the mythological significance of the bulls therein, and it both invokes and details the naming of the landscape from the body parts of the defeated animal.

When existing materials are brought together to form part of *Dinnṡenchas Érenn,* however, the emphasis changes somewhat. In such cases, the broader narrative function, as I see it, is not primarily onomastic, but etymological and aetiological.[12] A single example will suffice to illustrate the point. In the recycling of the tradition concerning *Aided Óenḟir Aífe* 'The death of Aífe's Only Son' in the *dinnṡenchas* corpus, the account is denuded of its narrative focus, transformed from a tragic tale of 'Father and Son Conflict' into the bare bones of a story, all to give an etymological explanation for an otherwise unattested placename: Lecht óenḟir Aífe 'The Stone of Aífe's Only Son'.[13] This constitutes reworking of an existing tradition so as to give it a *dinnṡenchas* focus which is not present in the earlier text. This may be contrasted with Áth Lúain, discussed above, which I would see as a more natural adaptation. Here, the author is not creating an aetiology for an unknown placename anew, but is making use of an existing aetological narrative for a well-known site in order to recycle it in the compilation of *Dinnṡenchas Érenn.* And, in so doing, the outline of the entire tradition and the whole of this story nexus is brought into the orbit of this brief article, and, in namechecking this aspect of the *Táin,* the entire epic is being invoked.

270–275).

[12] One of the anonymous readers makes the very valid point that the prose in the *dinnṡenchas* tends to be more aetiologically minded than the verse. For perceptive comments on the use of aetiology in medieval Ireland, see Baumgarten 1990.

[13] See McCone 2016. The full dinnṡenchas article is published in Murray, forthcoming.

The origins of such tales frequently remain uncited in the *dinnṡenchas* and must be investigated using intertextual analysis, though there are further articles present in the corpus which also name their sources. Take, for example, that concerning Lusmag 'The Plain of Herbs', a name which survives to this day in the parish of Lusmagh, barony of Garrycastle, Co. Offaly:

> Lusmagh canas ro *ainmniged?* Nī *ansa.* IS as tuc Dīan Cēcht cach [a]lus n-íce[a] *con*-ammalt ar Tiprait Slāinge i *n*dAch*ad* Abla fri Magh Tu*r*edh anīartūaid in tan fechta in cath mōr et*er* Tūatha Dea 7 Fomoire. C*a*ch ōen do Tūathaib Dē D*o*nann no laigtis fōn lind lusraidh-sin at-*r*aighedh slemo*in* slāncrēchtach. Un*de* Lusm*ag* no*min*atur.
>
> [a-a] sic **B**; luid íce **R**.
>
> IN eōl dūib in-ī dīa fail
> Lusmadh cosin lí luchair?
> Rīa cath Maide Tuired tē
> ba Mag Muiredh Moncuide.
>
> Ō cath Maighe Tuiredh tūaidh
> ain*m* dō Lusmagh co læchbúaidh
> and ro ben Dīan C*ēcht* ce*n* cai*r*
> l*us* ra c*a*ch crēcht dīa cobair.
>
> *Con*-melt c*a*ch lus lāth*a*r nglē
> hi f*us* a*r* Tiprait Slāi*n*ge
> a nAch*ud* Abla fuilech
> ba cab*r*a ríg robuidech.
>
> Cach lāoch no laighed fōn lind
> at-*r*aigedh súas co slā*n*grind
> c*e*n on c*e*n ai*n*im c*e*n olc
> f*o*r agaigh nō [a]for a*r*dcorp[a].
>
> [a-a] sic **B**; f*o*rd chorp **R**.
>
> IS ed-sin fo-d*e*r*a* tan
> L*usm*a*g* na legha labar
> do gnī*m*radh Dīan Cēcht na ceōl
> drēcht *co* ndīrgudh ro-dageōl. IN.[14]

[14] Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole MS 598, f. 120^{vb}26–46. The prose is printed in Dinds. xvi 59–60 §108. A version of the poem which draws upon multiple manuscript witnesses is printed in Metr. dinds. iv 182–185. I wish to thank one of the anonymous readers for pointing out that there is an additional verse on Lusmag in the poem beginning *Eri íarthar talman toirtigh* attributed to Gilla na Náem Úa Duind (Dinds. Uí Maine 78 §25):

> Dian Cecht tug gac(h) lus o Lusmaigh
> liaig tuath De Danann in tsluaig
> fo rath na luibhi ra luigeadh
> a cath Maigi Tuireadh tuaidh.

> Lusmag, why was it so called? Not difficult. It is from there that Dían Cécht took every healing herb and ground them over Sláinge's Well in Achad Abla north-west of Mag Tuired when the great battle was fought between Túatha Dea and Fomoire. Every one of Túatha Dé Donann who used to lie down in that pool of herbs used to arise whole with their wounds healed. Thus Lusmag ('The Plain of Herbs') is named.
>
> > Do ye know that from which Lusmag with its bright lustre [is named]? Before the fervent battle of Mag Tuired, it was known as Mag Muired Moncuide.
> >
> > North from the battle of Mag Tuired, its name was Lusmag of heroic victory; it was there that flawless Dían Cécht applied an herb to every wound to aid it.
> >
> > He ground every herb, a bright arrangement, here upon Tiprait Sláinge in blood-stained Achad Abla, he was the succour of grateful kings.
> >
> > Every warrior who used to lie in the pool used to rise up healthy and vigorous, without blemish, without defect, without injury, on face or on noble body.
> >
> > It is that which gave rise to Lusmag of the talkative doctors from the activity of Dían Cécht of the compositions, a regulating poem of great good knowledge.

Inspired no doubt by its name, this brief anecdote reworks the following information from *Cath Maige Tuired* 'The battle of Moytirra':

> Is edh dano doberiud bruth isna hógaib nogontais ann, comtar ániu íarnauhárach: fo bíth roboí Díen Cécht 7 a dí mac 7 a ingen .i. Ochttríuil 7 Airmedh 7 Míach oc dícetul foran tibrait .i. Sláine a hainm. Focertdidis a n-athgoíte indte immairlestis; botar bí notégdis esde. Bati[r] slán a n-athgoíte tre nert an dícetail na cethri lege robátar imon tibrait.
>
> Now this is what used to kindle the warriors who were wounded there so that they were more fiery the next day: Dían Cécht, his two sons Ochtriuil and Míach, and his daughter Airmed were chanting spells over the well named Sláine. They would cast their mortally-wounded men into it as they were struck down; and they were alive when they came out. Their mortally-wounded were healed through the power of the incantation made by the four physicians who were around the well (CMT[2] 54.538–543).

and:

> Luid trá Gaibniu fon tibrait 7 ba slán-side. Bai ócláech lasno Fomore .i. Octríallach mac Indich meic Déi Domnann, mac ríg Fomore. Atbert-side frisna Fomore aro tabroidis cloich cech áinfir leo de clochaib Drobésa do cor ar tibrait Sláine a n-Achad Abla fri Magh Tuired andíar, fri Loch n-Arboch antúaid. Lotar didiu, 7 doberod cloich cech fir forin tiprait. Gonud [d]e atá Carn Ochtríaldaig foran carn. Ainm n-aild dano din tibroid-sin Loch Luibe, ar dobered Díen Cécht ind cech losa rouhótar a n-Éri.
>
> Then Goibniu went into the well and he became whole. The Fomoire had a warrior named Ochtríallach, the son of the Fomorian king Indech mac Dé Domnann. He suggested that every single man they had should bring a stone from the stones of the river Drowes to cast into the well of Sláine in Achad Abla to the west of Mag Tuired, to the east of Lough Arrow. They went, and every man put a stone into the well. For that reason the cairn is called Ochtríallach's Cairn. But another name for that well is Loch Luibe, because Dían Cécht put into it every herb that grew in Ireland (CMT[2] 56.560–567).

This well functions similarly to the *peir dadeni* 'cauldron of rebirth' which plays such an important part in the second branch of the *Mabinogi.* The origin of this cauldron in *Branwen* lies with Llasar Llaes Gyfnewid and his wife Cymidai Cymeinfoll, who emerge from *Llyn y Peir* 'The Lake of the Cauldron' in Ireland. The Irish king Matholwch initially takes them under his protection, but, in the end, he and his people try to burn them to death within the Iron House, forcing them to escape and flee to king Bendigeidfran, who receives the cauldron from the giants; he later gives it to Matholwch as a peace gift. Ultimately, it is destroyed by Bendigeidfran's half-brother, Efnisien, because the Irish are using the cauldron to bring their dead warriors back to life.[15] The parallels between the functions and uses of the well in *Cath Maige Tuired* which restores the mortally wounded to health and the cauldron in *Branwen* are striking.[16]

The tradition which underpins the article on Lusmag in the *dinnṡenchas*—that of Dían Cécht placing the herbs in the well of Sláine (in the modern townland of Heapstown, parish of Kilmacallan, parish of Tirerrill, Co. Sligo, about 2.5 miles from Moytirra) to create a well of re-generation—derives from what is perhaps the principal mythological text surviving from medieval Ireland. Here, we see 'the creative redeployment of inherited materials' (Carey 2018: 37) in furtherance of different aims; in this case, the desire to provide a plausible aetiological origin for the name of Lusmag 'The Plain of Herbs'. A couple of observations are pertinent here. Firstly, the fact that the tradition which is being re-

[15.] Similar cauldrons in Welsh tales include the cauldron of Diwrnach the Irishman in *Culhwch ac Olwen,* the cauldron Cerridwen in the story of Taliesin, and the cauldron of the Head of Annwfn in *Preiddeu Annwfn.* For discussion, see Sims-Williams 2011: 230–261. He believes that 'the idea of a "cauldron of rebirth" could have emerged at many stages and its precise origin is probably irrecoverable' (234).

[16.] These have been discussed in detail in Mac Cana 1958: 50–64. Some reservations about the conclusions reached there have been expressed in Miles 2006: 35–36.

used here has no known connection with Lusmagh in Co. Offaly does not detract from the fact that it is authentic material from *Cath Maige Tuired*—explicitly cited by name in the text—which is being re-used. Secondly, the concept of the 'immanent narrative', i.e., one which is not related explicitly as a whole, but one whose broad outline is known by the relevant audience, is of significance here.[17] Similar to what we have seen for the *dinnṡenchas* of Áth Lúain, by citing an element of a story—and additionally, as in both these cases, namechecking its origin—the whole of the larger tale complex is being invoked and is brought to the mind of the audience, whether listener or reader. Connections are made—even if otherwise unattested—which may just be one-off literary reworkings, but which are seen to be true within the context of the tale. We are told in *Cath Maige Tuired* that *dobered Díen Cécht ind cech losa rouhótar a n-Éri* 'Dían Cécht put into it (i.e., the well of Sláine) every herb that grew in Ireland'; consequently, that he is said in the *dinnṡenchas* to have taken herbs from 'The Plain of Herbs' for this work is consistent with the original narrative. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the connection between Dían Cécht and Lusmag is attested only in this article.

Carey has pointed to other such mythological associations which are to be found solely in the *dinnṡenchas.* For example, he notes a few other articles in the corpus which 'are ancillary to the events of *Cath Maige Tuired*' such as 'the association of Loch Cé with a druid of Núadu's . . . the explanations offered for the name Umall . . . or the list of fallen warriors of the Fomoiri in the account of Slíab Badbgna' (2018: 40[11]). It is worth exploring such connections a little further by examining the prose article from the Edinburgh Dinnṡenchas concerning Loch Cé which is here given:

> Loch Cé, can*us* rohainmnigh*ed*h? Ni *ansa.* Cé .i. drái Nuadh*at* Airg*et*laim m*eic* Ech*t*aigh m*eic* Et*er*laim rotáet a *cath* Maig*e* Tu*red*h īarna guin isin cath co rainic Carn Coirrsl*éb*hi 7 co rainic in Magh Airni a fuil in loch, 7 docer Cáe ann sin, *con*id ica idhn*a*cal ro meb*aid*h in lo*ch.* Un*de* Loch Cé.
>
> Loch Cé, why was it so called? Not difficult. Cé, the druid of Núadu Airgetlám mac Echtaig meic Eterlaim, entered the battle of Mag Tured. After being wounded in the fight, he came to Carn Corṙslébe, and (then) he came to Mag Airne, where the lake is. And Cé fell there, and at his burial the lake burst forth. Whence is Loch Cé ('Cé's Lake').[18]

Here we find an otherwise unmentioned Cé, said to be a druid of Núadu's, named as the eponym of Loch Cé, modern-day Lough Key in Co. Roscommon. Though this explanation seems contrived, it has the advantage of localising events, in this case as the path from Moytirra to Lough Key down through the Curlew Mountains is a journey of less than 10

[17] This concept has been outlined by Clover 1986: 23–27. Its relevance to medieval Irish narrative has been discussed by Poppe 2008: 13–14.

[18] Ed. dinds. 492 §75 (Stokes' translation has been modified slightly here). The full prosimetric *dinnṡenchas* article on Loch Cé from the Book of Lecan is printed in Ann. Loch Cé i pp. xxxvi–xxxix.

miles and these three locations all form part of the one mythic landscape. In the poetry, this proximity is made even more explicit when we are told (Metr. dinds. iii 400–401) that the druid *Tánic ó Mag Tured te* 'From Mag Tured yonder, he came', as if the poem was composed locally, as well it might have been (thought the phrase need not be understood so literally). Consequently, though we may well doubt the traditionality of the links so created, this does not mean that we should necessarily doubt the authenticity of the broader mythological contexts which underpin these accounts. There is a significant difference between '*ad hoc* invention of a myth' and reworking and extension of a traditional mythic complex to forge links which may not have existed previously or which are not part of its original iteration. And I think contemporary audiences would have been much more attuned than us to the differences between both approaches.

It may be pertinent to scrutinise here a story with significant mythological elements which seems not to be otherwise attested outside of the *dinnṡenchas* corpus. The article in question is that dealing with Móenmag (which is around Loughrea, Co. Galway). In the prose (which I give below), this plain is said to be named for Móen (called Móen mac Allguba in the poetical account), a slave of the sons of Míl:

> Māenmag, canas ro *ainmniged?* Nī *ansa.* Mōen mogaid m*a*c Mīl*ed,* is é no b*e*rr*ad* clai*n*d nGailim, is ē *cét*na fer ro berrad i nĒiri*n*d .i. Forbarr sær m*a*c Mīl*ed* 7 ba rāthmogaid da*n*ó in Mæn-sin is dō da*n*ó tucc*ad* Berramai*n* a mæn a berrta. Un*de* d*i*citu*r* Berramai*n* .i. somáin in berrtha 7 is lais ro sl*echt*a ferann Fuithir m*a*ic F*o*rduib, *con*id edh is-b*e*rar Mænmagh 7 is and at-bath Mæn īar*um* .i. a *Mæn*maig. Un*de* d*i*cuntu*r* M*óen*m*ag* 7 Berra*m*ai*n;* de qui*b*u*s* ho*c* car*men.*[19]
>
> Móenmag, why was it so called? Not difficult that. Móen the slave of the sons of Míl, it is he who used to shear the descendants of Gailem, he is the first man who was shorn in Ireland, i.e., Forbarr, the wright of the sons of Míl; and that Móen was a rath-builder and to him, moreover, was given Berramain as reward for his shearing. Thus Berramain is said, i.e., the good reward for the shearing, and it is by him that the land of Fuither mac Forduib was cleared, so that it is called Móenmag; and it is there that Móen died thereafter, i.e., in Móenmag. Thus are said Móenmag and Berramain; whence this poem.

[19.] Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole MS 598, f. 110^{vb}22–33; the poetry for this article follows at f. 111ra1–30. The prose is printed in Dinds. xv 461 §63. A version of the poem which draws upon multiple manuscript witnesses is printed in Metr. dinds. iii 334–337. Once again, as pointed out by one of the anonymous readers, there is an additional verse on Móenmag in the poem beginning *Eri íarthar talman toirtigh* attributed to Gilla na Náem Úa Duind (Dinds. Uí Maine 86 §90):

> Berrt(h)oir mac Milead inaen amhnas
> alaind leis Maenmach gan maeir
> buan-ainm ar Bearramhain buidhnigh
> o ealadhain muirnigh Mhaein.

Such naming makes Móen a brother to others designated as eponyms of plains such as Áe mac Allguba (whence Mag nAí),[20] Aidne mac Allguba (whence Mag nAidni),[21] and Ceitne mac Allguba (whence Mag Ceitne).[22] Thus, though this particular tale concerning Móen is (to my knowledge) otherwise unattested, the linking of sons of Allguba to important plains in Connacht has a wider context.[23] It seems probable that these brief origin tales emerged from the construction of *Dinnṡenchas Érenn* and there seems to be a very strong possibility that they are secondary creations, perhaps advanced by one individual or school involved in forming and/or cultivating the corpus, a school which in this case may have been expanding upon and reworking materials which are also found in *Lebor gabála Érenn* 'The book of the taking of Ireland'.

Another part of the brief narrative on Móenmag to resonate with material elsewhere is the mention of Fuither mac Fordruib, whose land was cleared to create the plain. He is known to us from the *dinnṡenchas* of Dún Gabail, where his death at the hands of the female giant, Gabal/Gablach, is recorded (Dinds. xv 323 §23; Metr. dinds. iii, 78–83). This is the only other reference to Fuither mac Fordruib known to me and it, too, derives from a *dinnṡenchas* article. Consequently, though it is possible that these accounts may be drawing on older traditions which are otherwise lost, in this case, the self-referential nature of the citations leads to doubt on this point.

The examples described above illustrate some of the ways in which mythological materials were cultivated, re-used and recycled in *Dinnṡenchas Érenn* in order to present aetiologies for the places treated of in the corpus, a corpus which was being assembled and created throughout the Middle Irish period. Similar to other substantial synthetic compilations put together at this time—such as *Lebor gabála Érenn* and *Cóir anmann* 'Fitness of names'—one of the aspects of the *dinnṡenchas* collection which is difficult to assess is the extent to which it is a learned 'book' tradition, particularly considering its penchant for *bélrae n-etarscartha* 'the language of separation' (see Breatnach 2016: 121–124) and the fact that such a high percentage of the placenames attested are unknown from other sources. Does its etymological punning on minor and unknown placenames—which so frequently draws on Meic Míled and other characters from *Lebor gabála Érenn*—point to a learned literary context for much of the compilation? Or does the fact that the names being discussed are, in the main, natural features (such as *benn* 'peak', *cenn* 'headland', *loch* 'lake', *mag* 'plain', and *slíab* 'mountain') or man-made monuments visible in the landscape (such as *carn* 'cairn', *dún* 'fort', and *ráth* 'encampment') rather than later ecclesiastical and political sites point to a traditional—perhaps ultimately oral—origin for significant parts

[20] Metr. dinds. iii 380—*dia téis i mag n-´Ai . . . ´Ai mac Allguba na n-ág (cf. Dinds. xv 469* §69); Acall. 178.6440–6441—*Machaire in Scáil, risa raiter Mag nÁe meic Allguba isin tan-so.*

[21] Metr. dinds. iii 537—*Aidhne fer in mhaighe moir, mac Allguba maic Etheoir.*

[22] Acall. 191.6896–6897—*i Mag Céitne meic Allguba.*

[23] It would seem to be drawing on the same tradition which is attested in *Lebor gabála Érenn* where slaves of Meic Míled give their names to the plains of Ireland. See, for example, the list of slaves cited in Leb. gab.[2] v 28. Further details concerning these names are available under the relevant entries in Ó Riain 2009.

of the material being cultivated?[24] These questions admit of no easy answers.[25] Where we have access to the earlier sources which underpin *Dinnṡenchas Érenn,* our chances of interrogating these topics successfully are increased; in situations where the *dinnṡenchas* corpus is the oldest—and sometimes the only—source for the narratives being related, these issues become much more difficult to resolve. In these situations, the boundaries between modern scholarship and native learning remain difficult to traverse.

ABBREVIATIONS

Acall.	=	Stokes 1900
Ann. Loch Cé	=	Hennessy 1871
B	=	The Book of Ballymote (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, MS 23 P 12)
CMT[2]	=	Gray 1982
Comp. CC	=	van Hamel 1933
Dinds.	=	Stokes 1894–1895
Dinds. Uí Maine	=	Gwynn 1926–1928
Ech. N	=	Meyer 1889
Ed. dinds.	=	Stokes 1893
Leb. gab.	=	Macalister 1938–1956
Metr. dinds.	=	Gwynn 1903–1935
R	=	Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole MS 598 (15489)
TBC[1]	=	O'Rahilly 1976

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[24] These questions have been briefly touched upon by Ó Corráin 2017: iii 1542–1546 §1144, who notes however that the corpus contains some 'historicist poems written overtly in the interest of powerful kings' (1542).

[25] Significant concerted scholarly attention has been paid to the *dinnṡenchas* corpus in recent years; a list of the more recent scholarship is given in Murray 2017: 11. Another welcome development was the hosting of a conference on *Dinnṡenchas Érenn* at the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies in 2017 which was organised by Dr Marie-Luise Theuerkauf. It is hoped that the published proceedings will address some of the issues raised here.

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