Sample Chapter:

The Poems Attributed to Flann Mainistrech in Lebor Gabála Érenn

**Introduction**

Eleven poems attributed to Flann Mainistrech (ob.1056) appear as part of *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (hereafter LGÉ), a substantial prosimetric treatise on the history of the Gaels, the island of Ireland and the synchronism of this history with the history of the world.[[1]](#footnote-1) In its current form, the compilation dates from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. LGÉ is a complex work that has defied and frustrated several attempts at criticism and edition, although considerable progress has been made in understanding its textual history in recent decades.

In this chapter, I analyse these poems in terms of the textual history of LGÉ and the contexts in which they are cited in the various versions of the compilation. While LGÉ is an exciting and under-explored topic in itself, my primary focus is on how and why Flann's work was used and thus preserved. It is not possible to study Flann's work except through the work of subsequent scribes and scholars, with their distinctive objectives and methodologies, who thus collectively play an influential role in defining his corpus and his persona as it is presented to modern scholars. This is not to say that Flann is solely, to us, a *praestrigia scriptorum*; it may well be that medieval compilers were interested in whether a particular poet was the author of a text and had access to information about their texts that is not otherwise preserved. However, it is also important to understand the nature of a medieval author’s corpus as it actually exists for us before venturing onwards to the work and the man themselves.

***Lebor Gabála Érenn: Editions and Translations***

LGÉ exists in seventeen medieval manuscript versions, including fragments, commonly grouped into four recensions, known as *m*, *a*, *b* and *c*,[[2]](#footnote-2) as well as the seventeenth-century Ó Cléirigh recension.[[3]](#footnote-3) The medieval recensions are edited by Macalister (1938; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1956) and Carey (1983) has produced but not published an edition of recension *a*. Macalister's work has been repeatedly criticised in terms of both his overall editorial strategy and his handling and translation of the text (for example, Binchy 1954; Scowcroft 1987: pp.82‒83). Furthermore, he failed to complete his edition and some of the poems we will be examining thus fall outside his edited text.

Scowcroft has not as of yet produced a new edition of LGÉ but has published a detailed guide to its various versions and a closely argued description of its textual history (1987; 1988; 2008), including a stemma (2008: pp.4, 6). This account has largely, to date, gone unchallenged, although other scholars have produced studies of particular aspects of the compilation (for example, Carey 1992; 2009; 2010; Jaski 2006). N, the oldest manuscript copy (although not the most primitive version) is discussed by Schlüter (2010: pp.36‒44) in relation to its manuscript context.

In the study contained in this chapter, while carefully noting the criticisms made of it, I primarily use Macalister's edition. For all its flaws, it is the most accessible in that it is published and it conveys the basic sense and contents of a large number of manuscript versions. Furthermore, while Scowcroft might be justified in accusing Macalister of ‘evading editorial responsibility’ (1987: p.136) by his willingness to include all testimony‒ even down to the smallest variants‒ from all manuscripts, this makes Macalister's edition particularly suited to our purposes. We are interested in how each manuscript version of LGÉ cites and uses poetry attributed to Flann Mainistrech and Macalister's edition makes it possible to appreciate each approach. Scowcroft's studies of the textual history of the compilation are, however, indispensable and reference is made to them constantly.

***Lebor Gabála Érenn: Contents and Interpretations***

In a way, LGÉ is a hybrid of two medieval genres of historical writing: national history (Allen 2006) and world history (Pizarro 2006). The text covers the period from creation until, in most versions, the eleventh or twelfth century. The text narrates the history of the Gaels, tracing their descent from Noah, following their migrations across much of the medieval world before their settlement in Ireland and narrating the history of the kings who ruled there following the Gaels' arrival. The narrative is supported and perhaps even created by a range of scholarly disciplines including genealogy, synchronism, scriptural exegesis and etymology (Scowcroft 1988: pp.23‒26; 1995: pp.124‒30).

LGÉ provides a structure for Gaelic historical tradition which at the same time relates this tradition's narrative to the accepted account of world history in medieval Christian historiography. The recensions of LGÉ, however, have been influenced by a range of interests and apply various frameworks to their material. Most, but not all, devote considerable attention to the history of the land of Ireland and the various peoples who settled there prior to the Gaels: Cessair and her companions, the people of Partholón, the people of Nemed, the Fir Bolg and the Túatha Dé Danann. Some are more concerned with establishing chronological continuity in the material, others focus on particular topics with less attention paid to the history as a whole (Scowcroft 1987: p.119). Synchronising events relating to the Gaels and to the previous inhabitants of Ireland with events in biblical and classical history is important in many‒ although, again, not all‒ recensions but the synchronistic framework applied can vary dramatically.

Thus, the compilation involves particular components, such as poems or sagas, an overall historical framework and attempts to derive analogical or theological meaning from events. The different scholars involved in the manuscript tradition probably understood or prioritised these multiple levels of LGÉ, as well as their own interests, in different ways, rendering LGÉ a highly complex text even apart from the considerable scope of its narrative.

Scowcroft has argued that approaching LGÉ with traditional textual criticism and seeking an original or representative text has led to the failure to understand or edit the compilation properly. For example, he has pointed out that the lost exemplar of the LGÉ tradition must have been concise and limited in scope compared to the extant versions and that the compilation's development is thus characterised by the accretion of material from inside and outside the tradition, as well as wholesale restructuring, rather than redaction of an exemplar (1987: p.95). The material used to produce these composite texts was not necessarily consistent but Scowcroft suggests that it is also a fallacy to expect, or try to reconstruct, an internally harmonious version of LGÉ. Each scholar producing a version could,

Add glosses, interpose notes, attach alternative versions, conflate related but discrete traditions, producing finally the complicated, digressive, sedimentary narrative […] Though an attempt at synthesis, [LGÉ] thus gives voice to many authorities and to degrees of authority which the textual critic and literary historian must bear in mind. (1987: pp.91‒92)

***Lebor Gabála Érenn: Poetry***

The poems which appear as part of the compilation, the role they play and their relationship to the prose are obviously of particular interest for this study. Prosimetric form is common in medieval Gaelic literature in general and has been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion (eg. Mac Cana 1989; 1997; Toner 2005). The conclusion most often reached is that verse items support the prose narrative, either by expressing the heightened emotion of a situation or by providing authoritative information. The latter effect could be achieved both by virtue of the metrical form, which provides a guarantee that data is being preserved accurately, and by attribution of the verse either to an eyewitness or to a well-known scholar. It has also been suggested that the reverse can occur. A poem can be attributed to a pre-existing scholar or literary character highly unlikely to have actually composed it in order to categorise it critically or enhance its meaning through an implied narrative setting (Tymoczko 1996).

Whether the kind of theory developed through discussions of other medieval Gaelic texts can be applied to poetry in LGÉ, however, is uncertain. Poetry rarely appears in LGÉ to express heightened emotion or tension, not usually being spoken by a character involved in the action at all. It primarily supplies information, although often information that also appears in the prose. The poems can consist of anything from a single quatrain to lengthy, free-standing narratives or compilations in verse, some which come close to encompassing the whole of LGÉ in their own right.

Many of the shorter poems are unattributed. Four individuals, contemporary with or slightly earlier than the period in which LGÉ is thought to have been compiled, are named as responsible for the majority of the longer verse texts (Carey 1983: pp.51‒56): Eochaid Ua Flainn (ob.1004; Carey 2004a), Flann Mainistrech (ob.1056; Carey 2004b), Tanaide Eolach (Carey 1983: pp.52‒54) and Gilla Cóemáin (fl.1072; Smith 2004a). Some poems in LGÉ are attributed to legendary or anachronistic figures but this occurs less often than in other medieval Gaelic verse collections. Scholarly authority, derived either from these named individuals or from the general sense that the verse form preserves a tradition of learning, appears to be behind the citation of many of the poems in LGÉ.

It is not known at what stage of the development of the compilation the various poems were added. Scowcroft has suggested that **ω** was purely prose, although this does not mean verse texts did not influence it (1987: p.135). For Carey, the verse formed ‘a large corpus of extremely influential material, a repository of information drawn on most notably by the eleventh-century author of LGÉ’ (1994: p.19). However, he suggests that much of the verse formed part of ‘unified cycles of poems’ (1994: p.19) rather than a series of individual projects, the LGÉ concept and framework existing before or beyond the extant compilation which bears this name.

Macalister's opinion is similar, although he viewed the poetry less favourably.

To the modern reader these verses are an unmitigated nuisance, rarely adding anything to what he has already learnt from the prose text; nevertheless it is clear that they are the foundation on which the whole work, *in its present form*, is based. (1938: p.x; Macalister's italics)

The perceived pre-existence and futility of the poems in LGÉ motivates Macalister to edit them independently of the recensions in which they appear and print them in appendices. This strategy is not without precedent in LGÉ: N groups the longer poems together to create runs of prose narrative and R cites only the first line of each poem, suggesting either that the texts of the poems were not considered pivotal to the compilation as a whole or that the manuscript’s readers could be expected to know and remember the whole corpus or else be able to access the texts easily. M goes further and simply omits almost all the poetry (Scowcroft 1987: pp.85‒86).

There is agreement among scholars that the poetry is, or rather was at some point, fundamental to the LGÉ compilation, despite its treatment in some manuscripts. At times, it is implied that, far from calling on poetry for support, the prose in LGÉ is simply a commentary on the poetry and that the narrative is not created but rather re-expressed in the prosimetric compilation.

The view that the poetry in LGÉ is also part of a separate and possibly older tradition is supported by a not insignificant number of these poems appearing independently in other manuscripts. On the other hand, some poems are, to the best of my knowledge, only preserved in manuscripts of LGÉ. Examples of both are to be found among the poems analysed in this paper. Scowcroft is right to warn that each poem probably has its own history and the role of poetry in the tradition should be assessed on an individual basis (2008: p.8).

Indeed, Scowcroft has questioned the assumption that poetry must always be the source of prose and pre-exist the compilation (2008: p.8). Citing fundamental innovations shared between certain poems and the recensions that introduce them to the LGÉ tradition, he suggests that, in some cases, the authors of the poems were also the scholars responsible for entire recensions. The poem was composed as part of the process of compilation, possibly as a conclusion that fixes the findings of the process metrically.

Scowcroft focuses on Eochaid Ua Flainn and Gilla Cóemáin and proposes that they are responsible for **α** and **μ** respectively. Carey, writing before Scowcroft published this suggestion, had already noticed a connection between Eochaid Ua Flainn and the branch of the tradition that Scowcroft terms **α**. However, Carey argues that the recension is derived from the poetry attributed to Eochaid, citing examples of forms of words forced upon Eochaid by metrical requirements which are reproduced in the prose. He also finds similar examples of the influence of Tanaide’s work (Carey 1983: pp.51‒52).

Flann Mainistrech has himself been proposed more tentatively by Scowcroft as author of *b* (2008: p.12 n.42), although, lacking the kind of textual evidence Carey cites in relation to Eochaid and Tanaide, it is obviously extremely difficult to distinguish a poet’s personal responsibility for a recension from the influence of their ideas or texts.

In an interesting insight into the role played by verse in LGÉ, Scowcroft has suggested that the distinction between prose and verse marks levels of authority as well as authorial responsibility which serves an expositional purpose.

It was uniquely well suited for the digestion of diverse, even conflicting, traditions in a single, authoritative tract. The poetry remains more or less immutable‒ the voice of named authorities‒ while the prose, anonymous and adaptable, expounds and integrates their testimony, consolidating its allusive treatment of action and wealth of non-narrative detail into a full narrative line. This prose ‘explanation’ of poetic authority comes therefore to function as a theatre for the historian's own work as compiler and critic. (1987: p.91)

One can ask, therefore, to what extent LGÉ's treatment of an embedded poem should be conceived, in each case, as a process of analysing and harmonising the work of a distant *auctor* and to what extent the process of compiling LGÉ led to the production of the authoritative material. This is tied in with the question of how much of the narrative contained in the LGÉ compilation ever existed in another form and how much of it was generated in response to needs which only emerged during the process of compilation. Scowcroft, for example, asks whether some elements of the invasion narratives were essentially created by analogy with narratives absorbed into the compilation which created a structural norm (1988: pp.34‒40). Furthermore, the core of LGÉ may not have consisted of prose or verse, not being a text at all. What truly drove the development of the compilation could have comprised discussion, debate, educational practice or some other expression of identity, in which prose, verse and prosimetric compositions played a role but were not the ultimate objective.

The questions raised here cannot be answered definitively within the scope of this chapter. Indeed, both the scholarship on the poetry in LGÉ cited above and my own examination of the specific corpus attributed to Flann Mainistrech suggest that no single theory can explain their inclusion. Scowcroft has argued that the original version of LGÉ contained virtually no poetry and Carey, while not going that far in general, has found no evidence that Flann Mainistrech's poetry in particular was used in the compilation’s early stages (1983: p.54). The corpus under discussion therefore entered the compilation by a series of decisions to include it at different stages. Once included, their context and even their relevance become subject to the revisions and interpolations that occur as the compilation develops even while the poems themselves, to a very large extent, remain unaltered. Each poem should therefore be examined in its own right before any general comment can be made on the corpus.

**The Poems**

***Togail Tuir Chonaind co ngail***

36qq.

Recension *a*: N p.7; F2 fol.7r.

Recension *b*: R fol.79v (first quatrain only); E fol.4v; D fol.10v; Y1 fol.6r.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Recension *c*: L*c* fol.276v; B fol.16r; H. p.67 (first line only).

Ó Cléirigh Recension: K p.24; C fol.87v.

This poem has been edited by Macalister (1940: pp.180‒87) and Carey (1983: pp.117‒20, 272‒75). It narrates an expedition of the descendants of Nemed, the third invader of Ireland according to LGÉ's scheme, against the Fomoiri, to whom they owed a crippling tribute. The Nemedians attack Conand’s tower, where the Fomoiri are based, but, during the fighting, the rising tide sweeps them all into the sea. Thirty of the people of Nemed escape in three groups of ten; two groups are scattered but their descendants later return to Ireland as the Fir Bolg and the Túatha Dé Danann, while the third group become the ancestors of the Britons. The attack on the tower is synchronised with the Exodus of the Israelites and the Gaels from Egypt. In terms of the contexts in which the poem is quoted, all three recensions contain broadly the same information in the prose on the assault on the tower and the subsequent diaspora and cite the poem at the end in support.

This poem is likely to have entered the compilation early; its presence in both *a* and *b* but not *m* implies it was in **α**. The only manuscript which comes close to attributing this poem to Flann Mainistrech, however, is H: ‘Conad don scel sin do chan Fland fili an duan-sa, do chuimnugud an sceoil’[[5]](#footnote-5) (Macalister 1940: para.271).[[6]](#footnote-6) H’s relationship to the rest of the LGÉ tradition is unclear. Scowcroft groups it with *c* (1987: p.87) but the section that cites this poem appears to be a fragment of a saga adapted from LGÉ as opposed to a straightforward version of the compilation. It has been described as ‘something of a mystery’ (Scowcroft 1987: p.107).

While Flann Mainistrech is not specified and other poets called Flann do exist, no other scholar of that name is connected to LGÉ. It thus makes most sense to take this attribution as referring to him. No other medieval manuscript attributes this poem to a particular individual. K attributes it to Eochaid Ua Flainn. The poem itself apparently attributes the view that the Britons are descended from the Fir Bolg to Ua Flaind (‘atbert Hua Flaind’, Macalister 1940: q.13): this could either be taken as a ‘signature’ by Eochaid or a citation of him, suggesting the poem is by a later poet.

The attribution to Eochaid Ua Flainn has been accepted by Macalister (1940: p.205), Carey (1983: p.51) and Scowcroft (1987: p.120 n.114). Only Carey gives specific reasons: he points out that his reconstruction of recension *a* does not include any other poems by Flann and cites the ‘signature’ in ‘Togail Tuir’, which, while ambiguous in this instance, is a feature of Eochaid’s other poems (1983: p.364). Scowcroft argues that, in general, Eochaid's poetry closely parallels the material on the pre-Gaelic invaders in **α**; ‘Togail Tuir’ plays this role in relation to the people of Nemed. Furthermore, the synchronism with the Exodus appears to be based on a chronological system particularly associated by Scowcroft with **α** and Eochaid Ua Flainn, which reflects a typology between the Gaels and Israel and which synchronises the reign of King David with the Gaels’ invasion of Ireland. This was also the system used in **ω** (Scowcroft 1988: pp.32‒33).

It is not clear which chronological system Flann Mainistrech used. He is ascribed ‘Reidig dam a Dé do nim’ (see below), a versification of the Eusebian scheme of world history. In **μ** and in *b*, the Eusebian scheme is used to overhaul LGÉ’s older scheme and synchronise the Gaels’ arrival in Ireland with the conquests of Alexander the Great. However, almost no attempt is made in ‘Reidig dam’ to synchronise Eusebian history with Irish material, raising the question of whether Flann himself actually envisaged this framework being applied to LGÉ and how he would have done so.

Another poem attributed to Flann Mainistrech in the *Book of Leinster* and later appearing in the *Metrical Dindshenchas* is ‘Cia triallaid nech aisnis senchais Ailig eltaig’ (ed. and transl. Gwynn 1906: vol.IV pp.100‒106). This poem retells two aetiological narratives behind the place-name Ailech which were, apparently, to be found originally in a poem by ‘Eochaid’. It is not known, however, if this is Eochaid Ua Flainn, although this has been raised as a possibility (O’Curry 1873: vol.II pp.153‒54; Gwynn 1906 vol.IV p.402; Miles 2012: p.40). One narrative is set in the time of the Túatha Dé Danann, the last people to inhabit Ireland before the Gaels, and is described by Flann as occurring ‘in tres amser toirsech domain’.[[7]](#footnote-7) The third age, in most sources, is understood as the period from Abraham to King David.[[8]](#footnote-8) Placing the Túatha Dé Danann in this age conforms to the scheme associated with Eochaid, as the Gaels would then arrive in Ireland during the time of King David. This suggests either that Flann is deferring to his source or that he subscribed, at least at one stage of his career, to the same chronological scheme as Eochaid Ua Flainn, which thus makes him more credible as the author of the poem under discussion.

However, the reference in ‘Cia triallaid nech aisnis’ to the third age is ambiguous, as, under the Eusebian scheme used in ‘Reidig dam’, the Persians hold the third world kingship; Flann may thus be synchronising the Túatha Dé Danann with the Persians in ‘Cia triallaid nech aisnis’, with which the statement in ‘Togail Tuir’ would not be compatible. He need not, of course, have held to the same doctrines throughout his life or, indeed, he may have been aware that more than one valid approach to synchronistic problems existed.

The attribution of ‘Togail Tuir’ to Eochaid seems, marginally, to be more credible on account of it fitting into the pattern of his work elsewhere in LGÉ and it also appears to be closer in terms of chronological system to Eochaid's work. However, I do not believe Flann’s authorship can be ruled out.

***Éstid a eolchu cen ón***

qq,38/42

Recension *m*:R*m* fol.93v (first quatrain only);Y*m* fol.18v; L*bm* fol.19r.

Recension *a*: N p.6; F fol.13v.

Recension *c*: B fol.19a; L*c* fol.281v.

Ó Cléirigh Recension: K p.51; C fol.19v.

Other: Cambridge University Library MS. Add. 4207, fol.44v.

This poem has been edited by Macalister (1941: pp.224‒47), Carey (1983: pp.142‒49, 298‒305) and Pődör (1999: vol.I p.233‒62). It concisely narrates the deaths of seventy individuals of the Túatha Dé Danann. Some modern scholars have seen the Túatha Dé Danann as medieval reflections of pre-Christian deities (Van Hamel 1915: pp.190‒91; Macalister 1941: pp.97‒105; Dillon 1956: p.67). However, the understanding of them and of pre-Christian religion in medieval Ireland has been shown to be more complex (Carey 1994; Borsje 1999; Carey 2011: pp.1‒38).

The poem is attributed to either Flann Mainistrech or ‘Flann’ in every manuscript other than Cambridge University Library Add. 4207.[[9]](#footnote-9) O’Curry lists it among his poems (O’Curry 1873: vol.II pp.150). Pődör has argued for Flann’s authorship of the poem on the basis of language and style (1999: vol.II pp.186‒90). Furthermore, Oengus’ death is described as occurring ‘in inbur na Bóinne hi foss’.[[10]](#footnote-10) Given that Flann was based at Monasterboice, not far from the Boyne estuary, this further supports his authorship. This attribution is thus one of the most credible in the corpus.

All texts of the poem in *m* other than R and the text in L*c* contain an additional four quatrains (qq.39‒42). These warn that the Túatha Dé Danann are not still alive in *síd* mounds, as some apparently believe, but are in torment in Hell.

The status of these quatrains is uncertain but they are obviously important for understanding the purpose of the poem. Given that only *m*'s text, which was presumably L*c*’s source, preserves these quatrains, Carey doubts whether they were part of the original composition (2011: p.18 n.25). This is possible; they fall outside a viable *dúnad* (q.38) and, furthermore, a number of rhymes in the additional quatrains only work if Old Irish final vowel quality is lost (eg. mblédha: Tairngire; breth: íchtarach),[[11]](#footnote-11) while Pődör has shown that rhymes in Flann Mainistrech’s poetry, including the main text of this poem, generally rely on its retention (1999: vol.II pp.131‒32).

However, *m* is the most primitive version of the LGÉ compilation available so it is a significant witness to the text of the poem. Furthermore, the additional quatrains contain some forms consistent with early Middle Irish, such as the infixed pronoun in ‘nos-eisteadh’ (q.42). On the whole, the additional quatrains may well be a subsequent addition but, if so, they seem to have been added early in the poem's history.

The contexts in which this poem is cited vary. In *m* (ed. Macalister 1941: para.316A) and N (Macalister 1941: para.316), the poem immediately follows the genealogies of the Túatha Dé Danann, which go back to Noah via Nemed. In F (ed. Macalister 1941: para.318) and *c* (ed. Macalister 1941: para.376), the poem follows paragraphs inserted after the genealogies discussing whether the Túatha Dé Danann are humans or demons. ‘Éstid a eolchu’ seems to be regarded as evidence, the deaths guaranteeing that the Túatha Dé Danann at least had human bodies. F is particularly explicit in citing the poem as support: ‘conad dia n-aidedaib ro chan Flann Mainistreach in duan-sa sis ga foirgeall’.[[12]](#footnote-12) Furthermore, F's paragraph appears to conclude that the Túatha Dé Danann were demons, while *c*'s paragraph argues that they were human beings.

Material on the identity of the Túatha Dé Danannis not evenly distributed across LGÉ. No reference to the issue is found in *m* or N, F discusses it briefly (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.316‒18), and a substantial portion of the material is found in *b* (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.342, 348, 350). This is merged by *c* with what is found in F, *c* actually adding very little, although the argument of the paragraph from F is turned on its head by virtue of its new context in *c* (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.366‒69). L*c*, however, does add some entirely new paragraphs (Macalister 1940: paras.267‒69).

The meaning of the poem is thus uncertain. ‘Éstid a eolchu’ itself gives no clues, other than the assertions in the additional quatrains, as to the purpose of its composition. The presence of ‘Éstid a eolchu’ in *m* and its absence from *b* implies it was in **μ**. Scowcroft has shown that this recension was focused on establishing a continuous chronicle of the kings of Tara (1987: p.119), which appears to begin among the Fir Bolg (ed. Macalister 1940: paras.280, 296), and otherwise contained very little discussion or narrative about the invasions. The poem’s earliest context in LGÉ thus seems to be concerned with king-lists and chronology, rather than the identity of the Túatha Dé Danann.

‘Éstid a eolchu’ is not an unnatural poem to cite in such a context. Compilations of the deaths of notable individuals are common in medieval Gaelic historical poetry and need not imply any doubts over those individuals’ humanity. Smith (2002: p.328) has a category in his taxonomy of Irish historical poetry for ‘Versified Battle-lists and Death-tales of the Kings’, drawing examples, including ‘Éstid a eolchu’, from the seventh to the twelfth century. Within LGÉ, ‘Fir Bolg batar sunna sel’, ascribed to Tanaide Eolach (Carey 1983: p.52), is closely comparable to ‘Éstid a eolchu’ in style and content but concerns the Fir Bolg (ed. Macalister 1940: pp.46‒53; ed. Carey 1983: pp.125‒29, 281‒84). Beyond poetry, manner of death is frequently noted in the annals (Charles-Edwards 2006: vol.I pp.24‒35; Evans 2010: p.227) and the *aided* (‘violent slaying’)is a well-attested type of saga (Mac Cana 1980: pp.73‒74).

However, the additional quatrains found in *m*'s text, despite the recension’s almost exclusive focus on regnal history, strongly bring out the theological implications of the poem, that is, that the Túatha Dé Danann are not supernatural and thus reflect the meaning put on the poem in subsequent versions. The idea they attack, however, that the Túatha Dé Danann are immortal and living in the *síd*, does appear in some earlier texts, such as *De gabail in t-sída* (ed. Hull 1933) or *Mesca Ulad* (ed. Carmichael-Watson 1941: ll.1‒16), but is found nowhere in LGÉ, possibly suggesting the poem was composed or used in yet another context. Alternatively, the LGÉ project as a whole may have been opposed to this interpretation of the Túatha Dé Danann generally.

That this supposedly authoritative poem can in fact be used in several different contexts is an interesting insight into medieval textual culture and the critical role therein of *intentio auctoris* (for which, see Minnis 2009: 20‒21, 73‒117). It is possible, however, that the changing use of the poem is only apparent and that its later use was prompted by the earlier versions of LGÉ. As *m* and N cite their human ancestors, the mostly realistic reign lengths of their kings and their deaths, these versions could be analysed as making the case for the humanity of the Túatha Dé Danann, even though they do not do so explicitly. Reading theological implications into the poem thus results not from rhetorical need and a cavalier attitude toward authorial intention but from a genuine, but possibly mistaken, attempt to understand the significance of earlier material in the LGÉ tradition. Their reading could be understood as revealing the anxieties of later scholars in the tradition or, alternatively, as evidence of their special knowledge of the purpose of the tradition.

‘Éstid a eolchu’ has no explicit narrative structure but a substantial number of the deaths in the poem are mentioned elsewhere in LGÉ in *m*, *a*, *c* (ed. Macalister 1941: paras. 310, 312, 315, 328, 354, 362, 367; 1956: paras.469, 480) and the section of *b* thought to have been interpolated from *a* (ed. Macalister 1941: paras. 328, 329, 331; Scowcroft 1987: p.110). The order is virtually the same. The kings who appear in the poem follow the same order in the prose (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.310‒315, 335, 362‒367). However, many more deaths are included in the poem than are mentioned in any recension of LGÉ, while LGÉ mentions no death among the Túatha Dé Danann that is not in the poem. The evidence thus suggests that ‘Éstid a eolchu’ was used as a source in the development of *m* and *a*, and thus possibly **μ**, but may also derive material from an earlier version alongside other sources.

There is one interesting example of the poem being used as a source for the king-list. A digression on the skilled members of the Túatha Dé Danann interrupts the king-list in *a*,after which *f* provides a brief recapitulation of the first three kings (Scowcroft 1987: p.110), including the length of the reign and how each king died. In the case of the Dagda and Lug, this latter detail is not found in the main king-list but is found in ‘Éstid a eolchu’ (ed. Macalister 1941: para.314). The summary of the Dagda's reign is particularly close to the poem: ‘ochtmoga don Dagda, conerbailt do gái cró, dia ro guin Ceitlenn i cath mór Maige Tuired’.[[13]](#footnote-13)

This corresponds to the Dagda's death in ‘Éstid a eolchu’.

Marb In Dagda do gái chró | isin Bruig, ní himmargó, | dia rodgen Cetnen in ben, | i cath mór Maige Tuired. (q.32)[[14]](#footnote-14)

Why F includes these details in its kinglist is not clear but it seems highly likely that ‘Éstid a eolchu cen ón’ was the ultimate source, perhaps providing a brief example of the role played by the poem in the development of the main history of the Túatha Dé Danann in LGÉ.

However, it also seems likely that ‘Éstid a eolchu’ was itself based on something comparable to LGÉ. Carey seems to have noticed that the structure of the poem corresponds to LGÉ’s history of the Túatha Dé Danann, as, while not explaining his reasons or even citing ‘Éstid a eolchu’ specifically, he uses Flann Mainistrech's death as a *terminus ante quem* for the production of this section of LGÉ as it survives (1994: p.17), thus implying that the poem must also be based on a version of LGÉ or that the history of the Túatha Dé Danann had already been worked out in detail independently. Unless we are to accept that the order of the poem is random but that the entire history of the Túatha Dé Danann was extrapolated from it, it seems probable that ‘Éstid a eolchu’ itself is based on something comparable to this section of LGÉ and, while it might resemble a rather laborious list, is actually carefully structured chronologically. Alternatively, it is possible that incidents in the poem have been rearranged to conform to their sequence in LGÉ, although I have no evidence of this.

Beyond LGÉ, the poem is possibly used in another synchronistic tract on the Túatha Dé Danann. The Middle Irish *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda*, found in the *Book of Ballymote* (ed. MacCarthy 1892: pp. 286‒31; Scowcroft 1987: pp.128‒29) and of uncertain date, is an attempt to synchronise the kings of the world with events in LGÉ which involves synchronising theTúatha Dé Danann with the Assyrian kings. The *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda* cites the deaths of members of the Túatha Dé Danann which occurred during the reign of each king, as well as the reigns of the Túatha Dé Danann’s own kings. The order of deaths in the poem and in the *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda* is similar, although with some major exceptions. However, where the *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda* cites the cause of death, which is not often, it corresponds to that cited in the poem. Furthermore, there are several examples of individuals appearing in the same or adjacent quatrains in the poem dying in the reign of the same Assyrian king. For example, in Lamprides’ reign died Cermad mac in Dagda, Corpre File, Etan, Cian, Elloth and Donand (ed. MacCarthy 1892: p.292) and these all occur within qq.4‒6 in ‘Éstid a eolchu’.

In relation to these deaths in the *Leabhar Comaimsireachda*, ‘Éstid a eolchu’ is possibly quoted again. Two deaths are described as follows: ‘ocus isin coiced bliadain deg iar sin, bas Cairbri filed do gae grene ocus bas Eadaine’[[15]](#footnote-15) (ed. and transl. MacCarthy 1892: p.292). In the poem, we find,

Marb de gai grene glaine | Corpre mór mac Etáine: | atbath Etan ós ind lind, | de chumaid Chairpre chendfind.[[16]](#footnote-16) (q.6)

While the correspondence is not as close as in the previous example, the phrase *de gai grene* (‘of a spear of the sun’) is not common and not clear in ultimate meaning: note the different translations by MacCarthy and Macalister. Another argument for the use of ‘Éstid a eolchu’ in the *Leabhar Comhaimsireachda* is that many of the deaths it includes are not found anywhere else but the poem.

‘Éstid a eolchu’ is closely involved with the LGÉ tradition. It apparently uses something resembling LGÉ as a source and is used and cited in turn. I have cited two examples where it appears to have been of technical use in the compilation of synchronistic tracts. It is easier to argue that the poem was used in these texts on account of possible quotations from it but I believe this also shows it was possible that it was used elsewhere, including in the historical narrative set out in recensions *m* and *a* of LGÉ.

Nonetheless, the additional quatrains and the lack of any other single text containing a comparable number of death-tales of the Túatha Dé Danann both suggest ‘Éstid a eolchu’ had relevance in other contexts and drew on other sources. It could be cited as a source of historical data on the Túatha Dé Danann but also as part of a discussion of their identity. Apart from providing a general insight into the complex existence a text can lead in medieval manuscript culture, this poem demonstrates that Flann Mainistrech worked closely with the history of the Túatha Dé Danann as it would appear in LGÉ, and possibly even an early version of the compilation, when devising this poem.

***Tóisig na lloingsi dar ler***

17/18 qq.

Recension *a*: N. p.16; F fol.3r.

Recension *b*: L*b* fol.3r; D fol.18v; Y2 fol.1r; E fol.7v; R fol.81v (first quatrain only).

Recension *c*:[[17]](#footnote-17) L*c* fol.288r.

Ó Cléirigh Recension: K p.71; C fol.28v.

This poem has been edited by Macalister (1956: pp.104‒11) and Pődör (1999: vol.I pp.263‒78). It names the forty leaders of the Gaels’ invasion of Ireland and describes the place and manner in which they died, many of the places apparently deriving their names from these individuals.

It is attributed to ‘in senchaid’ in *a*, which is glossed ‘.i. Flann Man’ in N (ed. Macalister 1956: para.502; Pődör 1999: vol.I p.264).[[18]](#footnote-18) It is unattributed in *b* (ed. Macalister 1956: para.385) and is attributed to 'Flann Mainistrech' in L*c* (ed. Macalister 1956: para.503). K and C both attribute it to ‘Flann’. Pődör, as with the rest of the corpus she analyses, attributes it to Flann Mainistrech (1999: vol.II pp.186‒90).

However, both Scowcroft (1987: p.120 n.114) and Carey (1983: p.51) ascribe this poem to Eochaid Ua Flainn. Carey comments that it is ‘certainly’ his work (1983: p.54), although he subsequently numbers it among the poems in LGÉ ‘most likely to be [Flann’s] work’ (2004b). The attribution to Eochaid is possibly due, as with ‘Togail Tuir’, to its history in the LGÉ tradition: appearing in *a* and *b* but not in *m*, it was probably in **α**, the recension particularly associated Eochaid Ua Flainn.

Evidence for his authorship may also be found in the final quatrain:

A Christ ós na clannaib, cumnig | Mac mic Fhlaind a láech-Luignib; | a Rí na mblath is na mbreth | is Tú an tAbb, is Tú in Tóesech. (q.18)[[19]](#footnote-19)

Eochaid Ua Flainn, if his name is taken literally rather than as a surname, is ‘mac mic Fhlaind’[[20]](#footnote-20) and, as Carey has argued, he does have a tendency to include his ‘signature’ in his poems. However, this phrase still does not necessarily refer to him and need not imply that the poem is by him. Pődör points out that all of Eochaid’s other signatures explicitly claim authorship, while this does not (1999: vol.I p.264). The poet could be including a prayer for Eochaid Ua Flaind as some sort of tribute. If we understand the poet to be Flann Mainistrech, it seems highly likely that he used Eochaid Ua Flaind as an authority and may have wished to acknowledge this in some way. [[21]](#footnote-21) Alternatively, Flann may have included the prayer for his own grandson: he is known to have had at least three (Dobbs 1921‒1924).

The description of Christ as being ‘ós na clannaib’ could be read as implying that the one for whom he is praying is from a different tribe from the poet's own, as he is emphasising Christ's transcendence of such divisions.

‘Luignib’ could technically refer to the Laigin but is more likely to be derived from Luigni. This is how it appears in the translations of this poem and it is understood thus by Byrne (2005: p.865). The Luigni appear to have been part of the Ciannachta, a collection of tribes found in north Connacht, the Boyne Valley and what is now Co. Derry. Their location near major Uí Neill centres and their ancestors’ role in sagas as loyal allies of various ancestors of the Uí Neill both imply that they were, by some, envisaged as vassals of the latter (Ó Muraíle 2000; P. Byrne 2000; F.J. Byrne 2001: pp.68‒69).

Flann Mainistrech himself was of the Fir Arda, another branch of the Ciannachta (Dobbs 1921‒1924). The internal structure of the Ciannachta, if indeed this group was anything more than a construct of medieval genealogists, is not well understood but it may have been possible for one of Flann's grandsons to be regarded as ‘a Luignib’ through some sort of marriage or fostering arrangement. Eochaid Ua Flainn certainly has no known connection to this group (Byrne 2005: p.865).

Pődör proposes that ‘mac mic Fhlaind’ is Mael Sechnaill II mac Domnaill mhic Fhlaind (ob.1022) but admits that this does not explain the reference to the Luigni (1999: vol.I p.264). The *Annals of the Four Masters* mention ‘Cernachán mac Flaind, tigerna Luighne’ as being active in 1002 and dying in 1012 (ed. O’Donovan 1851: *sa* 1002, 1012). I cannot find any reference to him having a son but, if one existed, he would perfectly fit the description ‘mac mic Fhlaind a Luignib’ and would have been contemporary with Flann Mainistrech. However, Cernachán was killed in 1012 in battle‒ against, ironically, the forces of Mael Sechnaill II‒ while taking part in a disastrous raid into Míd by a confederation of kings from north Connacht. Given Flann’s general favour towards the Uí Neill, it is difficult to identify how he came to be on particularly friendly relations with this group, although the political situation and his own tribal loyalties could well have been more nuanced.

The authorship of this poem is thus uncertain but I believe the attribution to Eochaid Ua Flainn can be called into serious question.

In terms of the context of ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’, in recension *a*, it is found in the *Réim Rigraide* (part. ed. Macalister 1956: paras.469‒665; Scowcroft 1987: pp.115‒23), which is a history of the kings of Ireland after Érimón, one of the leaders of the Gaelic invasion. It follows the account of the reign of Ethriel mac Irieoil Fhátha meic Erimoin (para.502), which includes the plains he cleared in Ireland and his death at the hands of Conmael mac Ébir. Érimón, Ethriel’s grandfather, had established his line in the north while Éber’s descendants ruled in the south. The poem is then introduced: ‘is do aidedaib na tóesach-sa anuas ro chan in senchaid so sís’.[[22]](#footnote-22)

None of the deaths listed in the poem occur during Ethriel’s reign, however. The last event that is both in *a*’s prose and in the poem occurs during the reign of his father Íriel, with the death of Suirge mac Duib at the battle of Árd Inmaith (para.501). Ethriel’s slayer and successor, Conmael, is the first king of Ireland from the line of Éber (para.502), making this a reasonably significant point at which to commemorate the invasion. The prose lists the leaders that fought on each side, although no such division is made in the poem. That sides can be inferred from the circumstances of death, however, suggests that, like ‘Éstid a eolchu cen ón’, the poem is based on a pre-existing account of events.

In recension *b*, ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ is cited after a prose list of the chieftains mentioned in the poem, the two lists being, apart from a couple of irregularities, almost identical. All manuscripts of *b* other than E and R then include a paragraph emphasising the antiquity of this information and explaining how it was preserved (para.385). According to Scowcroft’s stemma, passages in *b* but omitted in E and R were interpolated from *a*.

Is iat sain anmand in cethrachat tóisech táncatar in Erinn, amail ro scribad o Finntan mac

Bochra i flaith Diarmata meic Cerbaill, for glun Finden Muigi Bile 7 Coluim Cille 7 amail ro scrib Túan mac Cairill i fiadnaisse fer nErenn 7 amail ro indisítar daltada Findtáin .i. Laigcend mac Buircheda 7 Colmán mac Coimgelláin 7 Cenn Fáelad mac Ailella mac Colmáin 7 Cú Alad a Cruachain Cú Alad 7 Bran Boime a Boirind.[[23]](#footnote-23)

All manuscripts then introduce the poem with the formula, ‘de quibus dicitur’, and without attribution. The quatrain constituting a prayer for ‘mac mic Fhlaind’ is omitted in Y, L*b* and D. Given that these are also the manuscripts that include the paragraph quoted above, this suggests that this quatrain was read as an authorial attribution to a recent poet and incompatible with the prose introduction attributing its composition to events in the distant past.[[24]](#footnote-24)

The inclusion of this paragraph implies that the forty leaders are of some importance, as the data concerning them is being guaranteed by ancient tradition. Recensions *a*, *b* and *c* (para.385) include attempts to trace lineages of importance in medieval Ireland from these chieftains and the poem itself links them to territorial divisions, such as Brega. LGÉ also explicitly traces the descent of the Uí Neill and Uí Briain dynasties from Érimón and Éber respectively (paras.401‒2, 425‒26, 451‒52). The allotment of tribes and territories between the two chieftains thus has considerable contemporary relevance.

Recension *c*, represented solely by L*c*,follows *a* in citing the poem after its account of the reign of Ethriel. It is introduced with the following paragraph (para.502), which also relates it to discussion of the leaders earlier in *c*:

Is ar oigeadaib na táiseach-sa táncadar le Macaib Míled in Érind, do neoch ro airmemar

romaind, 7 ara n-anmandaib, ach ger o hairmead, roime iad 7 do na hindadaib 7 do na cathaib a ndrochradar 7 do na rígaib ler thoitsead 7 in méd do thoit le Túatha Dé Danann i cathaib 7 comracaib díb 7 in méd do thoit le Macaib Mílead fén, amail adfet Flann Mainistrech [...][[25]](#footnote-25)

***Anmann na tóisech delm tenn***

12 qq.

Recension *m*: Y*m* fol.2v; L*bm* fol.20r; R*m* fol.94v (first quatrain only).

Recension *c*: L*c* fol.288v.

‘Anmann na tóisech’ involves many of the chieftains who appear in ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’. This poem names twelve *tóisich* (‘leaders’) and ten *ócthigeirn* (‘minor lords’). Each *óchthigern* is responsible for building a particular fort. A harper and a poet are also named.

This poem has been edited by Macalister (1956: pp.132‒35). To the best of my knowledge, its authorship is not mentioned anywhere. It is attributed to Flann Mainistrech in L*c* and is left unattributed in *m*. Its presence in *m* alone implies it was in **μ**, although it may have been added to *m* later.

In *m*, the poem is cited after a paragraph describing the contention between Éber and Érimón over the inheritance of Donn and, thus, the kingship of Ireland (ed. Macalister 1956: para.468). Éber rejects the judgement passed down to them, which favoured Érimón, a division that begins the warfare that dominates the rest of the *Réim Rígraide*. After the poem, there is an account in prose of the division of the leaders among the two brothers. The concept of two groups of six leaders dividing Ireland is found in this poem, in another cited shortly afterwards in *m* and *a*, ‘A mhic ain Ugaine’ (ed. Macalister 1956: pp.120‒23), and in the prose in *a* (para. 407). Earlier, *m* refers to Érimón and Éber each having thirty warriors (*laich*), which includes the *tóisich* and the *ócthigeirn* named in the poem (paras.466‒68). This list of the sixty warriors, divided between Érimón and Éber, is also found in *a* (paras.397, 402), with the names in exactly the same order as in *m*.

The identity of the leaders of the Gaels’ invasion is clearly a topic of some interest among the scholars who produced LGÉ. The resulting profusion of material may have some common source, such as **μ**, or it may be a result of wider traditions and enquiries. In this context, it is difficult to draw any conclusions concerning the role the poem played in the development of this part of the compilation.

‘Anmann na tóisech’ makes no attempt to divide the leaders between Érimón and Éber and does not even mention the conflict, although *m* cites it in this context and divides the individuals it mentions between the two sides in the prose, citing ‘A mhic ain Ugaine’, which mentions six chieftains on either side but does not name them, as justification for doing this. ‘Anmann na tóisech’ thus forms only one component of a narrative although, as with ‘Éstid a eolchu’ and ‘Tóisig na llongsi’, the poem itself must have got the names it contains from somewhere.

L*c* cites the poem following ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ after a brief introduction (para.503),

Ocus is for anmandaib na taiseach sin 7 na hoicthigern, do neoch thanic le maccaib Míled in Érinn 7 ar na dindaib ro cumdaiged leo in Érinn, do chum Flann Mainistreach in duan-sa; 7 ro bad fearr comad ac teacht tar na táisechaib ica cét-imrad docuimneocha hi, 7 o nach ead ni hanoircheas a cuimneochad, mara tarla don toiscsea a cur sa leabar-sa annso.[[26]](#footnote-26)

This paragraph is an interesting insight into how a manuscript version of LGÉ was actually compiled: the compiler‒ Giolla Íosa Mór Mac Fhirbhisigh,[[27]](#footnote-27) in this instance‒ is not copying from a single exemplar and instead has to remember that various components of the compilation exist. He does have a sense of where verse items would be most appropriate but is also capable of recognising other locations where they are also relevant. In this case, the two poems complement each other quite well, ‘Tóisig na llongsi’ covering the deaths of the *tóisich* and ‘Anmann na tóisech’ covering the places associated with them.

When L*c* does deal with the twelve leaders and their division between Éber and Érimón (para.482), the prose includes all of the individuals named in the poem and the forts that were built, as well as some extra information on territorial boundaries. This is also in B and seems to be based on a similar paragraph in *a* (para.431). It therefore seems that there were channels in the tradition other than the poem through which information could pass. Also, B contains a paragraph on the minor lords and their forts very similar to the one in L*c* but does not include 'Anmann na tóisech' either. This suggests that the poem was not in the exemplar of *c*, meaning that Giolla Íosa Mór may have intended to include it in L*c* from *m* on his own initiative rather than because it was in any manuscript of *c*.

***Cruithnig cid dus farclam***

1/46 qq.

Recension *m*: R*m* fol. 95r (first quatrain only).

Other:

*The Book of Ballymote*,fol.113v.

*The Book of Lecan*, fol.144r.

This poem, which appears in full in *Lebor Bretnach*, has been edited by Todd (1848: pp.126‒53) and Van Hamel (1932: pp.10‒19). It is an account of the wanderings of the Cruithnich until they settle in Alba, then a brief summary of their kings as far as Mac Bethad (Macbeth; ob.1057). As part of an interpolation on the Cruithnich, R cites this poem (Macalister 1956: para.492), including, as is his custom, only the first quatrain and attributing it to Flann Mainistrech. This is the only attribution of this poem but Byrne, who is often critical of attributions to Flann Mainistrech, believes it is accurate (2005: p.866).

As it is only introduced to LGÉ, apparently, on the initiative of one manuscript compiler, has little relevance to the compilation and has already been discussed in terms of its place in relation to the *Lebor Bretnach* tradition (Mac Eoin 1964), I will not deal with it in detail. It is worth mentioning, however, that Mac Eoin sees the poem as based on an already well-established textual tradition (1964: p.153), showing that one purpose of Flann’s poetry was to consolidate and re-express other texts.

***Ochtauin August in rí***

1 q.

Recension *b*: L*b* fol.8v; Y2 fol.7v; R. fol.86r.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Other: *Leabhar Breac* p.143.

The prose context for this quatrain appears in Macalister's edition (1956: para.594*bis*) but Macalister does not print the quatrain itself. There are no meaningful variants in the different versions I have seen but the text from Y2 seems to be the clearest:

Ochtauín August in rí | in nare ro gab Crist crí. | Tibir Cessair co curp nglan | in are ro chessartar.[[29]](#footnote-29)

This is quoted towards the end of *b*, the structure of which is difficult to appreciate from Macalister's edition (for guidance, see Scowcroft 1987: p.120). Rather than presenting a full king-list, *b* focuses on particularly significant kings and discusses the peoples that are descended from them and the legal and territorial innovations they brought about. The quatrain is quoted as part of a discussion of chronology that develops around one of the descendants of Ugaine Mór, Crimthann Nia Nair. The prose cites one view, which holds that Crimthann was contemporary with the birth of Christ. However, it is also suggested that it is more likely that Christ was born during the reign of Conchobar mac Nessa, although there is disagreement as to the precise year. The passage eventually settles for the seventh, then synchronises Christ's birth with the seventh year of Augustus and his death with the fifteenth year of Tiberius. The quatrain is cited in support with the words ‘amail atbert Flann’.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Flann’s synchronism in this verse is not at all controversial. Whether the birth of Christ occurred during the reign of Crimthann or the reign of Conchobar is of some chronological significance but it does not seem too fundamental, as Crimthann and Conchobar are generally regarded as living within a couple of generations of each other (paras.584‒87). Thus, while Flann’s material is being used to synchronise Irish history with world history, it is not actually performing that function in itself. It is also interesting that it is not being cited to resolve the point of contention but as a source of more certain information on which the prose bases its subsequent argument; Flann’s quatrain almost seems to represent the material on which there is consensus.

It also appears, without attribution, at the bottom of p.143 in the sixteenth-century *Leabhar Breac*, during a tract on King Herod (ms. pp.142‒44). The quatrain probably relates to a passage synchronising Herod and his relatives to the relevant Roman Emperors, including Augustus and Tiberius (ms. pp.143 b49‒144 a18).

This quatrain could be a free-standing mnemonic or could be taken from a longer poem not now extant. It is not clear what the focus of this poem would have been, except that it involved synchronisms. It may be a continuous list of Roman Emperors or it may be synchronising events in sacred history with king-lists.

***Augaine Mór, mac ríg Érenn***

60 qq.

Recension *c*: L*c* fol.303v.

Other:

*The Book of Leinster*, fol.35v.

This poem is a history of the *bóroma*, a tribute levied by the Uí Neill kings from Leinster (Byrne 2001: pp.143‒50; Charles-Edwards 2000: pp.570‒71). It is closely related to the prose saga, which contains at least some Old Irish material, charting the history of the tribute (ed. Stokes 1892). Stokes refers briefly to this poem as being on the same subject as the saga (1892: p.35). L*c* interpolates large sections of this saga into the *Réim Rígraide* (Scowcroft 1987: p.123). However, the poem is much more hostile toward the Laigin than the saga, which focuses on successful resistance to the tribute and its final annulment by St. Molling. The poem includes no successes by the Laigin, no annulment and the explicit statement that the *bóroma* remains in force until the day of judgement (l.4961).

It has not yet been fully edited. The context in which it appears in L*c* does appear in Macalister's edition (1956: para.614) but he declines to print it. The *Book of Leinster* version appears in the diplomatic edition of that manuscript (ed. Best 1954: pp.159‒64).[[31]](#footnote-31) I have made my own transcription of the poem from L*c.* Each poem contains the same quatrains in the same order, with one insignificant exception.[[32]](#footnote-32) There are a reasonable number of minor variants at the level of language and word choice but, in general, the two versions follow each other very closely.

In the *Book of Leinster*, however, the poem is split into two. ‘Augaine Mór mac ríg Erend’ consists of seven quatrains lacking a *dúnad* (ll.4871‒85). ‘Túathal Techtmar ba rí Temrach’ then begins and consists of 53 quatrains with the *dúnad* ‘Túathal’ (ll.4886‒994). Each poem begins with an elaborate zoomorphic initial. In L*c*, ‘Augaine Mór mac ríg Erend’ begins with a large initial (L*c* fol.303v a37) and ‘Túathal Techtmar ba rí Temrach’ continues without any visual separation (fol.303v b3). The last word in L*c* is still ‘Túathal’ but this is followed by the letters ‘A.U.G’. (fol.304r a44). L*c* thus presents it as a single poem. This issue is briefly discussed by Bronner (2007: p.86).

In L*c*, the poem, along with two others, is embedded in the account in the *Réim Rígraide* of the reign of Loegaire mac Neill (ed. Macalister 1956: para.614), a large part of which is devoted to how he failed to obtain the *boróma*. This, however, does not appear in ‘Augaine mór’. In the *Book of Leinster*, the poem appears in the section of the manuscript which, under Schlüter’s scheme (2010: pp.121‒22), contains the *láidshenchas Laigen* (‘the historical poems of Leinster’). Given the extent to which the poem seems to be anti-Leinster, this is somewhat surprising. A similar although not directly comparable issue is discussed by Byrnes (2008: p.97) in relation to *Esnada Tige Buchet* (ed. Byrnes 2008) in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B. 502.

The poem is unattributed in the *Book of Leinster*. In L*c*, it is headed ‘don boroma andso sis do rer Fhloind’ (fol.303v a36). It is not specified who this is but the poem is listed as attributed to Flann Mainistrech in the Royal Irish Academy catalogue (Mulchrone 1958: p.784) and is ascribed to him by the editors of the diplomatic edition of the *Book of Leinster* (Best 1954: p.xxiii). Carey (2004b) mentions this poem in passing as being by Flann. The argument that no other poet called Flann is associated with LGÉ also applies here.

However, Mac Eoin (1968: p.29) has suggested that it is in fact by Fland mac Maelmaedoc (ob.979). In his list of poems datable by non-linguistic criteria, Carney has dated ‘Túathal Techtmar ba rí Temrach’ to the late eighth century (1982‒1983: p.178). He does not give reasons but this dating is presumably based on the penultimate quatrain (ll.4991‒93) which traces the kings of Tara down to ‘Donnchad’, who is credited with being the first king to collect the *bóroma* since ‘Finnachta’. These individuals appear to be Fínsnechtae Fledach mac Dúnchada (ob.695; Charles-Edwards 2004) and Donnchad mac Domnaill (ob.797; Doherty 2004) respectively, although Carey (2004b) reads ‘Donnchad’ as Donnchad mac Briain (ob.1064), son of Brian Bóruma, whose relevance to the *boróma* derives from his alliance with the southern Uí Neill against Diarmait mac Mael na mBó of Leinster in 1057. Mac Eoin (1968: p.29), however, interprets ‘Donnchad’ as Donnchad mac Flainn Sinna (ob.944). The poem seems most appropriate as the product of the reign of Donnchad mac Domnaill, who appears to have been engaged in persistent warfare against Leinster during his reign. The battles that appear uniquely in this poem (ll.4964‒71), which were fought by Cairbre Lifechair against Munster after they also invaded Leinster, are particularly reminiscent of a similar campaign conducted by Donnchad in 794 and seem to make Carey’s reading of the poem as celebrating an alliance between the Uí Neill and the emerging Uí Briain unlikely.

The poem does include some of the Old Irish forms one would expect to find in a poem from this period. These include the inflection of the article (eg. l.4929: ‘dinaib clannaib’), gender distinction in numerals (eg. l.4889: ‘a ndí ingin’), correct initial mutation after numerals (eg. L*c* fol.304r b47 ‘na .uii. mbliadnai’) the retention of the reduplicated preterite (eg. ll.4934‒35: ‘nenaisc’) and the t-preterite (eg. l.4899: ‘adacht’) and declension of the adjective (eg. l.4973: ‘briathraib fíraib’). Infixed pronouns are used with more distinction in class than one might expect in Middle Irish, although the clearest example, ‘co Findachta rodus maithi’ (L*c*. fol.304v a39), is a special by-form which, according to Thurneysen (1949: para.415 p.260), emerged in the ninth century. There are only a few distinctively later forms (eg. l.4978: ‘forsna fledaib’) and none are fixed by rhyme.

However, while these are old forms, Pődör believes that the language of Flann Mainistrech is quite conservative for his time and her corpus in fact includes examples of nearly all the forms cited above, some of which actually predominate in the corpus.[[33]](#footnote-33) A full linguistic study of this poem, which I do not pretend to have undertaken here, is necessary to establish whether it really is too early to be regarded as Flann's work. For the moment, the combination of Old Irish forms with the close alignment of the narrative in the poem with Donnchad mac Domnaill's political interests and ambitions, as well as the poem ending with his reign, do seem to imply a date in the late eighth or early ninth century.

We shall take the heading in L*c* as referring to Flann Mainistrech, although this is questionable. This does not, however, actually state that Flann is the author. The phrase ‘do rer Fhlaind’ could mean ‘by the authority of Flann’ or ‘according to the opinion of Flann’ or even simply ‘agreeing with Flann’. It should therefore perhaps be read as referencing another work by Flann Mainistrech or simply stating that this poem is in accordance with a view he is thought to have held rather than ascribing the poem to him.

It is of course possible that Flann Mainistrech composed a text specifically on the *bóroma* which is now lost but is being referenced here. There are some basic differences in the narrative; for example, in the saga, the Laigin’s attack on the women of Tara takes place during the reign of Cairpre Lifechair (ed. Stokes 1892: para.37), whereas in the poem it takes place during the reign of Cormac mac Airt (ll.4908‒4927). The poem also fails to include anything about the annulment of the *bóroma*. It could thus be regarded as simply a different version of the narrative from that in the saga which existed elsewhere in a lost recension by Flann.

However, restricting ourselves to non-hypothetical texts attributed to Flann, ‘Augaine mór mac ríg Erenn’ does engage with topics which also appear in his work and noticeably more so than the saga. Establishing the relationship between the poem and the saga is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present study but some initial observations are possible. My initial impression is that the poem is an adaptation of something like the saga, corroborated by Mac Eoin’s remark (1968: p.29) that the poem represents ‘the *boróma* story [...] almost at full development’. The saga and the poem are both structured around the reigns of kings of Tara who were particularly active in pursuit of the *bóroma.* Appearing in the poem but not the saga is a brief history of the kings of the Laigin and the kings of Tara tracing them both back to the two sons of Ugaine Mór and dating the start of their conflict in terms of years before the birth of Christ (ll.4871‒4885). The dating also appears in the *Réim Rígraide*.[[34]](#footnote-34) This is all found in the initial seven quatrains which appear as a separate poem in the *Book of Leinster*.

While it would be tempting to suggest that these seven quatrains are Flann’s contribution, the poem contains similar material beyond these quatrains. The saga includes a list of kings of Tara who levied the *bóroma* which falls short, naturally, of being a full list of the kings of Tara. This is also in the poem but the poem also includes reign lengths for some of the kings (ll.4901‒906) and the statement that 40 kings reigned in Tara between the time of Túathal Techtmar, who instituted the tribute, to Finnachta, who was the last king before Donnchad to levy it (ll.4988‒90). In the saga, the corresponding list consists of only twenty-four named kings with two major gaps elided over in the saga's text (Stokes 1892: paras.38, 43). The poem also goes into a lot more detail about the identity of the maidens slain and kidnapped during Dunlang's raid on Brega (ll.4911‒27), an episode tersely related in the saga (Stokes 1892: para.37). As we have seen, lists of names of individuals are a feature of several other poems attributed to Flann Mainistrech, although interest in this sort of data is by no means unusual in medieval Gaelic texts in general (eg. Smith 2002: p.332; Burnyeat 2009).

The figure of 40 kings between Finnachta and Túathal Techtmar corresponds to the *Réim Rígraide* in LGÉ (Macalister 1956: paras.593‒634) but also to the metrical list of kings of Tara attributed to Flann Mainistrech, spread across ’Érimón is Éber ard’, ‘Ríg Themra dia tesbann tnú’ and ‘Ríg Themra toebaige iar tain’ (see below), which is almost certainly related to the *Réim Rígraide*. Indeed, it has been suggested that Flann Mainistrech was the first scholar to construct a continuous list of the kings of Tara (Scowcroft 1987: p.132; Smith 2002: p.341). However, these lists do not contain reign lengths or indeed any attempts at establishing a chronology beyond placing the kings in order and definitely nothing comparable to time measured in years before Christ. Smith associates these sorts of developments with Gilla Cóemáin.

The poem thus sets events surrounding the *bóroma* in the context of the line of the kings of Tara, tracing the conflict back to Ugaine Mór and down to Donnchad mac Domnaill. The saga itself tends in this direction, providing a sporadic list of kings limited to those who had distinguished themselves in relation to the tribute, although this list itself may have been a later addition in light of texts like the *Réim Rígraide.* The poem may thus be described as being in agreement with Flann in the heading because he was considered responsible for a comprehensive and authoritative account of this line of kings, even though some of the actual data may not originate with him.

The line of the kings of Tara depicted in ‘Augaine mór’ spans the majority of the *Réim Rígraide*, even though it does not supply a full list of names, and seems to have been composed in a context in which such a continuous king-list was thought to be possible. Some of its chronological apparatus is, in addition, relatively advanced. A poem like this being composed in the eighth century raises considerable problems for the idea that it was Flann Mainistrech who first developed a continuous list of the kings of Tara and that a scheme of reign lengths was first established by Gilla Cóemáin. Alternatively, it could be regarded as raising considerable problems for the eighth-century dating of the poem. It is possible that the poem is a compilation, in which an eighth-century poem has been adapted to bring it in line with later historical scholarship but a more thorough linguistic study is required to uncover any such strata.

The title which begins ‘Augaine mór’ in L*c* could refer also to the two poems which follow it: ‘Boroma Laigen na learg’ (L*c* fol.304r a44) and ‘Rig rogob Temair na treab’ (L*c* fol.304v a1). These are also unedited. Both concern the *bóroma*. ‘Boroma Laigen’ appears to present the formula for the division of the tribute between the Connachta, the Uí Neill and the Airgialla, who are all descendants of Tuathal Techtmar, who imposed the tribute. ‘Rig rogob’ appears to be a retelling of the story of how the tribute came to be imposed, which is already included in ‘Augaine mór’, although ‘Rig rogob’ is apparently unfinished. Both these poems also show an interest in contextualising their material within the overall history of the kingship of Tara, although the best example of this is found in two quatrains of ‘Boroma Laigen’ found beyond a very definite *dúnad* (beg. L*c* fol.304r b47). The poems are in a different metre from ‘Augaine Mór’ and seem to be more modern in terms of language. However, as stated above, it does not seem likely that the heading is claiming that any of the poems are actually by Flann Mainistrech. The poems to which the heading does refer and what it is about them that is in agreement with Flann probably cannot be discussed before further study has been done of these texts.

***Érimón is Éber ard* (r1)*,* *Ríg Themra dia tesbann tnú* (r2)*,* *Ríg Themra toebaige iar tain* (r3)**[[35]](#footnote-35)

81qq., 37qq, 51qq

Recension *m*:

* r1: L*bm* fol.33r.

Recension *b*:

* r1: L*b* fol.14v; D fol.42v; E.[[36]](#footnote-36)
* r2: L*b* fol.15v; D fol.43v; E.
* r3: L*b* fol.16r; D fol.44v; E.

Ó Cléirigh Recension:

* r1: K p.125; C fol.54v.
* r2: K p.177; C fol.81v.
* r3: K p.225; C fol.108v.

Other:

* r1: *Book of Lecan*, fol.33r.
* r2: *The Book of Leinster*, fol.131v.
* r3: *The Book of Leinster*, fol.132r.

Taken together, r1‒3 form a continuous list of the kings of Tara from Érimon, who led the Gaels' invasion of Ireland, to the return of Mael Sechnaill II to the High-Kingship following Brian Bóruma's death in 1014. r1 lists the kings from Érimón to Eochu Feidlech, r2 from Eochu Feidlech to Nath Í and the coming of Christianity and r3 from Lóegaire mac Neill to Mael Sechnaill II.

r1 is completely unedited; I have taken a transcript of the L*b* version but have not yet consulted the other manuscripts. r2 has been edited and translated from the *Book of Leinster* by Pődör (1999: vol.I p.279‒303). Despite r3 meeting all the criteria for inclusion in her corpus, Pődör does not even mention it. Both r2 and r3 appear in the diplomatic edition of the *Book of Leinster* (ed. Best 1954: pp.504‒16).

As a king-list, the poems fit together very well. However, in several respects, they are less homogeneous. First, as can be seen above, r1 and r2‒3 are never found together outside LGÉ. Secondly, r1 gives each king a specific reign length and summarises the number of kings by dynasty at the end, while r2 and r3 simply state each king's name and the manner of his death, along with sundry other details. In r1, the accounts of deaths are correspondingly less detailed.

r1 is never attributed. The presentation of the poems in L*b* implies that the scribe did not think r1 was by Flann. Following r1, r2 is introduced in a manner that seems to designate only r2 as Flann’s work: ‘Finit de regibus Hibernie ab Erimon usque Eochaid [*sic*] Feidlech et incipit ab Eocho usque ad Laegaire mac Neill. Et Flann cecinit’[[37]](#footnote-37) (L*b* fol.15v b10). However, O’Conor has attributed r1 to Flann (1814: vol.II p.lxxxxviii); Schmidt cites this view without distancing himself from it (2009: p.219). Scowcroft discusses r1 without attributing it (1987: pp.131‒32). I myself doubt that it is by Flann but firm conclusions must wait pending full investigation of the different manuscript versions and resolution of the difficulties in the text of r1 mentioned by Scowcroft.

In contrast, r2 and r3 are attributed to Flann Mainistrech in the Ó Cléirigh recension and in D. In the *Book of Leinster*, r2 is attributed to ‘Flann Mainistrech’ (l.15640) and r3 is attributed to ‘Flann’ (l.15783). An extract from r3 appears in two late manuscripts and both attribute it to Flann Mainistrech.[[38]](#footnote-38) In L*b*,r3 is not attributed to Flann in its own heading but both here and in the *Book of Leinster*,[[39]](#footnote-39) r3 contains a quatrain naming ‘Flann’ as the author (L*b* fol.16v a36; ll.15986‒88).

There is a general scholarly consensus concerning r2 and r3. O'Curry (1873: vol.II p,150), Carney (1982‒1983: p.181), Scowcroft (1987: p.131) and Byrne (2005: p.866) number them among reliable attributions to Flann and r2 is part of the corpus that Pődör' has asserted to be his work (1999: vol.II pp.186‒90).

In terms of the poems’ relationship with LGÉ, r2 and r3, in their earliest manuscript appearance in the *Book of Leinster*, are not part of the compilation at all but part of an independent collection of poems on the kings of Ireland in which the metrical synchronistic lists of the kings of Tara by Gilla Cóemáin (ed. Smith: 2007) also feature prominently (ed. Best 1957: approx. pp.471‒639; Schlüter 2010: p.130). r1 is found independently in the *Book of Lecan* between the end of L*bm* and the beginning *Senchas Naomh Érenn* (fol.34r a1), among a number of synchronistic texts, including *Sex Aetates Mundi* (ed. Ó Cróinín 1983) and ‘Réidig dam a Dé do nim’ (see below). Given the relevance of this material to the topics addressed in LGÉ, this raises the interesting question of whether this material is to be regarded as separate from L*b* and L*bm* or all part of a greater compilation to be read as one.

Where they appear in *b*, r1‒3 are found among the synchronistic texts appended to the recension proper. However, Scowcroft has shown that r1‒3 may not have been added at the same stage of *b*'s development. While r3 corresponds to the relevant prose in *b* to the extent that Scowcroft suggests they may have originally comprised a ‘prose-poetic unit’, r1 and r2 do not appear to have had any sort of influence and thus seem to have been simply appended rather than used (1987: p.132). This contrasts interestingly with the manuscript history of the poems in which r2‒3 are found together and r1 is found separately.

The material appended to *b* was gathered, apparently, to compensate for the lack of a proper king-list in *b* and to address irregularities in the recension’s chronology; the synchronistic tract interspersed through the recension and designated *s* by Scowcroft is more useful in addressing the latter (1987: pp.125‒26). Recension *m*, which focuses on the *Réim Rígraide*, was possibly appended to *b* for a similar reason. R omits r1‒3 but includes R*m* while D does not include a version of *m* but does append r1‒3, suggesting they might have served overlapping purposes, with one potentially rendering the other redundant.

There is no attempt at synchronism with world history in r1‒3 and r2 and r3 do not include reign lengths. The last king in r3 is Mael Sechnaill II (ob.1022) who is described as if he were still alive, ‘conid é Hérend oenrí’[[40]](#footnote-40) (l.15976). Brian Bóruma's reign up to his death in 1014 is also mentioned (ll.15965‒69), which appears to date the poem to between 1014 and 1022. This is the end of what Scowcroft believes to have been *b*’s original king-list. However, in two extensions to the original text, *b* first covers the middle of the eleventh century, an uncertain period in which there was no dominant ruler, then adds High Kings up to the death of Muirchertach Ua Briain in 1114 (Scowcroft 1987: p.131).

The production of a continuous list of the kings of Tara may have had a particular contemporary political significance. The late tenth and early eleventh century saw the rapid rise to power of a number of new dynasties (Jaski 2000: p.226), the most prominent of which being the Dál Cais under Brian Bóruma (Duffy 2004; Byrne 2005: pp.862‒64; Ní Mhaonaigh 2006). This dislocation of political convention, with the Uí Neill king of Tara, Mael Sechnaill II, having to submit to Brian in 1002, may have been behind Mael Sechnaill II’s patronage of literature (Duffy 2004), as if he were attempting to bolster the position of his dynasty, and the *status quo* in general, through appealing to historical precedent (Jaski 2000: p.227). Flann's king-list in these poems should perhaps be read in this context, representing the kingship of Tara as an institution at least as old as the Gaels’ settlement in Ireland and traditionally monopolised by the Uí Neill or their direct ancestors (Byrne 2005: p.866).

However, r1‒3 are about the kings of Tara, whereas, in every recension of LGÉ, the *Réim Rígraide* presents the same individuals as holding the *ríge Erenn*, the kingship of Ireland (eg. 1956: para.477). The kingship of Tara did not necessarily equate to the kingship of Ireland conceptually, let alone in reality, despite this equation being made in later historical writing (Kellerher 1963: pp.123‒24). The kingship of Tara appears to have sometimes represented overlordship of the Uí Neill and sometimes overlordship of the northern half of Ireland against a corresponding king of the southern half at Cashel (Jaski 2000: pp.215, 227).

Flann is explicitly listing the *ríg Themra* (ll.15873, 15641) but he does occasionally use the term *oenrí Erenn* (‘sole king of Ireland’) in relation to Nath Í mac Fiachrach (l.15780), Domnall mac Aeda meic Ainmirech (l.15851) and, as we have seen, Mael Sechnaill. It is not clear if he is equating being the sole king of Ireland with being the king of Tara or if he views the former as a separate and much rarer achievement. His use of the term is not particularly partisan: Domnall was of the northern Uí Neill dynasty of Cenél Conaill (Charles-Edwards 2004c) while Nath Í, ancestor of Uí Fhiachrach, was not of the Uí Neill at all. Brian Bóruma is included in the king-list; however, the strange term ‘ardlí Gall 7 Gaedel’ (‘lofty splendour of Gaels and foreigners’) is used in the *Book of Leinster* text of r3 (l.15966) but both L*b* (fol.16v a28) and K (p.228 l.15) give *ardrí* (‘high king’). It is possible for either form to be an emendation and I cannot at the moment judge which was the original. Even if he did use the term *ardlí*, however, Flann must have been aware that it could be easily and controversially amended without doing violence to the poem’s metre or rhyme scheme.

Therefore, while the *Réim Rígraide* is a widely attested component of LGÉ, the verse king-list Flann produces does not appear to be based on the same conception of the kingship of Tara and the kingship of Ireland as that which underlies the *Réim Rígraide*. It could also have had potent political meaning as a text in its own right and, as we have seen, appears in manuscripts independently. On the other hand, the work of other poets like Gilla Cóemáin and entire versions of the compilation, such as **μ**, are themselves focused on the model of the king-list, suggesting a desire to explore and enhance its history was of relevance to LGÉ itself and those involved in it.

As with ‘Éstid a eolchu cen ón’, it seems likely that the composition of r1‒3 drew on a range of sources beyond LGÉ, particularly for the accounts of the deaths of the kings. Many, such as the death of Conaire Mór in the *bruiden* (ll.15660‒64), are found in independent narratives (ed. Knott 1936; West 1999). A couple of hints at the background to its compilation appear in the poem. For example, Flann includes Nuada Necht, apparently on the basis of a tradition distinctive to Leinster, but cannot find a written account of his death:

Atberat Lagin na llecht | robo rí ced Nuadu Necht; | a aided cen chobraind cain. | ni fogbaim i scríbennaib.[[41]](#footnote-41) (ll.15656‒60)

Lists of the kings of Tara did exist for Flann to use, although they appear to have contained lengthy gaps (Jaski 2000: p.215). One such text, *Baile in Scáil* (ed. Murray 2004), is explicitly cited by Flann, although he is actually disagreeing with it on a particular detail:

Marb iarna rígad don tslóg. | Eocho mínglan Mugmed*on*; | ro fírad cid cruth aile. | ro scríbad issin Scálbaile.[[42]](#footnote-42) (ll.15765‒69)

Most of the kings and their deaths are recited unreferenced and uncontested but these moments do suggest that r1‒3 were composed after the consultation and collation of multiple sources. Thus, while political interests probably did influence the production of this text, it also gives the impression of being a product of scholarly enquiry.

How this poem relates the *Réim Rígraide* is not clear. r1 contains 74 kings, r2 35 and r3 45, totalling 154. The *Réim Rigraide* in *m*, *a* and *c* contains 115, with 68 in *b*’s incomplete list (Scowcroft 1987: p.119). The *Réim Rígraide* proves incompatible with the rest of LGÉ’s chronological framework, prompting *c* to push the whole narrative much further back in time than even the Eusebian model that synchronised Érimón with Alexander (Scowcroft 1987: pp.127‒28). Thus, r1‒3’s list, being longer, would be even less compatible and is possibly based on another system entirely, such that which synchronises Érimón with King David. Firm conclusions on this matter, however, would require further analysis of this section of LGÉ, currently impeded by the lack of a complete edition.

***Reidig dam a Dé do nim/ co hémidh a n-indisin***

317qq.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Recension *b*: L*b* fol.11r (L1[[44]](#footnote-44)); D fol.36r (*d*).

Other:

* *The Book of Uí Maine*, fol.44v (UM).
* *The Book of Lecan*, fol.27v (L2).

This enormous poem is a list of the ‘kings of the world’ from Ninus son of Belus, king of Assyria (often synchronised with Abraham) down to Leo III, Emperor of Byzantium. The kings are divided into a succession of six kingdoms: the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Macedonians and Romans. This is the model used by Isidore (ed. Lindsay 1911:V.xxxix.1‒42; transl. Barney 2010: pp.130‒33), by Bede in the *Chronica Minora* (transl. Wallis 1999: pp.157‒239) and, ultimately, by Jerome and Eusebius in the *Chronicon* (transl. Pearse 2005)*.*

The poem has been incompletely edited and translated by Sean Mac Airt, the project being interrupted by his death.[[45]](#footnote-45) The final quatrains, which cite Flann as the author, have been edited and analysed by Thurneysen (1915). The entire poem has been discussed and analysed in some detail by Schmidt (2009).[[46]](#footnote-46) In that he examines the textual history of the poem and its role within LGÉ, Schmidt shares many of the objectives of the present study. On the other hand, despite publishing in 2009, he appears to be unaware of Scowcroft's work on LGÉ. Scowcroft has not, to the best of my knowledge, published since 2008 and thus has not commented on Schmidt. This is not necessarily a problem, however, as Schmidt and Scowcroft can thus be treated as independent witnesses where they deal with the same topics.

Flann Mainistrech is named as the author in a note preceding the poem in the *Book of Uí Maine*. L1 contains a quatrain which names Flann as the author (ed. Thurneysen 1915) and dates its composition in relation to the end of the poem's king-list, most interpretations of which placing the composition in the latter years of Flann's life (Thuneysen 1915; Schmidt 2009: pp.213‒14). This attribution has been accepted by O'Curry (1873: vol.II p.160), Carney (1982‒1983: p.181) and Byrne (2005: p.866) but Schmidt remains sceptical (2009: p.212).

‘Réidig dam’ appears as an independent text in two manuscripts, the *Book of Uí Maine* and L2. Further to this, the poem is frequently quoted in the *Annals of Innisfallen* (ed. Mac Airt 1944) in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. B. 503, firmly dated to 1092 (Ó Cuív 2001: vol.I pp.201‒8). Schmidt has argued that the independent versions of the poem are closer textually to the quotations and thus represent an older version which was not originally part of LGÉ (Schmidt 2009: p.216). The poem possibly acquired somewhat iconic status, as a number of later metrical synchronisms use the same first line (eg. *The Book of Lecan* fol.190r a33 or ed.Ó Cróinín 1983: para.70 pp.97‒108).

Both Schmidt and Scowcroft discuss this poem’s relationship with LGÉ. For Scowcroft, ‘Réidig dam’ forms the ‘real core’ (1987: p.126) of the synchronistic apparatus, which he designates *s*, appended to and interspersed with the *Réim Rígraide* and the invasion narratives in *b* which is designed to bring this narrative into line with the Eusebian scheme of world history set out in ‘Réidig dam’: ‘the author of *s* juxtaposed prose and metrical treatments of the same material...the coherence of which depends not on the continuity of the Irish material but on the sequence of kings in the world at large’ (1987: p.126). The Eusebian scheme is highly influential in *b*, which has been re-written to conform to it. Scowcroft, however, is unsure whether *s* was the basis for this revision or whether *s* was compiled to set out explicitly the scheme being used (1987: p.127). MacNeill was of the opinion that *s* was a much older and independent tract and edited it as such (MacNeill 1910, but see Scowcroft 1987: p.126). The centrality of Flann Mainistrech’s work in ‘Réidig dam’ to the chronological apparatus added to *b* prompts Scowcroft to ask whether it is possible for Flann to have compiled the recension himself (2008: p.12). This suggestion is corroborated by his suggestion that *b*'s king-list was completed during the interregnum following the death of Mael Sechnaill II in 1022 (Scowcroft 1987: p.131).

Schmidt (2009: pp.250‒4) traces both ‘Réidig dam’ and the synchronistic tract interspersed through *b*, along with several other tracts, back to a common source based on the now-fragmentary *Irish World Chronicle* (for which, see Charles-Edwards 2006: pp.2‒4), arguing for their textual relationship on the basis of shared, distinctive translations of the *Irish World Chronicle*’s Latin. After establishing a common source, Schmidt asks whether the poem might be derived from the prose or vice-a-versa, citing reasonable evidence for both possibilities and ultimately remaining unsure (2009: pp.256‒57).

These views are in some ways compatible. Scowcroft's theory that Flann Mainistrech was responsible for the whole of *b* as currently extant could resolve Schmidt's confusion over the poem and the prose each apparently being derived from the other. Also, it is interesting both scholars find ‘Réidig dam’ somewhat primitive in its context in *b* (Scowcroft1987: p.126; Schmidt 2009: pp.256‒57). The poem contains only two references to events in Ireland and lacks reign lengths, while the prose synchronistic material covers the reigns of Irish kings and events during their reigns in relative detail and often provides specific reign lengths. ‘Réidig dam’ is thus central to the compilation in that it provides a continuous series of reigns on which to base an objective chronology but a lot more work or other sources would have been required to produce the prose found with it in *b*.

However, for Scowcroft, *s* can only have come into existence as a response to a version of LGÉ, as it is based on the sychronising of world kingships with invasions of Ireland. He favours the view that the prose is derived from the poem (1987: pp.126‒27) but, while the prose may have been influenced by older documents like the *Irish World Chronicle*, as well as by ‘Réidig dam’, it is to be viewed as part of the development of LGÉ rather than approached as an independent text.

As Schmidt has noted (2009: p.244), comparison is invited between this poem and r1‒3: both are added to *b* as part of its chronological apparatus and both provide a complete king-list. However, they cover different periods of time, Érimón reigning long after Ninus and Mael Sechnaill II reigning over 300 years after Leo III.[[47]](#footnote-47)

One of only two events pertaining to Ireland cited in ‘Réidig dam’ is St. Patrick's arrival. In common with several other synchronistic works, r2 and r3 are divided into kings before and after Christianity, which ‘arrived’ during the reign of Loegaire mac Neill, and it does not require highly specialised knowledge of Gaelic historical tradition to synchronise that point with the arrival of St. Patrick. Furthermore, ‘Réidig dam’ concludes by synchronising Leo III with Fergal mac Mael Dúin, king of Tara, who also appears in r3 (ll.15886‒90). What Irish material does appear, therefore, is useful for a very basic understanding of the chronological relationship between the lists presented in the two poems. That the synchronism with Fergal is included at all, if indeed it was part of the original poem, demonstrates that ‘Réidig dam’ was composed with some kind of awareness of a synchronistic framework, there being no other particularly obvious reason to synchronise these two kings.[[48]](#footnote-48)

**Analysis**

This study has raised a number of interesting issues. Discussion concerning the individual texts, such as the protracted uncertainties over authorship, will be left as it is for now while more general conclusions are explored.

Our core purpose in examining this corpus was to understand how the personnel involved in the production of extant medieval Gaelic literature understood and used texts attributed to Flann Mainistrech and to understand how far removed Flann himself was from the contexts in which his work appears. On the basis of recent scholarship on the history of the development of LGÉ, some conclusions can be drawn as to the point of entry of some of the poems into the tradition. The context and terms in which each poem is cited in extant manuscript versions are also available.

In terms of the history of the poems within the corpus, three categories emerge quite easily. Basing our analysis on Scowcroft’s stemma, which envisages an original text (**ω**)developed independently in two radically different directions (**α** and **μ**), several poems attributed to Flann seem likely to have been found in one of these hypothesised developments of the original or, at the very least, are found in manuscripts associated with that branch of the tradition.

‘Togail Tuir’ and ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ are associated with **α**, while ‘Éstid a eolchu’ and ‘Anmann na tóisech’ are associated with **μ**. These poems are not found in medieval or early modern manuscripts outwith the LGÉ tradition. It is also worth noting that ‘Togail Tuir’ and ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ are the most uncertain in terms of authorship.

Another substantial group, ‘Ochtauin August’, r1, r2, r3 and ‘Réidig dam’ all appear for the first time in *b*. All of these are used in the recension essentially as part of a new synchronistic apparatus for the recension’s original core, with the exception of ‘Ochtauin August’ (which is itself concerned with synchronology), and appear to have been added after the core had been compiled in an effort to correct it, Scowcroft arguing the poems were added in a number of different stages (1987: p.132). Flann is the main poet associated with the material added. Given that *b*, before this apparatus was added, is thought to be closely derived from **α**, Flann’s poetry is being used to correct a recension which originally may have contained a number of his poems. These five poems all appear in manuscripts outwith the LGÉ tradition.

‘Cruithnig cid’ and ‘Augaine mór’ are each only found once in the LGÉ tradition, in R and L*c* respectively, and thus seem to have been added on the initiative of one compiler. Both are found in other manuscripts.

A sizeable majority of the poems attributed to Flann can thus be traced to either the very early stages of the development of the LGÉ compilation as extant or to a particular phase in the development of *b*. In terms of attributions, apart from ‘Éstid a eolchu’, which is exceptional in the corpus for being consistently attributed to Flann Mainistrech, none of the first group of poems is attributed to Flann until recension *c*.[[49]](#footnote-49) The only extant attributions for ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’, ‘Anmann na tóisech’ and ‘Augaine mór’ are in the hand of Giolla Íosa Mór Mac Fhirbhisigh, the scribe of L*c*. It should be noted that over a quarter of the corpus is only being considered on the authority of one man unless, in the case of ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’, K and C have access to independent evidence. The attribution of ‘Togail Tuir’ to Flann is also based on a single witness.

It is unfortunate that there appear to be no clues as to how either these or other attributions were made by late scholars in the LGÉ tradition. Did more information survive about verse texts than is extant for us today or are the attributions deductions based on knowledge of a poet’s style and interests? Both ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ and ‘Anmann na tóisech’ are attributed to Flann in L*c* and both deal with similar information in a similar way: is one thus assumed to be by the same author? Transmission may also have influenced attribution: Schmidt (2009: p.213), for example, believes ‘Réidig dam’ originally became associated with Flann by appearing in a book of poems predominantly attributed to Flann.

‘Réidig dam’ and r1 are unattributed within LGÉ, although the former is attributed to Flann internally in L*b*, while r2 and r3 are both attributed to Flann somewhere within recension *b*. However, if Scowcroft’s suggestion that these poems were actually added at different stages of *b*’s development be accepted, then the transmission of information regarding their authorship becomes more complex.

The poems in the corpus, therefore, are not often attributed, particularly in their early witnesses, and there is no obvious source for many of the attributions that do appear. For a compilation which is often helpfully open concerning disagreements over the facts, narratives and synchronisms it contains, LGÉ is confident but frustratingly opaque when attributing authoritative poetry.

It is also unclear why or if a poet’s identity might be important to medieval scholars working on LGÉ. If our interpretation of L*c*’s heading to ‘Augaine mór’ is correct, then this provides an interesting but rare example of a compiler identifying what he understood to be a poet’s area of expertise rather than what they supposedly composed. Otherwise, how the ascription of a poem to a particular poet affected the interpretation or authority of that poem remains unclear. It is not clear what connotations surrounded the various poets cited in LGÉ, although the understanding of who they were does appear go beyond names and epithets; Carey (1983: p.52) has noticed that Eochaid Ua Flainn is consistently and disproportionately described as *in senchaid* (‘the historian’), for example.

It is easy to accept the idea that attributing a poem to a famous scholar gave it authority and an interesting topic for further enquiry would be how a comparatively recent, as opposed to a legendary, scholar could also be authoritative. However, while the poetry has been rightly said to be presented as ‘immutable […] the voice of named authorities’ (Scowcroft 1987: p.91), is the individual cited important for more than rhetorical effect? In our study of ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ and, more radically, ‘Éstid a eolchu’, we have seen that the relevance and context of a poem is to a large degree in the control of the compiler rather than the poet, named or otherwise. We have discussed how r2 and r3 may not actually be lists of kings *of Ireland* but that they are presented as such in LGÉ, even though this could be the result of a genuinely mistaken or anachronistic understanding of the significance of the kingship of Tara. Also illustrative is *m*’s treatment (ed. Macalister 1956: para.468) of ‘Anmann na tóisech’ alongside ‘A mhic ain Ugaine’, each poem providing only part of the narrative presented in *m*’s prose (see above, p.15): the meaning made of the poem is dependent on other authoritative texts at the compiler’s disposal as well as his overall narrative and strategy.

The authority of an individual scholar can perhaps be reconciled with the compilers’ approach to the material and the tradition in that the compilers are engaged in harmonising and finding the consensus among a plurality of authorities. These authorities need not only be individuals cited by name: there is a sense that compilers of LGÉ operated according to general conventions associated with the compilation or the wider genre of historical writing. We have seen one suggestion of this in Gioll Íosa’s apology for misplacing ‘Anmann na tóisech’ (see above, p.15). Another is found in a passage in F and *c* (ed. Macalister 1956: para.497; Scowcroft 1987: p.118): ‘is coir a fis conidh slicht occ arailib senchadaib conidh inund bunadus do cach gabhail rogabastair Erinn, cenmotha gabáil Cesrach 7 conadh Srú condreccait uile.’[[50]](#footnote-50) While the opinions of *araili* are often set up only to be knocked down again in LGÉ, this passage goes on to affirm these statements, the ‘other historians’ being in this instance a source of support rather than of opposition. These asides suggest that the development of LGÉ did not so much take place through random or opportunistic copying and conflation of exemplars as through self-conscious participation in a tradition. While compilers of LGÉ often let conflicting narratives and ideas co-exist, there are also hints that the tradition was thought to hold the potential for reconciliation into a single account: hence, the entire chronological structure is overhauled on more than one occasion to take account of new material, for example. A particularly stark example of this aspiration may be found in the passage on the identity of the Túatha Dé Danann from *c* cited above (p.9) in which material found almost verbatim in F is amalgamated with material in *b* to argue the opposite case from its original purpose in F (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.318, 366‒69). A similar if less violent process of absorption can be observed in the development of the account of the arrival of the Túatha Dé Danann (ed. Macalister 1941: paras.306, 321, 327, 358).

A general acceptance of the authority of the tradition, which necessarily includes the individual scholars who participate in it, can thus transform into scepticism when dealing with each individual component regarding the correct interpretation of that component in light of the tradition as a whole. The reading, interpretation and use of Flann Mainistrech’s work as part of LGÉ therefore occurs within a multi-vocal, discursive process much of which may not have reached the manuscript page or may be expected to occur primarily within the mind of the manuscript reader.

In practice, not all of the poems discussed appear to have been subject to any radical shifts of interpretation. ‘Togail tuir’, for example, is a summary of the attack on Conand’s tower and is always cited as such. ‘Réidig dam’, when it appears in LGÉ, is never openly treated as something other than what it claims to be. This being said, we have looked at evidence of Flann’s poems being subsequently used or reworked. In the case of ‘Éstid a eolchu’ and ‘Réidig dam’, the sequential lists in Flann’s poems appear to be drawn on to produce full synchronistic tracts. In other cases, the relationship between prose and poetry is more difficult to prove but it is possible that further examples exist. Gilla Cóemáin, who appears to have been particularly influential in the development of LGÉ, is thought by Smith to have based his verse king-list, in which regnal years are included, on r2 and r3 (2002: p.341). Smith goes further and suggests that *tempus* and *personae* were different areas of scholarship, Flann working only on the latter and Gilla Cóemáin merging it with the former (2002: p.340). Flann’s work, no doubt along with much else in the LGÉ tradition, was not regarded as absolute but as the basis for further study and synthesis with other sources.

The topics covered by the poetry attributed to Flann in LGÉ are fairly broad ranging, beginning with the diaspora of the people of Nemed and including the Túatha Dé Danann, the arrival of the Gaels and their line of kings, thus covering a substantial portion of LGÉ’s narrative. However, his poetry is not nearly as consistent in its coverage as that of Eochaid Ua Flainn, for example. He is never cited as an authority for a verse rendition of the overall LGÉ narrative, as Eochaid is with ‘Éistid a eolchu aibind’ (ed. Macalister 1941: pp.252‒283), for example, until the *Réim Rígraide* nor is a comparable text is attributed to him anywhere else. The only explicit suggestion in a poem that it has a context in the LGÉ narrative is in ‘Togail tuir’, one of the most doubtful attributions of the corpus, when the fall of Conand’s tower is synchronised with the departure of the Gaels from Egypt.

This raises the question of whether Flann ever actually worked with something comparable to LGÉ as it is conceived today. There are clues suggesting he might have done so. We have cited the close conformity between many of the events listed in ‘Éstid a eolchu’ and ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ and the corresponding prose history in the LGÉ compilation. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how poems such as ‘Anmann na tóisech’ could be read apart from some sort of narrative context. It is arguable that large amounts of the LGÉ narrative were generated during the process of compiling LGÉ (Scowcroft 1988: pp.34‒40), meaning that some of the topics addressed in Flann’s poems may not have existed before the project had begun. However, we have also seen, particularly in relation to ‘Éstid a eolchu’, r1‒3 and ‘Réidig dam’, that some of Flann’s poems are based on potentially extensive reading or knowledge beyond any extant version of LGÉ, the products of which are not always absorbed into the prose of the compilation. While ‘the vast majority of [LGÉ’s] poems recapitulate what has just been said in the prose’ (Scowcroft 1987: p.90), Flann is not always so derivative and can be argued to be working with a very different version of LGÉ from those currently extant or working to some extent independently of the tradition altogether. Many of his poems, as we have shown, appear to have been part of the compilation from an early stage in its development so the majority of compilers involved would not necessarily have perceived him as independent of the tradition. However, the original citing of his poetry from outside the context of the compilation perhaps affects the critical perspective of the compilers on the poems and increases their malleability in terms of interpretation.

One flaw of this study is that I have not been able to examine in-depth the work of other poets in LGÉ to nearly the same extent and thus cannot comment on whether the treatment of Flann’s poetry is special in this context or, if so, in what way. In terms of the understanding and use of Flann by later scholars, however, I have demonstrated the distance that can exist between compilers and the texts they present, the complex influences on interpretation and contextualisation of a text and the uncertainty that can exists over a text’s authorship, although how this might affect its interpretation is unclear. While the implication is that the use of such texts in later compilations is not necessarily a helpful indication of their original meaning, helpful insights can be gained into how the texts were compatible with wider scholarly interests and projects in medieval Ireland which might give some indication of Flann Mainistrech’s role, importance and context.

1. For a general introduction, see Carey (1993; 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I will be using the same sigla as those used in Scowcroft (2008). For a key, see the Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A list of the manuscripts by recension is found in the Appendix [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The relevant section of L*b* is missing. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘And of this story Fland the poet sang this song, to commemorate this story’. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations and translations from the prose and poetry in LGÉ are from Macalister’s edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. q.23: ‘in the third lamentable age of the world’ (transl. Gwynn). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For example, Isidore of Seville in the *Etymologiae* (ed. Lindsay 1911:V.xxxix.8‒12; transl. Barney 2010: p.131) or Bede in the *Chronica Maiora* (transl. Wallis 1999: p.157). For an introduction to the six ages of the world in Insular tradition and more widely, see Ó Cróinín 1983: pp.1‒10; Wallis 1999 pp.353‒69. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This nineteenth-century manuscript is a miscellany of poems and tracts on grammar and is too late to be of use to us here (De Brun 1986: pp.39‒40). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. q.26: ‘here at the mouth of the Boyne’. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Macalister's *varia lectiones* includes 'mbleide' for 'mblédha', making the first example potentially viable as an Old Irish rhyme. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ‘So it is to testify to that that Flann Mainistrech recited this poem on the deaths of the Túatha Dé Danann’ (my translation). However, if we read *ga* as a 3rd plural conjugated preposition as opposed to a 3rd singular, Flann Mainistrech’s testimony might merely be to the deaths rather than the point being made earlier in the paragraph. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. ‘Eighty years to the Dagda, till he died of the javelin wherewith Cetlenn gave him a deadly wound in the great battle of Mag Tuired’. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ‘The Dagda died of a dart of gore in the Brug‒ it is no falsehood‒ wherewith the woman Cethlenn gave him mortal hurt, in the great battle of Mag Tuired’. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘And in the fifteenth year after that, Cairbre the poet died of a spear of [Mac] Greine and Etain died.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘Of a stroke of the pure sun died Cairpre the great, son of Etan: Etan died over the pool of sorrow for white-headed Cairpre.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. There is a chasm in B broadly corresponding to L fol.288‒299 but it may well have contained this poem and ‘Anmann na toisech delm tenn’. A transcript of B, apparently containing the missing material, exists in Dublin, Trinity College Library H.1.15 cat.1289 (saec. XVIII) pp.29‒91 but I have been unable to consult it (Scowcroft 1987: p.124). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. I have examined a high-quality photograph of the relevant page of the manuscript and can find no trace of this gloss but Macalister and Pődör both believe it exists. Even if it does exist, however, it is not necessarily by the scribe who wrote the poem. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ‘Christ, thou are above the clans; remember the grandson of Flann, from heroic Luigne; King of adornments and of judgements, Thou are the Abbot, Thou the Chief’. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ‘Son of Flann’s son’. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The major piece of evidence for Flann’s use of Eochaid’s work is the colophon following *Aided Nath Í* in *Lebor na hUidre* (ed. and transl. T. Ó Concheanainn 1975‒1976: p.146). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘Of the deaths of these chieftains down to this the historian chanted thus’. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. ‘Those are the names of the forty chieftains who came into Ireland, as it was recorded by Fintan s. Bochra in the reign of Diarmait s. Cerbaill, under the nurture of Finnian of Mag Bile and of Colum Cille, and as Tuan s. Cairell wrote it down in the presence of the Irish, and as the pupils of Finnian told it, to wit, Laidgen s. Bairche and Colmán s. Coimgellán, and Cenn Fáelad s. Ailill, and Senchan s. Colmán, and Cú Alad from Cruachu and Bran Boirche of Boirend’. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *De Suidigud Tellaig Temra* (ed. Best 1910) focuses on Fintan mac Bochra, who survived from before the Flood, to become the ultimate authority on history and territorial divisions, agreeing with this paragraph in many respects, although the precise information on the chieftains is not mentioned. *Scél Tuáin mheic Chairill* (ed. Carey 1984) focuses on Tuan, a similar character. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. ‘It is upon the deaths of these chieftains who came with the Sons of Míl into Ireland, whom we have reckoned above, and of their names, even though they have been reckoned before; and of the places and battles in which they fell and of the kings at whose hands they fell, and all of them who fell at the hands of the Túatha Dé Danann in battles and in combats, and all who fell at the hands of the Sons of Míl themselves, that Flann Mainistrech saith […]’ [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. ‘And it is upon the names of those chieftains, and of the lordlings who came with the Sons of Míl into Ireland, and of the forts that were founded by them in Ireland, that Flann Mainistrech framed this song. And it were better that we should have remembered it when we were going over the chieftains at their first mention; and since it was not so, it is not improper that we should remember it now, as there has come this opportunity of inserting it into this book here’. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For a biography of this scholar, see Ó Muraíle 1996: pp.16‒32. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. According to Macalister's edition, this quatrain is also in both E and D. However, as I do not have access to the manuscripts and the quatrain is not significant enough to appear in the catalogues, I do not know its exact location. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. ‘Octavian Augustus was the king when Christ took flesh; Tiberius Caesar, of the pale body, was king when Christ suffered’. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ‘As Flann said’. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. All references to the poem, unless otherwise stated, are to this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The two quatrains found within ll.4979‒82 are reversed in L*c*. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Inflection of the article (vol.II: para.75 p.148), gender distinction in numerals (vol.II: para.43 p.141), reduplicated preterites (vol.II: para.114 p.157), t-preterites (vol.II: para.112 p.157), declension of adjectives (vol. II: para.34 p.139), historical initial mutation following genitive numerals (vol.II: para.42 p.141). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. In one of the few serious variants in the poem, the *Book of Leinster* text gives the figure as 207 years (l.4883) and the L*c* text gives it as 308 years (fol.303v b1). The passages on Ugaine Mór in all recensions of LGÉ give the figure as 307 years (Macalister 1956: para.556). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For convenience, I will be using these abbreviations when dealing with these poems. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. No edition of any of these poems includes E, the catalogue entry is not sufficiently detailed to give its location (Abbott 1921: p.308) and I do not have access to the manuscript itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. 'The end of the kings of Ireland from Érimón until Eochu Feidlech and beginning of [the kings] from Eochu until Laegaire mac Neill. And Flann sang’. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *Leabhar Clainne Suibhni*, p.143; British Library MS. Egerton 127 fol.48v. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. I have not been able to consult D or E. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ‘so that he is the only king of Ireland’ (my translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. ‘The Leinstermen of the graves say it: even Nuadu Necht, he became king; his death, without a fine portion/partnership, I cannot find it among the writings’ (transl. Pődör 1999: vol.I p.297). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. ‘After his installation as king, at the hands of the army died gentle-bright Eochu Mugmedon; it was fulfilled, although it was another form, which was written in Baile in Scáil’ (transl. Pődör 1999: vol.I pp.302‒3). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. For details of the various ways of counting this poem's quatrains, see Schmidt 2009: p.243. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. These sigla are based on those used by Schmidt but have been altered to prevent confusion with those used by Scowcroft. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. I am grateful to Dr. Dan MacCarthy (Trinity College Dublin) for supplying me with a photocopy of Mac Airt's draft of the whole edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. I am grateful to my mother, Mrs. Ann Thanisch, and to Mr. Christoph Otte (University of Edinburgh) for assisting me in reading this article. I myself take responsibility for any misunderstandings of Schmidt's work. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. It is assumed that Flann, or his source, ended the king-list here because this is where Bede ended his *Chronica Minora*, which is thought to be the ultimate source (Scowcroft 1987: p.126). For the various dates at which the *Chronica Minora* has been thought to have ended, see Schmidt 2009: pp.213‒14. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. It is perhaps worth investigating whether it is a coincidence that Fergal mac Mael Dúin is considered to be the last king of Tara to appear as a character in a heroic saga: *Cath Almaine* (ed. Ó Riain 1978: pp.xi‒xii). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. This is discounting the doubtful attribution of ‘Tóisig na lloingsi’ to Flann in N (see above, p.12 n.18). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. ‘It is well to know that other historians have a passage to the effect that every taking which took Ireland was of the same stock except the taking of Cessair and they all unite at Srú.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-50)