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VERSION\*\***

The assassination of Mág Raghnaill and the capture of his ship in 1502

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## INTRODUCTION

On the evening of 27 March 1502, Easter Sunday, the chief of the small lordship of  
10 Muintear Eólais (in modern-day Co. Leitrim), Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill, was murdered.  
The assassination was carried out by rival members of his own family, but the driving force  
behind it was the Mac Diarmada family, rulers of the neighbouring lordship of Magh Luirg  
(in modern-day Co. Roscommon). The assassination of the reigning Mág Raghnaill was only  
one blow struck by the Meic Dhiarmada against Muintear Eólais in the course of a co-  
15 ordinated multi-pronged assault on Easter Sunday 1502: on the same day, they confiscated  
Leitrim Castle and seized Mág Raghnaill's ship, sailing it from Mág Raghnaill territory on  
Lough Ree to Lough Key, the centre of Mac Diarmada power. These events are not recorded  
in any annalistic collection known to me. They are related in a memorandum written the day  
after these events took place, of which we have a copy in RIA MS 23 N 29 (Cat. 467).

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the late Professor Richard Sharpe for drawing my attention to the text edited here and for  
generously suggesting important improvements to this paper. My thanks to Dr Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha for  
helpful comments and corrections. A manuscript spelling as opposed to that used in my edition is indicated by  
'MS'. The manuscript (RIA 23 N 29) can be consulted at [isos.dias.ie](http://isos.dias.ie). The following abbreviations are used:

5 AC = A. Martin Freeman, *Annála Connacht: the Annals of Connacht* (Dublin, 1944).

AFM = J. O'Donovan, *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (7  
volumes, Dublin, 1848-51).

ALC = W.M. Hennessy, *The Annals of Loch Cé* (2 volumes, London, 1871).

AU = W.M. Hennessy and B. Mac Carthy, *Annála Uladh: Annals of Ulster*, (4 volumes, Dublin 1887-1901).

10 DIL = *Dictionary of the Irish language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish materials* (Dublin, 1913-75).

IGT = O. Bergin (ed.), *Irish Grammatical Tracts*, in supplements to *Ériu* 8-10, 14, 17 (1916-55).

20            23 N 29 is a composite of fragments from several medical manuscripts. According to  
the RIA Catalogue, following an earlier account by O'Curry,<sup>2</sup> Section I (f. 1-9) contains, in  
addition to medical material, two non-medical verse items (both found on f. 5) – a poem on  
the Shannon<sup>3</sup> and a 'poem on [the] murder of Mac Ragnaill, chief of the name, by his friends  
and the captain of his ship'. This notice of the assassination of Mág Raghnaill in 1502 is, in  
25 fact, prose. Besides the fact that the text in question gives an account of the death of Maol  
Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill, chief of Muintear Eólais, every detail of the brief description of  
this piece in the RIA Catalogue is wrong: Mág Raghnaill was assassinated not by friends but  
by rival kinsmen supported by some of the Meic Dhiarmada of Magh Luirg; no mention  
whatsoever is made of 'the captain of his ship', though the expropriation of the ship is  
30 described in some detail. Other scribal notes in this part of the manuscript are discussed in  
some detail by Paul Walsh in his study of the Mac an Leagha family, but he does not discuss  
this text.<sup>4</sup> Besides the fact that it has not previously been edited and its contents are  
inaccurately adumbrated in the RIA Catalogue, the account of the death of Mág Raghnaill in  
1502 in 23 N 29 is of some historical value as the unique witness to the events related. In  
35 addition, the 1502 memorandum vividly sheds light on the significance of naval power on the  
Shannon and its tributaries in this period. In this article, I present this short text with English  
translation, textual notes and commentary.

## MANUSCRIPT

Section I of 23 N 29 earlier consisted of 120 folios, divided into ten quires, according  
40 to a post-scribal note on the upper margins of f. 3v and 4r. Of these 120 folios only nine now  
remain. It seems reasonable to assume given the contents of ff. 1-4 and 6-9 that we are  
dealing here with fragments of a medical book. In what context f. 5 was originally written  
remains a mystery; I can detect nothing of relevance to medical matters in the poem on the  
Shannon, though it might naturally be of interest in a non-professional capacity to members  
45 of the Mac an Leagha family based in north Connacht,<sup>5</sup> and it may be significant that Section

<sup>2</sup> Eugene O'Curry, *Catalogue of Manuscripts (1<sup>st</sup> series) (RIA MS 67 E 9-11) (1841-3)*, i, 258-61; *Catalogue of manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1926-70), 1220-4. The relevant fasciculus in the printed catalogue was the work of Winifred Wulff and Kathleen Mulchrone; Wulff was responsible for the description  
15 of the medical manuscripts.

<sup>3</sup> *Béarad bhreith na himreasna*, edited by Brian Ó Cuív, 'The poetic contention about the River Shannon', *Ériu* 19 (1962), 89-110.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Walsh, *Irish men of learning* (Dublin, 1947), 219-25.

<sup>5</sup> For the Sligo branch of the Meic an Leagha, see Walsh, *Irish men of learning*, 206-18.

I of the manuscript contains medical verse. We may have to do with an interpolated leaf. It was nonetheless prepared with some care. The initial letters of the poem on the Shannon are rubricated, as is the initial letter of the text edited here; rubrication of initials is found also on the other folios of this section of 23 N 29.<sup>6</sup> The poem takes up all of f. 5r and the first five  
50 lines of 5v. The memorandum edited here fills the following 23 lines. At some later point, a kinsman of the then owner of the book, Diarmaid Mac an Leagha, made the eight lines which fills up the rest of f. 5v, leaving some space between the beginning of his text and the end of the memorandum. It is to be hoped that future research on the medical material in this manuscript, on which the present writer is not qualified to comment, will shed further light on  
55 its compilation.<sup>7</sup>

On f. 4r Connla Mac an Leagha, of the famous medical family, gives his date of writing as 1509.<sup>8</sup> There seems no reason to reject the contemporaneity of Connla's statement. Beneath the text edited here, on f. 5v, there is a note by a kinsman of a later (early seventeenth-century?) owner of the manuscript, Diarmaid (mac Connla mheic Mhaithiasa  
60 mheic Connla) Mac an Leagha, the great-grandson of the scribe (as suggested by Paul Walsh), in which, among other things, he prays for the soul of Connla.<sup>9</sup>

The text edited here is dated internally to Easter Monday 1502. In addition to the scribal date 1509 in our manuscript, there are indications that we are dealing with a later copy of the text. There are a small number of copying errors in this short text: in l. 14, the  
65 preposition *do* is omitted in a case of haplography; in ll 13, 14 and 20, material originally omitted by the scribe is added in the margin or interlineally. Noteworthy also is the use of

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20 <sup>6</sup> The line-spacing in the poem on f. 5r is curiously irregular. The final few words of verse 9 and the entirety of verses 10 and 11 are written significantly larger than the rest of the poem and with more generous line-spacing. Verses 10 and 11 of the poem are the only verses to contain direct speech, being words put into the mouth of the poet, Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn. (I would adopt Ó Cuív's suggestion, made in a textual note on l. 76, that verse 11 should be read as part of Tadhg Óg's speech, rather than as a separate address by Maol Eachlainn, rival of Brian  
25 Bórainmhe, and emend the published translation accordingly.) If the line-spacing is deliberate here, as seems highly likely, it may reflect a desire to give prominence to the words of the distinguished Ó hUiginn poet.

<sup>7</sup> See now Deborah Hayden, 'Attribution and authority in a medieval Irish medical compendium', *Studia Hibernica* 45 (2019), 19–51.

30 <sup>8</sup> He is probably the Connla who was in Magh Luirg in 1512 at the time of the Earl of Kildare's invasion and also wrote 23 B 3 (Walsh, *Irish men of learning*, 206–7, 214–18).

<sup>9</sup> See Walsh, *Irish men of learning*, 217–18. The portion of this scribal note which concerns the herb scammony remains to be transcribed and translated.

abbreviation in l. 7, where the personal name *Ruaidhrí Buidhe* is abbreviated *R.B.* on its first and only occurrence in the text.<sup>10</sup> We may well wonder in what context our text was first put into writing the day after the events it describes.

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## INTERPRETING THE TEXT

The writer of the text edited here writes the day after the assassination of Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill (l. 1).<sup>11</sup> We can only speculate as to his motivation in setting out this account of the events of the previous night. The end-result is more than a short scribal note, the kind made marginally or inserted as a line-filler, hence my use of the term

<sup>10</sup> Of relevance for the date of writing of f. 5 is the date of composition of the poem *Béarad bhreith na*

35 *himreasna* by one Tadhg an Ghadraigh Mac Aodhagáin, which makes up all of f. 5r and the beginning of f. 5v. This poem is the third in a versified debate concerning the Shannon. (The first two poems, *A Shionainn Bhriain Bhóraithe* by Diarmaid Ó Briain and *A Shionainn Chuinn Chéadchathaigh* by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn, are re-printed in Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (Dublin, 1970) as poems 12 and 13.) The second of these poems is attributed to Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn. If he is the famous poet of that name who died in 1448, there is nothing in  
40 the presence of the poem in this manuscript to contradict an early sixteenth-century date. Brian Ó Cuív, following a suggestion by Eleanor Knott, inclined to the view that the Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn of the contention on the Shannon was the son of the famous Tadhg Dall (†1591). This identification may have contributed to Ó Cuív's description of 23 N 29, f. 5 as being 'of unknown date but possibly seventeenth century' (Ó Cuív, 'The poetic contention', 89). Though reluctant to accept a fifteenth-century date, no argument is advanced by Ó Cuív  
45 to justify rejecting such a date for any of the poems which form part of the Shannon debate, and the presence of the poem *Béarad bhreith na himreasna* does not itself speak against an early sixteenth-century date for our manuscript. Katharine Simms, in a paper form on the poem *A Shionainn Bhriain Bhóraithe* prepared as part of her invaluable Bardic Poetry Database ([bardic.celt.dias.ie](http://bardic.celt.dias.ie)), points out that, if the references to Diarmaid Ó Briain as *Ó Briain* in *Béarad bhreith na himreasna* mean that he was chief of his family, he must be the  
50 Diarmaid Ó Briain who died in 1360. In that case, the second poem in this contention, *A Shionainn Chuinn Chéadchathaigh*, would be the work of a still earlier Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn who lived in the fourteenth century. However, as Ó Cuív points out ('The poetic contention', 106, note on l. 26), we should perhaps understand *Ó Briain* in reference to the poet Diarmaid in that poem not as a surname and title but rather as *ó Briain* 'descendant of Brian'.

55 <sup>11</sup> So far as I know, Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill is mentioned only once in the annals s.a. 1499 in *AU* and *AFM*, on the occasion of his being taken prisoner by members of the Ó Ruairc family. He was imprisoned on an island on Lough MacNean. When the island was attacked by a member of the Mág Uidhir family, Maol Eachlainn was taken prisoner yet again and later ransomed by Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill, the powerful northern lord. His freedom came at a high price, however, as Maol Eachlainn was obliged to give Leitrim Castle to Ó  
60 Domhnaill again (*arís*). On Leitrim Castle, see further below. It is unclear when Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill became chief of his name; perhaps on the death of the reigning chief (another Maol Eachlainn) in 1501 (*AFM* s.a.).

75 ‘memorandum’ to describe it. The coup in Muintear Eólais and the acquisition of Mág Raghnaill’s ship were clearly events of great moment in the region. The writer’s emotional engagement with the events described is obvious from the first line, which foregrounds the horrible nature of what he is about to record. Though this is not specifically stated, the fact that the acts of violence he relates occurred at Easter may have heightened this sense of

80 horror. Mág Raghnaill’s death and the capture of Leitrim Castle are reported in a matter-of-fact fashion. The confiscation of the boat, however, and the itinerary of its journey to Lough Key are described in much greater detail and here the style becomes more dramatic. The writer describes the terror evoked by Diarmaid Mac Diarmada and his newly-acquired ship among the sons of the slain Mág Raghnaill chief and among the inhabitants along the route

85 up-stream from Lough Ree to Lough Key. It may be significant that it is at this point in the text that learned allusions are first introduced by the writer; the more subjective tone is accompanied by a historicising impulse on the part of the writer. Up until this point in the text, place-names have been given in their ordinary form, but as Mág Raghnaill’s ship nears its final destination in our writer’s account they are given in more elaborate form in that

90 details on the eponyms are also provided; in the case of the final place-name mentioned (*Teach Tinnean* (?)) we are treated to a separate synopsis of its origin, a reference to the tale *Cath Bóinde*. The text concludes with a comparison between Mág Raghnaill’s ship and the Argo and the assertion that no greater ship than Mág Raghnaill’s has been constructed since the time of the Argonauts.

95 The memorandum relates that Mág Raghnaill was feasting in the house of the chief of the Í Mhóráin.<sup>12</sup> Rival Méig Raghnaill, ‘the descendants of Tadhg’, led by Murchadh mac Taidhg, finding the reigning chief dining in a small company, kill him (ll 2-5).<sup>13</sup> It is clear, however, that the assassination of Mág Raghnaill was not a purely internal Mág Raghnaill affair, as we are informed that Cathal Óg and Seaán Óg Mac Diarmada, members of the

100 ruling family of the north Roscommon lordship of Magh Luirg, received payment for their part in the killing from Eóghan and Fearghal Mac Diarmada (ll 6-8).<sup>14</sup> Cathal Óg was related

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<sup>12</sup> The Í Mhóráin were a minor Muintear Eólais family who left little trace in the annalistic compilations of later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

65 <sup>13</sup> The Tadhg *a quo sliocht Taidhg* was the Mág Raghnaill chief who died in 1486.

<sup>14</sup> Of these Meic Dhiarmada, only Cathal Óg is mentioned by name in the Annals, to my knowledge, on his death s.a. 1530 in *AC* and *ALC*. The poet-historian Páidín Ó Maoil Chonaire composed a praise-poem in honour of Cathal Óg c. 1497. A critical edition will appear as poem 3 in my forthcoming *Bardic poems on the Meic Dhiarmada*. Part of the poem is printed in Damian McManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, *A bardic miscellany*

to ‘the descendants of Tadhg’: his mother was a member of the Mág Raghnaill family, a sister of the eponymous Tadhg.<sup>15</sup> Seaán Óg was probably a nephew of Cathal Óg, a son of his half-brother Tomaltach. As for Eóghan and Fearghal Mac Diarmada, who paid Cathal Óg and his nephew Seaán for their part in the killing, they were also nephews of Cathal Óg, sons of his brother Conchobhar. We have here evidence of a scheme by members of the Meic Dhiarmada intimately connected by blood to one branch of the Méig Raghnaill to help their Mág Raghnaill kinsmen to supplant the reigning chief.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to read of payments from family members to one another for involvement in these machinations.

On the same day on which Mág Raghnaill was assassinated, the conspirators seize Leitrim Castle, the caput of the Méig Raghnaill (l. 9). Since 1487, Magh Luirg, the Mac Diarmada lordship, had been subject to repeated invasions from the Í Dhomhnaill, the powerful ruling family of Tír Chonaill led by Aodh Ruadh. The Meic Dhiarmada enjoyed some success in blocking these advances in the Curlews, scoring a famous victory in 1497, in which the Í Dhomhnaill suffered a humiliating defeat and the loss of their precious relic, the *Cathach* of Colm Cille.<sup>17</sup> The Mág Raghnaill lordship of Muintear Eólais, however, represented a convenient backdoor into Magh Luirg for the northern magnate. In 1499, we are informed by *AU* and *AFM*, Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill, who would die in 1502, had returned control of Leitrim Castle to Ó Domhnaill. In that same year, Ó Domhnaill took full advantage of this foothold on the Shannon to invade Magh Luirg, securing the submission of the Meic Dhiarmada and restoring to the Í Dhomhnaill Colm Cille’s book. The Meic

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(Dublin, 2010) as poem 182.

<sup>15</sup> Following a genealogy in RIA MS D i 3, f. 81r, and the genealogy given in the O Clery Book of Genealogies (edited by Séamus Pender in *Analecta Hibernica* 18 (1951), §1003), Cathal Óg Mac Diarmada had three brothers, viz. Diarmaid *an Einigh*, Conchobhar and Brian (the children of the daughter of Cathal Mág Raghnaill); he also had four half-brothers from his father’s first marriage (the children of the daughter of Riocard Mac Uilliam), viz. Tadhg, Cormac, Tomaltach and Aodh. Cathal Óg’s father was Ruaidhrí Buidhe or Óg, chief of Magh Luirg (†1486).

For the significance of the mother’s kin as reflected in contemporary praise-poetry, see Damian McManus ‘Female ancestry and mother’s kin in Classical Irish poetry’ in Caoimhín Breatnach and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (eds), *Aon don éigse* (Dublin, 2015), 193-220.

<sup>16</sup> The Meic Dhiarmada were heavily involved in the affairs of the Méig Raghnaill throughout the later Middle Ages. References to some of this activity will be found in my forthcoming book, *Bardic poems on the Meic Dhiarmada*.

<sup>17</sup> See Dermot Mac Dermot, *Mac Dermot of Moylurg: the Story of a Connacht Family* (Manorhamilton, n.d), 123-5.

Dhiarmada therefore were strongly motivated to wrest control of Leitrim Castle from any Mág Raghnaill faction prepared to cooperate with the Í Dhomhnaill, not merely for the purpose of controlling the Mág Raghnaill lordship with the help of local elements loyal to them, but also for the purpose of defending their own territory.

The text informs us that Mág Raghnaill's ship was seized by Diarmaid Mac Diarmada (l. 10). This Diarmaid, known as Diarmaid *an Einigh* 'the generous', was the brother of Cathal Óg and the eldest of the sons born to Ruaidhrí Buidhe Mac Diarmada from his second marriage. He would go on to assume the chieftainship of Magh Luirg in 1528, holding it until his assassination by a rival branch of his family in 1533.<sup>18</sup> Diarmaid probably did not participate in the seizure of the boat himself; the text implies that the boat was brought to him. The Rock of Loch Cé, the chief fortress of the Meic Dhiarmada, was on Lough Key; presumably the unidentified *Teach Tinnean* (?) of our text refers to a nearby site, perhaps the residence of Diarmaid.<sup>19</sup>

More than half the text is devoted to the seizure of Mág Raghnaill's ship. In contrast, the capture of Leitrim Castle receives no more than a few words. Ships and fleets in this region are rarely mentioned in the annals, but they do feature in contemporary praise-poetry. For example, the poet-historian Páidín Ó Maoil Chonaire (†1506) mentions the ship of Cathal Óg Mac Diarmada in a praise-poem composed about five years before the events discussed here.<sup>20</sup> The fact that Mág Raghnaill's ship is brought to Diarmaid Mac Diarmada and the emphasis in our text on the fear evoked by this ship and by its new owner suggests that Diarmaid was the ringleader of the conspirators who effected the coup in Muintear Eólais.

## LANGUAGE AND ORTHOGRAPHY

The language and style is consistent with that generally employed in annalistic texts of the Early Modern Irish period. There are a few pseudo-archaisms, e.g. the adverb *do-ríse*<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For Diarmaid Mac Diarmada's career, see Mac Dermot, *Mac Dermot of Moylurg*, 131-2.

<sup>19</sup> At the time of Maol Eachlainn Mág Raghnaill's death and the confiscation of his ship, a half-brother of Cathal Óg and Diarmaid, Cormac, held the title of Mac Diarmada (Mac Dermot, *Mac Dermot of Moylurg*, 125-31).

<sup>20</sup> *Ní meisde díbh anfadh agaibh; th'arthrach i dtír tugais*, 'You are none the worse for a storm; you have brought your ship ashore' (Hoyne, *Bardic poems on the Meic Dhiarmada*, poem 3, ll 29-30). This is an example of the common conceit that the honorand has nothing to fear from inclement weather as his righteous conduct ensures fine weather.

<sup>21</sup> In the Classical Modern Irish poetic register (as also normally in Early Modern Irish prose), only forms of the adverb in *a-* (etymologically a 3 person possessive pronoun) are found (*a-rís(e)* / *ar-ís(e)*); forms in *do-*



(l. 12), passive present indicative *ad-bhearthar* ‘is said’ (from Middle Irish *at-beir*) (l. 16) and the conjunction *’nás* ‘than’ (rather than the more common *’ná*) (l. 22). The digraph *oi* in MS *boī* (normalised *baoi*) (l. 14) is also noteworthy in a manuscript of this period.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the text also shows some features that better reflect contemporary usage. If I have interpreted the passage in question correctly, we have in l. 18 a plural subject with a singular verb (but see the textual note). In the relative clause *roimh a mó gráin ⁊ eagla* lit. ‘before which is greater terror and fear’ (l. 22), *roimh* has taken the place of *ré* ‘before’ as a simple preposition. In the Classical Modern Irish poetic register, which is more conservative in this regard, we would expect the combination of the preposition *ré* ‘before’ + relative particle + present copula to be *réna*; in prose of this period, it is unsurprising to find *roimh* taking the place of *ré* as a simple preposition.<sup>23</sup>

Several spellings betray scribal pronunciation, though they reveal nothing unexpected. In spelling, the guttural final of *ríogh*, the genitive of *rí* ‘king’, is retained on two occasions (ll 19, 23), but is (no doubt inadvertently) omitted in l. 15 *rí*. Similarly, *-dh-* in the adjective *feidhleach* (l. 15) is omitted in MS *fe[i]leach* (the epithet of Meadhbh’s father), which we should probably understand as representing *féileach*.<sup>24</sup> The loss of *-gh-* in MS *megranaill* for (normalised) *Méig Raghnaill* (ll. 2, 3, 10) may also be significant in this regard, as one might have expected the *-gh-* to be retained in this instance, if the pronunciation of the vowel in *Raghn-* was a diphthong /əi/ rather than /a:/.<sup>25</sup> The digraph *ai* is used to represent (normalised) *ao* (e.g. l. 2) and *aoi* (l. 3), pointing to a scribal pronunciation /i:/ in both *Maol* and *Maoil*. Note that *æ* is used to represent *a* + palatal glide vowel in MS *Tædg* (normalised *Taidhg*).<sup>26</sup> The manuscript word-division is typical for a manuscript of this period with (originally the 2 sing. possessive pronoun) do not appear to have been used in poetry. The latter forms are met with occasionally in Early Modern Irish prose (see, for example, *dorídhisi* in Paul Walsh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* (London, 1948), volume 1, §22).

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere we have *aī* for normalised *aoi* (see next paragraph).

<sup>23</sup> See Damian McManus, ‘An Nua-Ghaeilge Chlasaiceach’, in Kim McCone, Damian McManus, Cathal Ó Háinle, Nicholas Williams and Liam Breatnach (eds), *Stair na Gaeilge* (Maynooth, 1994), 335-446, §10.3.

For an example of the preposition *ré* + relative particle + present copula in Classical Modern Irish, see *cúis réna cóir sgáth* lit. ‘a cause before which fear is proper’ (Eleanor Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn* (2 volumes, 1922/6), poem 15.24).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the variation in the personal name *Feidhlim* / *Féidhlim* / *Féilim* permitted in the Classical Modern Irish register (*IGT* ii §112).

<sup>25</sup> See fn. 27 below.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the same scribe’s *doua graebh* for normalised *do ghraif* (Walsh, *Irish men of learning*, 215).

unstressed words generally written together with a following stressed word (e.g. MS *atigh* in l. 4 for normalised *i dtigh*). Both elements of a surname are written together (e.g. MS *megranaill* for normalised *Méig Raghnaill*<sup>27</sup> and MS *himorain* for normalised *Í Mhoráin* in ll 4-5), pointing to the fact that the first element was generally unstressed in speech.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, both elements in the personal name *Maol Eachlainn* are always written together (MS *mailechlainn*), indicating that the second element bore primary stress.<sup>29</sup>

## EDITION

I have normalised the orthography to the standard generally used in editing Early Modern Irish texts, silently supplying capitals, punctuation and paragraphs, as well as lenition, length-marks and glide-vowels.<sup>30</sup> *-nd(-)* is normalised to *-nn(-)*. The prepositions *i* (MS *a*) and *go* (MS *gu* or *g* + suspension stroke) and the article *an* (MS *in*) are normalised throughout. Editorial insertions are given between square brackets. Non-ambiguous manuscript abbreviations are expanded silently; italics are used when expanding suspension strokes and superscript consonants. All other changes are noted in the variant readings.

## Text

<sup>27</sup> This is a particularly clear instance of the two elements of the surname being written together as the *ra-* of *Raghnaill* is not written *plene* in the MS; instead a superscript *a* is found over the *-g* of MS *meg* on all three occurrences.

<sup>28</sup> For *Ó* and *Mac* as stressed and unstressed words in contemporary poetry, see Cáit Ní Dhomhnaill, *Duanaireacht* (Dublin, 1975), 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> In poetry, *Maol* in names such as *Maol Eachlainn* is always an independent stressed word. In ordinary speech, however, it is clear that it was often the following proper noun in the genitive which bore the primary stress, resulting (in some dialects in any event) in a shortening of the vowel of the *Maol*-element. Anglo-Norman spellings such as ‘Malathlin’ and ‘Molethlin’ for *Ó Maoil (Sh)eachlainn* probably indicate this shortening (cp. ‘Leys’ and ‘Leis’ for *Laoighis*) (Thomas F. O’Rahilly, ‘Notes on Middle-Irish pronunciation’, *Hermathena* 20 (1930), 152-95, at 163). Only occasionally is this vowel-shortening reflected in Irish spelling. The sub-literate inscription by Matha Ó Coigligh on the tomb of Maol Eachlainn Ó Ceallaigh (†1401) and Fionnghuala inghean Í Chonchobhair (†1403) at Abbeyknockmoy (reproduced in R.A.S. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, 2 volumes, Dublin, 1949, ii, 8-9) is a rare instance. Ó Coigligh’s *domuleachlaind okeallaid* represents normalised *do Mhaol Eachlainn Ó Ceallaigh*. This rightward movement of primary stress from an originally fully-stressed word to a qualifying noun or adjective is no doubt responsible for the short vowel in Modern Irish *rud* (< Early Modern Irish *réad*, occasionally *raad*); we must imagine that the frequent co-occurrence of *réad* with a following adjective like *éigin* facilitated the shortening of the vowel in *réad*.

<sup>30</sup> MS *e* regularly stands for both *ea* and *ei* in normalised spelling.

Adhaigh Luain Chásca a-réir 7 do ba<sup>31</sup> mhór a gránta 7 a dorchada<sup>32</sup>.

- 185 Murchadh mac Taidhg<sup>33</sup> mheic Mhaoil<sup>34</sup> Eachlainn 7 sliocht Taidhg Mhéig Raghnaill<sup>35</sup> do ionnsaighidh Mhéig Raghnaill .i. Maol<sup>36</sup> Eachlainn mac Murchaidh mheic Thaidhg 7 a mharbhadh iarna fhaghbháil<sup>37</sup> i n-uathadh fholachtais 7 é ag déanamh na Cásc[a] i dtigh<sup>38</sup> Í<sup>39</sup> Mhoráin .i. Domhnall mac Eóghain Í Mhoráin.

Comha do ghabháil do mhac Mheic Dhiarmada, .i. Cathal Óg, 7 do Sheaán Óg mac

- 190 Tomaltaigh Mheic Dhiarmada ó dá mhac Conchubhair mheic Ruaidhrí Buidhe, .i. Eóghan 7 Fearghal, ar bheith ag déanamh an mharbtha-sin.

Caisléan Liathdroma<sup>40</sup> do ghabháil don fhoirinn réamhráite an lá céadna.

Long Mhéig Raghnaill do ghabháil do Dhiarmaid Mac Diarmada an lá-sin, 7 a heagla do bheith ar chloinn Mhaoil Eachlainn 7 ar Chaladh na hAnghaile 7 ar Loch Rí. Agus<sup>41</sup> go hÁth

- 195 Luain an Fhinnbheannaigh 7 go hInnse dá gabháil 7 go Snámh Sealgach 7 siar do-ríse<sup>42</sup> go Loch Dorra inghine Mothráin Mhíochuirdigh 7 do Loch Cé inghine Big mheic Bhuain<sup>43</sup> 7 go Teach Tinnean<sup>44</sup> (?) .i. Tinne<sup>45</sup> mac Conrach Cais [do] Dhomhnann[ch]aibh<sup>46</sup> baoi<sup>47</sup> ar

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<sup>31</sup> MS *do bo*.

<sup>32</sup> MS *dorchadai*.

<sup>33</sup> Always *tædg* in MS.

<sup>34</sup> Always *mail* in MS.

- 130 <sup>35</sup> Always *megranaill* in MS.

<sup>36</sup> MS *mail*.

<sup>37</sup> MS *fadbaill*.

<sup>38</sup> MS *a tigh*.

<sup>39</sup> Always *hi* in MS.

- 135 <sup>40</sup> MS *liadroma*.

<sup>41</sup> MS 7.

<sup>42</sup> MS *síar dorísi*.

- 140 <sup>43</sup> The scribe originally wrote only *meic*. The letters *bug* were inserted above the line. These may be what the insertion marks at that point refer to. However, in the left margin the scribe has written ...*uain* (the first part of this word is now illegible). See the note on this line below.

<sup>44</sup> MS *tennin*.

<sup>45</sup> MS *tende*.

<sup>46</sup> ...*aib* is found in the margin and marked for insertion after *domnann*.

<sup>47</sup> MS *boi*.

deabhaidh ann ó *inghin* rí[ogh] Éireann, Meadhbh Chruachan inghean Eachach Feidhleach,<sup>48</sup>  
 7 ó Oilil mac Mata mheic Shraibhginn mheic Niúil, gurab aire ad-bheartar<sup>49</sup> Teach  
 200 Tinnean<sup>50</sup> (?) de. 7 ní bhfuil<sup>51</sup> eatarra sin do mhuir nó do thír, do loch nó do innse nó  
 d'abhainn nó do dhaingean ná do dhroibhéal acht muna<sup>52</sup> bhfuil fíorcharaid<sup>53</sup> ar nach bhfuil  
 eagla 7 uruamhain an mheic ríogh gusa ráinig an t-eathar lánmhór-sin. Deithbhir ón, uair  
 níor<sup>54</sup> cumhdaigheadh long ná eathar ó do chumhdaigh Argo mac Ara[s]toris, .i. príomhshaor  
 na nGréagach, long do Iasón mac Éasóin<sup>55</sup> re taisteal mara [7] is [s]uail m[á] do  
 205 cumhdaigheadh ó shoin<sup>56</sup> arthrach roimh a mó gráin 7 eagla<sup>57</sup> 'nás an t-eathar-sin 7 an mac  
 ríogh gus ráinig. A°.D°.M°.CCCCC°.II°. <sup>58</sup>

145 <sup>48</sup> MS *feleach*.

<sup>49</sup> MS *atbertar*.

<sup>50</sup> MS *tindin*.

<sup>51</sup> Always *buil* in MS.

<sup>52</sup> MS *mina*.

150 <sup>53</sup> MS *fircharait*.

<sup>54</sup> Inserted above the line.

<sup>55</sup> MS *esoin*.

<sup>56</sup> MS *hoin*.

<sup>57</sup> MS 'haec'-symbol + *la*.

155 <sup>58</sup> Some text may have been rubbed out after these numbers.

## Translation

Last night was the eve of Easter Monday and its horrors and darkness were great.

210 Murchadh son of Tadhg son of Maol Eachlainn and the descendants of Tadhg Mág Raghnaill attacked the Mág Raghnaill, i.e. Maol Eachlainn son of Murchadh son of Tadhg, and killed him after finding him feasting with a small number while celebrating Easter in the house of Ó Móráin, i.e. Domhnall son of Eóghan Ó Móráin.

Payment was taken by the son of Mac Diarmada, i.e. Cathal Óg, and by Seaán Óg son of Tomaltach Mac Diarmada from the two sons of Conchobhar son of Ruairí Buidhe, i.e. 215 Eóghan and Fearghal, for carrying out that slaying.

Caisléan Liathdroma was seized by the aforementioned band on the same day.

Mág Raghnaill's ship was seized by Diarmaid Mac Diarmada on that day, and the sons of Maol Eachlainn<sup>59</sup> and Caladh na hAnghaile and Loch Rí were in fear of it. And it was brought to Áth Luain an Fhinnbheannaigh and Inse, and to Snámh Sealgach and westwards 220 again to the Lake of Dorra (?) daughter of Mothrán Míochuirdeach and to the Lake of Cé daughter of Beag mac Buain and to Teach Tinnean (?), that is, Tinne mac Conrach Cais of the Domhnainn who withdrew to there from the daughter of the king of Ireland, Meadhbh of Cruachain, daughter of Eachaidh Feidhleach, and from Oilill son of Mata son of Sraibhgeann mac Niúil, so that it is for that reason that it is called Teach Tinnean (?). And between these 225 [places] there isn't sea or land or lake or island or river or fortress or fastness that is not in fear and terror of the king's son to whom that enormous vessel came [i.e. Diarmaid Mac Diarmada] unless there be close allies [of his there]. That is to be expected, for since Argus son of Arestor, i.e. the chief wright of the Greeks, constructed a ship for Jason son of Aeson to travel the sea there has not been constructed a ship or vessel – and it is unlikely that such a 230 craft has been constructed since then – that evokes more horror and fear than that vessel and the king's son to whom it came. A.D. 1502.

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<sup>59</sup> This Maol Eachlainn is the murdered chief.

## TEXTUAL NOTES

1: For *dorchada*, see *DIL* s.v. *dorchatu*. I take *gránta* to be the nominative plural of *gráin* in the sense of ‘object of horror or dread’. The nominative plural form in the Classical Modern Irish register was *gráine* according to *IGT* ii §14. However, Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha has  
 240 suggested to me that *gránta* might be connected with Old Irish *grándatu*. *DIL* cites s.v. *Ba mor iarum a dorchotai na haidqui sin, agus a grandatai* ‘great was the darkness of that night and its horror’ (Kuno Meyer, ‘Echtra Nerai’, *Revue Celtique* 10 (1889), 212-28, §2).

4: Though the word is registered in *DIL*, no translation is suggested for *folachtas* (variant *falachtas*). The context here would support a translation ‘feasting’ or ‘entertaining (a guest)’.  
 245 Cf. *fulacht* (*DIL* s.v.).

8 *ar bheith ag déanamh an mharbhtha-sin*: The use of the progressive verbal noun construction here might on first sight appear rather odd; one would perhaps have expected simply *ar an marbhadh-sain* ‘for that slaying’. The slaying (*marbhadh*) is imagined here not as a temporally bounded action that occurred at the very moment of Mág Raghnaill’s death  
 250 but rather as an activity that was on-going over a longer period of time. In other words, the idea here is that Cathal Óg and Seaán Óg Mac Diarmada were paid for the conspiracy which resulted in the death of Mág Raghnaill rather than merely for the actual act of murder itself.

9 *Caisléan Liathdroma*: Leitrim Castle.

11 *Caladh na hAnghaile*: Caladh na hAnghaile (Callow) on the River Shannon in the parish  
 255 of Cashel, Co. Longford.

*Loch Rí*: Lough Ree. The more historical form of this placename is *Loch Ribh*, but as early as *Lebor na hUidre*, in portions of the manuscript that are the work of ‘M’ (identified as Máel Muire mac Céilechair meic Cuinn na mBocht †1106), a vowel-final form of the second element is attested (Osborn Bergin and R.I. Best, *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin, 1929), ll 2939  
 260 and 7934). In the Classical Modern Irish poetic register, both a consonant- and a vowel-final variant are attested. So, for example, in a mid-fifteenth century poem preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript, we find the second element in *Loch Rīgh* (a spelling which would most likely point to a scribal pronunciation /r’i:/) rhyming with *mín* (James Carney, *Poems on the Butlers* (Dublin, 1945), poem 18, quatrain 12cd), while as early as the work of

265 the thirteenth-century poet Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe we have a metrically-confirmed instance of the vowel-final form in the rhyme between the second element of *L. Rí* and the 3 sing. feminine pronoun *í* (N.J.A. Williams, *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* (London, 1980), poem 6, quatrain 33).

*Áth Luain an Fhinnbheannaigh*: Athlone. ‘An Finnbheannach’ refers to the famous bull of  
270 Oilill, which features so prominently in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.

12 *Innse*: I have not succeeded in identifying this place with any certainty. Based on the details of the journey described, it must be to the east of Lough Key and it is not unreasonable to assume it might have been on Lough Ree itself. Several islands on Lough Ree had nom. *In(n)se* as a first element of their name in the late sixteenth century to judge by  
275 their Englished forms; a document of 1570, for instance, lists ‘Inshemore’, ‘Inshehyggen’, ‘Insheloghrene’, ‘Inshennenagh’, ‘Inshekarbegdermuyd’ among prominent islands on the lake (*The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns* (reprint with new introduction; 4 volumes, Dublin, 1994), iii §1511). In the early nineteenth century, Inchmore was sometimes referred to simply as ‘Inch’ (An *In(n)se*) (see the archival records at  
280 <https://www.logainm.ie/en/33019>; accessed 8 August 2017).

*Snámh Sealgach*: I have not succeeded in identifying Snámh Sealgach. Perhaps it is to be connected with Droim Snámha (Drumsna) on the Shannon in the parish of Annaduff, County Leitrim. This would be consistent with a river journey from Lough Ree to Lough Key.

*Loch Dorra inghine Mothráin Mhíochuirdigh*: The placename *Loch Dorri* occurs in *AC* s.a.  
285 1393 and is identified with Oakport Lough in Co. Roscommon (*AC*, 834). This location would be consistent with the journey in question. One might have expected *doire* rather than *dorra* here (and *dorri* in *AC*), but though *-ir-* and *-rr-* often appear similar in manuscripts, it does appear both *AC* and 23 N 29 f. 5 have *-rr-*. The story of the daughter of Mothrán Míochuirdeach is unknown to me, but Mothrán himself appears in the Early Modern Irish  
290 version of the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh (Brian Ó Cuív, *Cath Muighe Tuireadh* (Dublin, 1945), ll 289, 371, 1197-9, 1409; see also Mícheál Hoyne, ‘The political context of *Cath Muighe Tuireadh*, the Early Modern Irish version of the Second Battle of Magh Tuireadh’, *Ériu* 63 (2013), 91-116 at 110, n. 42).

13 *Loch Cé inghine Big mheic Bhuaín*: Lough Key in Co. Roscommon. In *Feis Tighe*  
295 *Chonáin* mention is made of three daughters of Beag mac Buain of the Tuatha Dé Danann.

Their names are given as Céibhfionn, Teach and Arbach, and they reside by a well in the Curlews (Maud Joynt, *Feis Tighe Chonáin* (Dublin, 1936), §§6, 20). According to the *dindshenchas* of Loch Cé, Cé was a wizard of the Tuatha Dé Danann (Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dinshenchas* (5 volumes, Dublin, 1903-1935), iii 400-3, 551 and Whitley Stokes, 300 ‘The Edinburgh Dindshenchas’, *Folklore* 4 (1893), 473-97 at 492-3). A folk-tale recorded by John O’Donovan presents yet another eponym of Loch Cé – Cé (or Céibh), the daughter of Manannán (*ALC* i p. xxxv-vi).

*Tech Tinnean* (?): I cannot identify this place. One presumes it is to be found in the vicinity of Loch Cé, in the territory of the Meic Dhiarmada. The personal name Tinne is not attested 305 as an *n*-stem noun to my knowledge (though note the spelling *Tinniu* in Rawlinson B 512 registered in O’Neill, ‘Cath Boinde’, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 173-85, at 178 vl. 12). I have nonetheless interpreted the vowel in MS *-in* as *-ion* (= *-ean*) here. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that our scribe has misread his exemplar, taking final *-ni* as *-in*, though, if this mistake does lie behind the apparently anomalous form here, it is remarkable that it is 310 confined to the two instances of the placename and did not effect the intervening instance of the personal name (spelt *Tende*).

For Tinne mac Con(n)rach, see Joseph O’Neill, ‘Cath Boinde’. For the phrase *ar deabhaidh ó X*, see *DIL* s.v. *debuith* IV. This passage would appear to refer to the supplanting of Tinne as king of Connacht and his exile from Cruachain to the ‘deserts of 315 Connacht’ by Meadhbh’s father (O’Neill, ‘Cath Boinde’, 178-9).

16 MS *ni buil*: The *b*- here in the MS (and cf. *mina buil* later in the passage) represents *bhf*-. For nasalisation after the negative adverb here, see Terence McCaughey, ‘Ní bhfuil’ in James Carney and David Greene (eds), *Celtic Studies: essays in memory of Angus Matheson* (London, 1968), 72-5. For the idiom *ní bhfuil de/do X*, see *DIL* s.v. 1 *de* XXXIII (h).

320 17-18: Note the single instance of plene *nó*, followed by three instances of the *vel*-symbol, followed by plene *ná*. It is possible we should emend the initial *nó* to *ná*. The *vel*-symbol may have represented both *nó* and *ná* leading to some confusion, or it may indeed have been acceptable to alternate the two conjunctions in this manner.

18 *acht muna bhfuil fíorcharaid*: I take *fíorcharaid* here to be nom. pl. Occasionally, a 3 sing. 325 verb is used with a plural subject in Early Modern Irish prose, even in prose characterised by a strong pseudo-archaising tendency (Damian McManus, ‘An Nua-Ghaeilge Chlasaiceach’



§7.30). However, it is possible that we should take *caraid* here as acc. sing. after the dependent form of the present tense of the substantive verb (McManus, ‘An Nua-Ghaeilge Chlasaiceach’, §3.2 (a)).

330 For the influential position of the *mac ríogh*, ‘the king’s son who was not expected to succeed’, in later medieval and early modern Gaelic society, see Katharine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords* (Woodbridge, 1987), 57-8.

19 *Argo mac Ara[s]toris*: Argus is described in similar terms in *Togail Troí*: (gen.) *prímsaír 7 primelathnaig na nGréc* ‘chief wright and chief craftsman of the Greeks’ (R.I. Best, Osborn  
335 Bergin, M.A. O’Brien and Anne O’Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster* (6 volumes, Dublin, 1954-82), II 30934-6). There were apparently two forms of the name Argo in Classical Modern Irish to judge by rhyming examples from two early seventeenth-century poems – a variant with a non-lenited -g- (note the rhyme with *arda* in Tadhg Ó Donnchadha, *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (Dublin, 1931), poem 25, quatrain 30cd) and a variant with a lenited -g-  
340 (*Argo* : *tarla* and *Argo* : *bheannamhra* in Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith, *Dioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938), poem 107, quatrains 28cd and 35ab). His father’s name is normally given as Arestor (in the Book of Leinster, we have genitive *Irastoris*).

345