

# A short exploration of the inauguration of kings in late medieval Ireland, and its depiction in bardic poetry.



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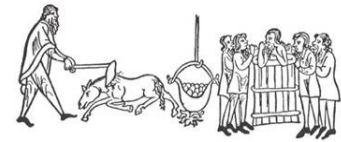
Cover: Image accompanying the description of the Irish inauguration ceremony by Giraldus Cambrensis. National Library of Ireland, MS 700, 39v.

1: Inauguration of Ó Néill at Tulach Óg. Trustees National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Image courtesy of Elizabeth FitzPatrick.

2. Carn Fraoich. Image courtesy of Elizabeth FitzPatrick.

3. *Topographia Hibernica*, National Library of Ireland, MS 700, 39r.



## 1. Introduction

In this short paper I will examine the practice of royal inauguration in high (c. 1100-1350) and late (c. 1350-1650) medieval Ireland, and its depiction in bardic poetry of that period. This is done with the following questions: Of what elements did the practice of inauguration consist? Are there any developments in the practice during the middle ages? How is inauguration depicted in bardic poetry, and does this reflect the actual practice? Do inaugural odes have special characteristics? As in-depth focus and illustration to both I also examine one inaugural ode and its historical context. The nature of this research also entails an evaluation of the possibility to use bardic poetry as a historical source. Unfortunately, the combination of focus both on literary material and historical background has the disadvantage that it limits the extent of research in both those fields, due to the limited time that was available to me.

Bardic poetry has been somewhat ignored in the past, but luckily recent years have seen a new interest. Katharine Simms is certainly a great advocate of the subject, and with excellent research she has unveiled the merits of its usage as a historical source.<sup>1</sup> With the compilation of the bardic poetry database,<sup>2</sup> she has facilitated numerous research possibilities on the subject. This is further aided by the publication of many new poems in *A bardic miscellany* by Damian MacManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately this book was not available to me, and any further research on this topic should certainly make more use of both the database and the book than I have done now. It was by a lecture delivered by Damian MacManus on the bardic poetry database,<sup>4</sup> and the lectures of Elizabeth FitzPatrick on late medieval Ireland at NUI Galway, that I was inspired to write this paper.

A last, practical note: in translating I have used the dictionaries of Ó Dónaill, Dinneen and Lane.<sup>5</sup>

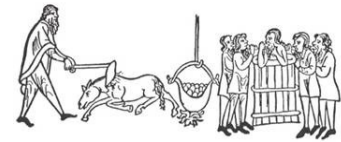
<sup>1</sup> For example with: Katharine Simms 'Native sources for Gaelic settlement: The house poems' *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, lordship and settlement* eds. Patrick J. Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (Dublin 2001) 246-267

<sup>2</sup> Katharine Simms, The Bardic Poetry Database, <http://bardic.celt.dias.ie/>

<sup>3</sup> Damian MacManus and Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh *A Bardic miscellany: five hundred poems from manuscripts in Irish and British libraries* Léann na Tríonóide/Trinity Irish Studies 2 (Dublin 2010)

<sup>4</sup> The statutory public lecture of Tionól 2010: 'The Bardic Poetry Database: opportunities and challenges for future scholarship'

<sup>5</sup> Ó Dónaill, Niall *Foclóir Gaeilge - Béarla* (Dublin 1997 (1978)); Dinneen, Patrick S. *Foclór Gaedhilge agus Béarla/An Irish-English Dictionary: Being a thesaurus of the words, phrases and idioms of the modern Irish language* (Dublin 1927); Lane, T. O'Neill *Larger English-Irish dictionary: foclóir Béarla Gaidhilge* Revised and enlarged edition (Dublin 1922)



## 2. Inauguration in Medieval Ireland

The status and image of a king was, at least partially, derived from the sacral king of sagas, such as that of Niall Noígiallach.<sup>6</sup> In these sagas it is conveyed that under a righteous and unblemished king of royal ancestry there is peace and prosperity. The prosperity of the land is a sign for a true king, as the king is married to the land, represented by a sovereignty goddess.<sup>7</sup> These motifs are echoed in the medieval inauguration ceremonies.

I will give an overview of the elements of these ceremonies, the sources in which they are mentioned, and the developments during the high and late medieval period.

The actual practice of inauguration is not mentioned before the twelfth century.<sup>8</sup> From then on it appears in an array of historical sources, the most useful of which are the annals and historical works. From these sources an image arises of several traditions that play a role in the ceremony, some of which have ancient indo-european roots.<sup>9</sup> They appear in several varieties and combinations, in the course of the middle ages some disappear and others appear. These elements are: the presence of a horse; a single shoe; a circuit around the king; the rod of kingship; naming of the king. Another feature is the presence of the king's vassals or clerical officials, and their official role in the ceremony. The ceremony is conducted at a special inauguration site: a mound where a sacred tree or *bile* and a flagstone or *leac* may be present. One of the earliest and most intriguing sources is Giraldus Cambrensis, who in his twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica* mentions the inauguration ceremony in Donegal. He describes how the king-elect, surrounded by an assembly of his people, violates a white mare. The horse is then slaughtered and cooked, and the king bathes in this horse broth while drinking it and eating the horse meat.<sup>10</sup> Though a very graphic account, Giraldus can not be trusted to have been an eye-witness; he used this story with a political incentive. But eating

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<sup>6</sup> On a hunting outing, Niall and his brothers need water to cook their game. All brothers try to fetch water at a well that is guarded by a hideous hag, who demands a kiss. The brothers are not willing to fulfill this demand, except for Niall. He lies with the hag, who thereupon turns into a young, beautiful woman: a sovereignty goddess. This assures the kingship for Niall, who has essentially married the sovereignty: he is, quite literally, connected with the land. F. Byrne, *Irish kings and high-kings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Dublin 2001) 75

<sup>7</sup> Katharine Simms *From kings to warlords: The changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later Middle Age* (Woodbridge 1987) 21.

<sup>8</sup> Simms *From kings to warlords* 21

<sup>9</sup> Dillon, Myles 'The consecration of Irish kings' *Celtica* 10 (1973) 1-8

<sup>10</sup> As depicted on the cover image. Giraldus Cambrensis *The historical works of Giraldus Cambrensis: containing the topography of Ireland ...* Revised and edited by Thomas Wright. Reprinted from the 1863 edition (New York 1968) 138



horse meat is rooted in an Indo-European tradition.<sup>11</sup> The presence of a horse and the sexual act of the king are elements that figure in other accounts.<sup>12</sup> The crude image of the future king, on all fours, “embracing the animal,” can be seen as a marriage, where the horse represents the sovereignty. The word for marriage *feis* (and *banais* from *ban-feis* with a feminine prefix) is the verbal noun of *fo-aid*, meaning ‘to sleep with’. This word and the marriage motif are used more often to describe inaugurations.<sup>13</sup> The image of the king as Giraldus describes it, “professing himself to be a beast also” is mirrored in a more friendly way in a thirteenth century praise poem. It describes children acting out an inauguration, and the one playing the king carries the other upon his back.<sup>14</sup>

Though the motifs of marriage and the horse are thus echoed at inaugurations, they are not the most important parts of the actual ceremony. These consisted of the presence of the king’s vassals, sometimes ecclesiastics as well, one of whom is the inaugurator. It is his right to give the king the *slat na righe*, the rod of kingship. The inaugurator then makes a circuit around the king.<sup>15</sup> The office of inaugurator, obviously a very prestigious job, was hereditary. In the sources of the high middle ages, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it was carried out by the king’s *ollamh* or a churchman: a *comharba* or coarb. An example of the latter is found in the second Life of St. Maedóc<sup>16</sup> on the inauguration of the kings of Leinster and Breifne, which gives a good description of the ceremony. In Leinster the coarb must go three times around the king and place the rod of kingship in his hand, as a payment he gets part of the king’s suit and “one of his shoes full of silver”.<sup>17</sup> In Breifne the coarb gets the king’s horse and robes; twelve coarbs go round him; and one of them gives him the rod.<sup>18</sup> Ó Domhnaill of Tír Conaill was even inaugurated in a church in 1258.<sup>19</sup> It seems that the church competed for a role in the inauguration ceremony, which was traditionally controlled by the *ollamh*. Simms thinks

<sup>11</sup> Byrne *Irish kings and high-kings* 17

<sup>12</sup> The bath in broth is a motif in older stories as well, notably in *Táin Bó Froích*, which explains the name of *Carn Fraoich*, the inauguration mound of the O’Connors. Byrne *Irish kings and high-kings* 18

<sup>13</sup> In the Annals of Connacht the inauguration of Feidhlimidh Ó Conchobhair in 1310 is described as a marriage as well Byrne *Irish kings and high-kings* 17-18, Katharine Simms “‘Gabh umad a Feidhlimidh’- A fifteenth century inauguration ode?’ *Ériu* 31 (1980) 133-134

<sup>14</sup> This is the poem *Leachta carad a ccaith Briain*. Lambert McKenna ‘Irish Bardic poems – no. 82’ *Studies: an Irish quarterly review* (1947/2 June) 175-186

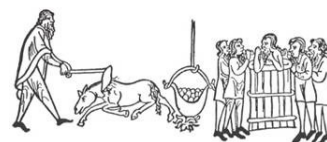
<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland, c. 1100-1600, A cultural landscape study*. (Woodbridge 2004) 11

<sup>16</sup> Which originates in the twelfth century. Simms *From kings to warlords* 22

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Simms *From kings to warlords* 22-23

<sup>19</sup> This is the poem *Ceathrar is fhéile fuair flann*: “We kinged Domhnaill of the Éirne in Rath Both in the spring, the church was filled with us as we made the chief of Creibhlinn king” N.J.A. Williams (ed.), *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* (Dublin 1980) 107, poem № 9



that this influence of the church in the thirteenth century is part of a greater development towards a more Continental model of kingship with involvement of kings with the church, but the advent of the Anglo-Normans halted this development.<sup>20</sup>

In the later middle ages there occur some changes in the inauguration ritual, that are connected with the changes in society. In the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the role of inaugurator shifted to the leading vassal or overlord. The Ó Conchobhairs were inaugurated by their leading vassal Mac Diarmada (see 5.4) and all later medieval inaugurations were carried out by the leading vassal or overlord.<sup>21</sup> Much importance is given to the inaugurators in the sources; some of them mention the fact that is impossible to create the king without the inaugurator.<sup>22</sup> This reflects the crucial role of the inaugurator, not from a traditional, symbolic notion but from a political reality. The king needed the support of his vassals or overlord. It is in this light that the role of the single shoe at inauguration ceremonies should be seen. It is a late medieval addition to the ceremony, all instances date to the fifteenth and sixteenth century. A shoe is placed on the foot of the king, or thrown over his head.<sup>23</sup> Both in Irish and Indo-European literature the single shoe is a motif for kingship<sup>24</sup> but in the later medieval inaugurations the importance lies in the fact that the most powerful vassal supports the king-elect, which is shown by his giving of the shoe.



fig. 1 At the inauguration of Ó Néill a shoe is thrown over his head at Tulach Óg. On an Ulster map of c.1602

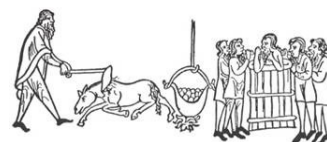
<sup>20</sup> Simms *From kings to warlords* 11-12

<sup>21</sup> Simms 29-40, Kenneth Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin 1972) 28

<sup>22</sup> FitzPatrick *Royal inauguration* 124

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 122-123

<sup>24</sup> See *Ibid.*, 125-127 and P. Mac Cana 'The *topos* of the single sandal in Irish tradition' *Celtica* 10 (1973) 160-166



Simms identifies another change in the terminology of inauguration. The *slat na righe* was now called the *slat seilbhe*, rod of possession, or *slat tigiornais*, rod of lordship.<sup>25</sup> This reflects quite literally the change from kingship to late medieval lordship. The emphasis also shifted to the name of the king. Simms notes that after 1400 the term *gairm anma*, the proclamation of the name, was used for inauguration in the annals.<sup>26</sup> From the fifteenth century a king is referred to by just his surname with the article, and as such it was used to describe his inauguration, for example when ‘the Ó Néill was made.’<sup>27</sup>

The inauguration sites did not change during the middle ages.<sup>28</sup> These were mounds that could have a smaller mound on top. Among them are the famous Carn Fraoich of the Ó Conchobhairs and Tulach Óg of the Ó Néills. They were often embedded within a prehistoric landscape, connected with myths. Strategically located they commanded a great view of the territory. There used to be a *bile*, a sacred tree on or at the mound until the twelfth century, but these are only found in the historical sources as being destroyed.<sup>29</sup> Another element of the site was a flagstone or *leac*, upon which the king stood. It originates in a direct connection with the land, but at the end of the middle ages this motif converted into that of a stone throne.<sup>30</sup>



fig 2. Carn Fraoich with a small upper mound, as it remains nowadays.

<sup>25</sup> Simms *From kings to warlords* 30-1. *seilbh*, Modern Irish *sealbh* var. *seilbh* gen. *seilbhe*

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 32-33

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 33-35, the citation *O'Neill do dhenamh* is from the poem *Ni deireadh d'anbhuaín Eireann*. The Ó Néills are especially known for this, and of a sixteenth-century chief Ó Néill it was said that ‘he has evermore a thirsty desire to be called O Nealle – a name more in price to him than to be intitled Casear.’

<sup>28</sup> FitzPatrick has written extensively on the subject in *Royal inauguration*.

<sup>29</sup> Simms, *From kings to warlords* 30

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth FitzPatrick ‘*Leaca* and Gaelic inauguration ritual in medieval Ireland’ *The stone of destiny: artefact and icon* eds. Richard Welander, David J. Breeze and Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh 2003) 107-122 and *Royal inauguration* 104-108. A stone throne was certainly used at Tulach Óg, and appears on a 1602 map by Richard Bartlett. A famous counterpart is the Scottish stone of Scone, which is rooted in the same tradition.



### 3. Bardic poetry – a short introduction

As the subject of my research consists of bardic poems, I deem it necessary to provide an outline of the background and characteristics of bardic poetry.

Bergin, in his very elegant lecture on the subject, provides a general definition of bardic poetry as “the writings of poets trained in the Bardic Schools as they existed in Ireland and the Gaelic parts of Scotland down to about the middle of the seventeenth century.”<sup>31</sup> In form the poetry is distinguished as syllabic poetry, it has strict rules on the number and distribution of syllables.<sup>32</sup> Hence it is also called syllabic poetry by Eleanor Knott.

#### 1. The poet

The poets were held in high esteem and had an important, hereditary, social function, in which they flourished after the Anglo-Norman invasion.<sup>33</sup> They were essentially family poets, who celebrated their patrons and their genealogy. Their work was not just to write poetry, they had to be knowledgeable in literature and history as well. As Bergin puts it, the bardic poet was “[a] public official, a chronicler, a political essayist, a keen and satirical observer of his fellow countrymen.”<sup>34</sup> This was done through elaborate praise poems that were intended for the upper class. The poems were very complicated, and to achieve mastery in the subject the poets underwent a long education. They attended bardic schools during the winter season. Their way of studying was very curious: they lay on beds in the dark all day, composing a poem on a subject they had been given.<sup>35</sup> After six or seven years they, when they had mastered all the metres and variations, they had finished their education.

#### 2. The poetry

Although the dialects of Irish were diverging in the later Middle Ages, bardic poetry was composed in a standard literary language. It was artificially created by the poets, who based

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<sup>31</sup> Osborn Bergin (compiled and edited by David Greene and Fergus Kelly) *Irish bardic poetry* (Dublin 1970) 3

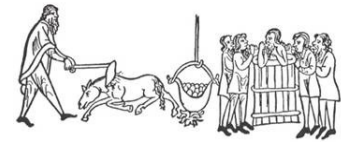
<sup>32</sup> Eleanor Knott, *An introduction to Irish syllabic poetry of the period 1200-1600* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Dublin 1974) 1

<sup>33</sup> E. C. Quiggin *Prolegomena to the study of the later Irish bards 1200-1500* (1977) reprinted from *Proceedings of the British Academy* Vol V (1911)

<sup>34</sup> Bergin *Irish bardic poetry* 4

<sup>35</sup> McManus provides an elaborate overview of the academic career of the bardic poets. Damian McManus, ‘The bardic poet as teacher, student and critic: a context for the grammatical tracts’ *Unity in diversity: studies in Irish and Scottish Gaelic language, literature and history* eds. Donald E. Meek and Cathal G. Ó Háinle (Dublin 2004) 97-123





their language on the works of earlier, esteemed poets. A tract on the usage of words existed, which must have been used as an instruction book.<sup>36</sup>

For the form, the poet has the choice of several metres that are distinguished by the number of syllables in each line and in the last words of the lines.<sup>37</sup> Most metres are heptasyllabic, a few have 6 or 8 syllables, or a combination of all the former. One of the most complicated metres is *droighneach* where the line can run have 9 to 13 syllables, ending in a trisyllabic word. Apart from the syllables there is rime, within and between the lines. Perfect *comhardadh slán*, exists between words that have identical stressed vowels, and the consonants after the stressed vowel are of the same class. Unstressed long vowels must also be identical. This gives *dán direach*, the most desirable style of bardic poetry. It is *comhardadh briste* when the consonants do not rime. This is the case in *brúilingeacht* and *óglachas*: simpler variations of *dán direach*.

With the data of the bardic poetry database the occurrence of the metres can easily be quantified. The most common of the metres is *deibhidhe* which is used in over half of all the poems.<sup>38</sup> Also frequently used is *rannaigheacht mhór* in c. 15% of the poems, followed by *séadhna* (10%) and *rannaigheacht bheag* (7%). The other metres are less often attested for, with only 10 to 20 occurrences, except for *ae freislighe* and *caisbhairdne* which are used in 63 and 32 poems respectively.

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<sup>36</sup> Bergin *Irish bardic poetry* 13-14 For a more elaborate account on the linguistic skills of the poets see 'Brian Ó Cuív The linguistic training of the mediaval Irish poet' *Celtica* 10 (1973) 114-140

<sup>37</sup> This passage is based on Knott, *Irish syllabic poetry* 4-20

<sup>38</sup> This assesment is based on the data of the Bardic Poetry Database: <http://bardic.celt.dias.ie> 6-4-2012



## 4. Inauguration in bardic poetry

For this part of my research I have made extensive use of the bardic poetry database. I have looked at the way inauguration is described in bardic poetry. The limited time of this project did not allow me to conduct a thorough assesment, though I have of course looked at many inaugural odes and descriptions of inauguration of all kinds. As a preliminary overview, I have examined the terminology used to describe inauguration. For this I have used the 30 poems that are listed as inaugural odes in the bardic poetry database, and the 54 poems that feature inauguration as motif. All these poems can be found in appendix 1. An overview of the inauguration markers, sorted by the date of the poems, is given in appendix 2.

### 1. Inaugural odes

Of the short over 1000 poems in the BPD thirty are inauguration odes. They are typical praise poems, they usually celebrate the patron's noble lineage, his victories in battle, and his vassals. They relate the stories of his ancestors, the virtues of a good king and the prosperity that is the result of just kingship. Their function is not just to celebrate the king, but also to justify his reign.

With such a function one would expect the odes to be especially pretentious. Maybe they are longer than usual, or use complicated metres? I have looked at both of these characteristics.

The normal occurence of the different metres has been set out ealier (see 3.2). Of course, one has to be careful when comparing the respective ratios when there are only 30 inaugural odes. Nevertheless, there are some remarkable differences with the normal occurence. About half of the inaugural odes are in *deibhidhe*, which is a normal amount. But none of them are in *rannaigheacht mhór*, whereas these normally amount to 15%. On the other hand, the poems using *séadna* occur twice as much in inaugural odes as they do normally. Furthermore, five of the odes are written in rare and complicated metres: *casbhairdne*, *droighneach* and *deachnadh mór*.<sup>39</sup> The tendency to use *séadna* and not *rannaigheacht mhór* is difficult to explain, the former is not necessarily more difficult. But it seems that inaugural odes tend to use a more difficult metre than your standard bardic poem.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Notably, 2 of the total 18 poems in *drioghneach* and 2 of the total 19 poems in *deachnadh mór* are inaugural odes.

<sup>40</sup> Although one is written in the easier *ae freislighe*, but see 5.3.



Based on comparison with the whole corpus contained in the BPD some remarks can be made on the length of inaugural odes as well.<sup>41</sup> When only the proportions of ‘middling’, ‘long’ and ‘very long’ poems are compared (15-30, 30-45 and <45 quatrains respectively), it appears that there is a much larger number of ‘long’ inaugural odes.<sup>42</sup> Without drawing too severe conclusions, it does appear that inaugural odes are a bit on the long side.

## 2. Occurrence of inauguration markers

When looking at the results of the assessment of the inauguration terminology (see appendix 2) some things spring to attention. The bulk of the inauguration markers are from late poems, which coincides with the general distribution in time of bardic poetry.<sup>43</sup> As Simms has pointed out *ríoghadh* is indeed already used in the earlier period, but the first occurrence of *gairm ríogh* is in the early thirteenth century as well.<sup>44</sup> It is also used in the fourteenth century, but virtually absent until the latest period. In fact, *ríoghadh*, *gairm anma* and *carn (Fraoich)* are the only terms used before the fifteenth century.

The *slat seilbhe* appears in the fifteenth century and is used frequently from then on, but the related *slat tighearnais* is used only once. Furthermore, the term *slat na righe* is only used twice, both in the latest period. The significance of these results are discussed in the conclusion.

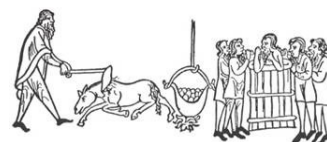
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<sup>41</sup> It must be noted that there is only one ‘short’ (less than 15 quatrains) ode, whereas the short poems amount to one third of the total corpus. But these are probably mainly fragments, whichh distorts the image. They may be more difficult to identify as part of an inaugural ode, or inaugural odes may have been more securely copied. Thus I have excluded them from this comparison.

<sup>42</sup> In the total corpus these amount to 43%, of the inaugural odes this is 63%.

<sup>43</sup> It is striking that there are no poems that mention inauguration from the early sixteenth century. Of course, this does not have to mean anything at all, except that is a caution not to generalise these data.

<sup>44</sup> In the poem *Sa raith-se rughadh maire* about the youth of Jesus



## 5. Focus: an inaugural ode

A very interesting inaugural ode is *Gabh umad a feidhlimidh*, as it is accompanied by a tract on the inauguration of the O'Conors of Connacht. The poem is edited and translated by Myles Dillon, and Katharine Simms has commented further on both the poem and the tract.<sup>45</sup>

### 1. Identity of the poet and patron

The poem and the tract survive in three manuscripts, a fourth manuscript contains a fragment of the poem.<sup>46</sup> One of the manuscripts was copied by Charles O'Conor, an eighteenth-century antiquarian, who acquired the other three manuscripts as well. The poem has a heading ascribing it to Torna Ó Maol Chonaire, and in the penultimate quatrain the author identifies himself as Feidhlimidh's historian (*do seanchaidh*). In the oldest manuscript the date A.D. 1310 is inserted in the margin after the name of the poet, and Charles O'Conor believed that the poem was an inaugural ode for Feidhlimidh Ó Conchobhair, son of Eighan, who was king from 1310 until 1316.<sup>47</sup> But Simms has shown that the author must have been the Torna Ó Maol Chonaire, the *ollamh* to the Ó Conchobair of Connacht who died in 1468. He was the *ollamh* or historian of Feidhlimidh Fionn, son of Tadhg, of the Ó Conchobhair Ruadh branch. The insertion of the date 1310, whether it was made by Charles O'Conor or earlier, could have been inspired by the annalistic entry of an Ó Conchobhair inauguration in 1315 that is attended by twelve coarbs and twelve chieftains. Though it took place during the reign of Feidhlimidh, this was not his inauguration but that of his contestant.<sup>48</sup>

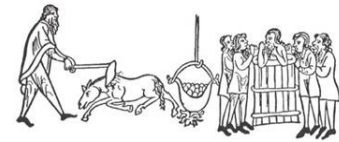
The Feidhlimidh Fionn of the poem was inaugurated in 1488 and died two years later. The poem must have been written before his inauguration, as Torna Ó Maol Chonaire died in 1468. Simms proposes a date within two years after the death of his father in 1464. I will return to this later.

<sup>45</sup> Myles Dillon 'The inauguration of O'Conor' *Medieval studies: Presented to Aubrey Gwynn, S.J.* ed. J.A. Watt, J.B. Morrall, F.X. Martin (Dublin 1961) and Katharine Simms 'Gabh umad a Feidhlimidh'

<sup>46</sup> Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 236 (B.iv.1) 9a; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 746 (E.ii.1) 17; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 935 (C.i.1) 28; a fragment of the poem, from quatrain 16 onward survives in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 1077 (A.iv.2) 1. Simms 'Gabh umad a Feidhlimidh' 132

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 133, Dillon 'The inauguration' 187

<sup>48</sup> Feidhlimidh was inaugurated in 1310, which is also recorded in the annals, as mentioned above. Simms 'Gabh umad a Feidhlimidh' 133-137



## 2. Feidhlimidh Fionn – a family history

Feidhlimidh Fionn and his ancestor Feidhlimidh Ó Eoghan both lived in the turbulent times of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, that were characterised by a constant struggle within the Ó Conchobhar dynasty for the kingship of Connacht.<sup>49</sup> This was complicated by alliances with Anglo-Irish families, who fought out a similar conflict.<sup>50</sup> At the close of the thirteenth century, the power within the Ó Conchobhair family came in the hands of the descendants of the famous Cathal Croibhdhearg,<sup>51</sup> but the fourteenth century saw a great feud between two branches: the Ó Conchobhair Don and the Ó Conchobhair Ruadh.

The Ó Conchobhair Don held the most power and produced the last undisputed kings of whole Connacht: Aodh and Feidhlimidh Geangach. It is here that our hero Feidhlimidh Fionn comes into the story, as his father Tadhg was Aodh's contestant. With Aodh's death in 1461 the Ó Conchobhair Don lost their power in the province. This did not necessarily mean that the power was reverted to Tadhg, as he was also at war with his own brothers. After his death in 1464 Feidhlimidh fought for the kingship together with his brother Cathal Ruadh against his uncles, who had launched the attack immediately after his father's funeral. The uncles were on the stronger side: Cathal was killed in 1465 and his other brothers and many vassal-chiefs were against Feidhlimidh. He was on his own, except for his two allies Ricard Ó Cuarsge MacWilliam Burke and Mac Diarmada.<sup>52</sup> During the turbulent years before and after Tadhg's death the Ó Conchobhair Don had regained dominance with Feidhlimidh Geangach as king. But Feidhlimidh Fionn kept fighting, aining respect and acknowledgement for his chieftaincy, even though he was opposed.

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<sup>49</sup> The following paragraphs are partially based on Art Cosgrove *A new history of Ireland: II Medieval Ireland, 1169-1534* Oxford (Clarendon Press) 1987 576-579, 625-626 and the accompanying genealogical tables in T.W. Moody F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne *A new history of Ireland: IX, Maps, genealogies, lists: A Companion to Irish history part II.* (Oxford 1984)

<sup>50</sup> Especially the De Burghs, who were also separated in different branches. Katharine Simms 'Relations with the Irish' James Lydon, ed. *Law and disorder in thirteenth-century Ireland: The Dublin parliament of 1297* (Dublin 1997) 73-76. The De Burghs were themselves a gaelicised family and even adopted the use of inauguration mounds for the election of their leaders. Elizabeth FitzPatrick 'Assembly and inauguration places of the the Burkes in late medieval Connacht' *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, lordship and settlement* eds. Patrick J. Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (Dublin 2001) 357-374

<sup>51</sup> The inauguration of this Cathal 'Redhand' was celebrated with the inaugural ode *Tainic an Croibhdhearg go Crúachan* by Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe, according to whom his red hand was as red as the stones in the ring he was wearing. E. C. Quiggin 'A poem by Gilbride Macnamee in praise of Cathal O'Conor' *Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer: by some of his friends ...* ed. Osborn Bergin and Carl Marstrand (Halle a. S 1912) 167-177. He is also celebrated in a fascinating poem, *Tairnic in sel-sa ac Sil Néill*, where his kingship is prophesied by the sovereignty goddess of Niall of the Nine hostages. The future princes of Ireland are shown to Niall, represented by a shoal of salmon. One has red fins: he is Cathal Croibhdhearg, who has to fight with coarse, ugly fish: the english. Brian Ó Cuív 'A poem composed for Cathal Croibhdhearg Ó Conchubhair' *Ériu* 34 (1983) 157-174

<sup>52</sup> Simms 'Gabh umad a Feidhlimidh' 136

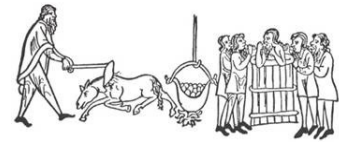


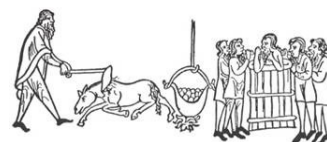
fig. 3 Fighting kings? Another image from *Topographia Hibernica*, accompanying a passage on how the Irish always carry an axe 'that they may be ready promptly to execute whatever iniquity their minds suggest.'

Feidhlimidh Geangach died in 1474 and Feidhlimidh Fionn was eventually inaugurated in 1488. He had now finally achieved dominance, only to die two years later.<sup>53</sup>

So, Feidhlimidh's time as king was a very difficult one, and certainly not undisputed. He acquired the kingship because of the death of his father and brother, at a time when he was at war with both the Ó Conchobhair Don and his own family, and most of his vassals were against him as well. In the meantime, the Anglo-Irish lords complicated affairs with wars, changing alliances and invasions. During the reign of Feidhlimidh and his father Tadhg their family broke the dominance of the Ó Conchobhair Don. However, because of the internal conflict, this did not gain the Ó Conchobhair Ruadh the kingship of whole Connacht. On the contrary, it led to the definite separation of the branches and the end of the power of the Ó Conchobhair kingship.<sup>54</sup> Feidhlimidh Fionn was a king of great struggle, but a king after all. It is in this light that one should look at the inaugural ode composed for him.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Nicholls *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland* 148



### 3. The poem

The poem is quite long: 47 quatrains. It is written in *ae freislighe* in *óglachas*, a looser rhyme than *dán direach*. Simms mentions that *ae freislighe* in later Middle Ages is associated with informal poetry, not with professional poets.<sup>55</sup> This poem is indeed the only one of all the inaugural odes to be composed in *ae freislighe*. Simms proposes that this is due to the fact that Torna Ó Maol Chonaire is a *seanchaidh*, a historian. There is even an accusation of a contemporary poet that Torna had usurped the position of *ollamh* to Mac Diarmada.<sup>56</sup> It is curious that in another source the Ó Maol Chonaire are accredited with the hereditary office of *ollamh* (but see below 5.4).

The first quatrain bids Feidhlimidh to come to the inauguration mound and the following quatrains set out which families will be present there. It is stressed that “it is a long time since they came to meet one so young as you.”<sup>57</sup> The inauguration itself is most explicitly looked forward to in quatrains nine to eleven:<sup>58</sup>

*Easpaig agus airdespaig,  
ollamhuin ann 'gut fhuireach  
ní tugadh le haimseraibh  
a leithéid sin do chuireadh*

Bishops and archbishops,  
and ollamhs are there awaiting you  
not for times was given  
such an invitation

*Ní ffuil rígh ná rodhamha  
dán dú ríghadh rígh Connacht  
ná mionn cáidh ná comharba  
nach ffuil a Cearn Fraoich romhad*

There is no king or royal heir  
with the right to king the king of Connacht  
no noble reverend or coarb  
who is not at Carn Fraoich before you

*Luathaigh ort, a Fhéidhlimidh,  
nárob móide do dhíomus  
a tteacht sin ar énshtligidh  
go Carn Fraoich do bhor ríoghadh*

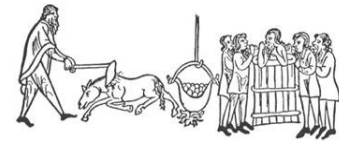
Make haste, Feidhlimidh,  
may your pride not increase  
from their coming on one way  
to Carn Fraoich to enking you

<sup>55</sup> Simms ‘Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh’ 137

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* 137-138

<sup>57</sup> *a ccoine do chonhaoisi fada ó thángadar roimhe.* Dillon ‘The inauguration’ 191, 199

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 192, 199



The poem continues with several examples of famous forebears who were also inaugurated when they were young, or younger than their brothers. Among them are Toirrdelbach and his son Cathal Croibhdhearg. It is mentioned that Cathal Croibhdhearg and his own father were faced with opposition when obtaining the kingship. After some quatrains of general praise the poet relates three of Feidhlimidh's victories. Each is described in only one quatrain, and the poet is quite reserved. In each quatrain there is a disclaimer: "I say not, though I heard.."; "I bear not witness, but I have heard..."; "I tell it not against you..."<sup>59</sup> More space is given to two stories of victories at Áth an Urchair, those of Conchobhar Mac Nessa and Cathal Croibhdhearg. Then Feidhlimidh's own victory at the same place is mentioned, but the poem quickly reverts to more general praise of Feidhlimidh's prowess, and returns to two lines on inauguration, as a marriage. The rest of the poem, from quatrain 41 onward, lists the king's officers and their functions. This ends with the poet himself: *agas mise do sheanchaidh*, "and me your historian."<sup>60</sup>

The way Feidhlimidh is described in the poem closely reflect his personal situation. He is met with much opposition from older family members, supposedly he is the youngest son as well. The poet is hesitant to describe his victories, which is not surprising as the raids of quatrain 24 were against his own uncles.<sup>61</sup>

The inauguration ceremony itself is not described, but the setting is: all the vassal chieftains and kings, as well as prominent ecclesiastics, have assembled at Carn Fraoich. The verb used is *righadh*, they will make him king. Later, in quatrain 40, the inauguration is described as a marriage.<sup>62</sup> However, the inauguration is described as a future event, Feidhlimidh is yet to come to Carn Fraoich. Simms thinks the poem is written between c. 1464 and 1466, predating the actual inauguration with two decades.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, this date would agree with the political message of the poem. Feidhlimidh is not celebrated as an inaugurated king, the king who has emerged from all the strife. Quite the contrary, he is encouraged to become a king, despite the opposition he is facing.

<sup>59</sup> Dillon 'The inauguration' 200

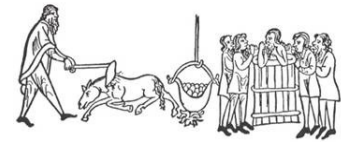
<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 169

<sup>61</sup> Simms 'Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh' 134-35

<sup>62</sup> *Déana do bhanaís*: celebrate your marriage. Myles Dillon, 'The inauguration' 195, 201

<sup>63</sup> Simms 'Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh' 136





#### 4. The tract

The inauguration tract of the Ó Conchobhairs is based on a twelfth or thirteenth century core text, and possibly the whole tract is of that age.<sup>64</sup> It sets out the nobles of Connacht and churchmen who ought to be at an inauguration, and then describes the inauguration ceremony. Ó Maol Chonaire, the *ollamh* “is entitled to give the rod of kingship into his hands at his inauguration.”<sup>65</sup> He and Ó Connachtain, the keeper of the mound, are alone with the king on the mound. The latter gets an ounce of gold for the keeping of the mound, and a coarb gets the king’s horse (see 2). The rest of the tract sets out all the vassals of the king, with their respective stipends and duties. The vassals mentioned are almost the same to those in the poem, but there are some differences. Most strikingly there is no inaugurator mentioned in the poem. And in other accounts, not Ó Maol Chonaire is the inaugurator, but the main vassal Mac Diarmada. He is first mentioned in this context in the annalistic entry of the 1310 inauguration of Feidhlimidh Ó Eoghan, when he was installed by Mac Diarmada in a splendid inauguration or “kingship marriage.”<sup>66</sup> He is mentioned again in the annals as inaugurator, by putting on the king’s shoe, in 1488, and in 1461. In a tract on the rights of the Mac Diarmada they are explicitly accredited the office of inaugurator.<sup>67</sup> The date of the tract is unknown to me, but from all these accounts it appears that at some point, surely by 1310, Mac Diarmada had replaced the traditional *ollamh* as inaugurator. Although it could be said that Torna Ó Maol Choanaire was still involved, as he wrote Feidhlimidh’s inaugural ode.

#### 5. The inauguration of Feidhlimidh Fionn

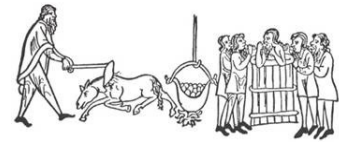
With the turbulent succession of kingship among the Ó Conchobhairs it is not a straightforward task to reconstruct Feidhlimidh’s inauguration. In fact, it is mentioned twice in the annals. These are the accounts of 1461 and 1488 mentioned above. In 1461 he was kept hostage, but Mac Diarmada released him and took him to Carn Fraoich, where “he put on his

<sup>64</sup> Simms ‘Gabh umad a feidhlimidh’ 143

<sup>65</sup> *7 is é Ua Maoil Chonaire dhlighes slat na ríge do thabhairt ina láimh aga ríghadh 7 ní dhligghinn duine do mhaithibh Connacht ueth ‘na fhochair ar an gcarn acht Ó Maoil Chonaire aga ríghadh 7 Ó Connachtáin ag doirseóracht an chairn.* “And it is Ó Maol Chonaire who is entitled to give the rod of kingship into his hand at his inauguration, and none of the nobles of Connacht has a right to be with him on the mound save Ó Maol Chonaire who inaugurates him and Ó Connachtáin who keeps the gate of the mound.” And: *Ollamh Í Chonchobhair Ua Maoil Chonaire: “Ó Maol Chonaire the ollamh of Ó Conchobahiar”* Dillon ‘The inauguration’ 189, 197, 190

<sup>66</sup> Simms ‘Gabh umad a Fheidhlimidh’ 133-134

<sup>67</sup> *Óir ní dlighthear rígh do dhéanamh ar Chonachtaibh ach an rígh do-dhéana Mac Diarmada .i. rígh na Cairrge ...* For no king is entitled to be made king of Connacht except the king made by Mac Diarmada. Nessa Ní Shéaghda ‘The rights of Mac Diarmada’ *Celtica* 6 (1963) 157. A circuit around the king is also mentioned: *teacht ‘na thimcheall,* ‘going around him.’



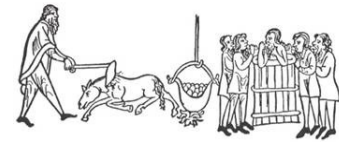
shoe.”<sup>68</sup> In 1488 he is mentioned to have succeeded his uncle, who died of old age. Again, he was inaugurated with a shoe by Mac Diarmada.<sup>69</sup> Would there really have been two inaugurations? I think it is likely that the event in 1461 was not so much an inauguration as a claim to the Ó Conchobhair kingship, instigated and supported by Mac Diarmada. The shoe might have been part of this as a new rite, to enhance this claim. The annalists could have been confused about what happened when, as both accounts have almost the exact same sentence about Mac Diarmada and the shoe. In any case, Feidhlimidh was inaugurated again when his claim to the kingship was no longer contested, “in as meet a manner as any lord had for some time before been nominated; and his shoe was put on him by Mac Diarmada.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> After he had bought this shoe: & do chuir Mac Diarmada a brocc fair iar n-a chennach. *Annals of the Four Masters* 1461.12 CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: a project of University College, Cork <http://www.ucc.ie/celt> (2002) 20-4-2012

<sup>69</sup> & a bhrocc do chor fair do Mac Diarmata. *Annals of the Four Masters* 1488.27

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



## 6. Conclusion

From the examination of historical sources and bardic poetry a picture of inauguration can be reconstructed. The essential elements of the inauguration ceremony were the assembled vassals and churchmen at the inauguration mound. One of them inaugurated the king by giving him the *slat na righe*. In the late middle ages, where kingship became lordship, the office of inaugurator shifted from *ollamhs* and *comharbas* to the most important vassal or overlord. The rite of the single shoe was introduced and emphasis was given to naming the king. These developments led to shifts in the terminology with the use of *slat seilbhe* and *gairm anma*.

In bardic poetry, inauguration is found in some of the inaugural odes and as motif in other poems. The inaugural odes are a prestigious class of bardic poetry, they are long and are somewhat distinguished by using complicated metres. The terminology for inauguration in bardic poetry mirrors the actual practice and its development. Inauguration sites are mentioned several times as a mound, *carn*, and a *leac* is mentioned twice. The most frequent verbs to denote inauguration are *ríoghadh* and *gairm anma*. The latter has one very early instance, but the rest are from the fourteenth century onward, which agrees with its occurrence in the annals. *Slat seilbhe* is very frequently used with its first occurrence in the fifteenth century, which is also contemporary with the political developments from kingdom to lordship. In general, the accounts from bardic poetry confirm the historical developments that are known from other sources. The bardic poets did in fact not use traditional terminology, but used the words from contemporary practice. One could say that they do not owe up to their reputation of back-looking traditionalists, but were indeed the journalists of their age, as Bergin aptly described them. The historical developments are also illustrated by the inauguration of Feidhlimidh Fionn Ó Conchobhair. He was made king with the new rite of the single shoe, put on him by his main ally Mac Diarmada, who had replaced the traditional *ollamh* as inaugurator.



## Appendix 1: List of poems

This list is based on the information from the bardic poetry database, to which I have added. The first part consists of the 30 inaugural odes, the second of the 54 poems that feature inauguration. As well as the date of composition and metre, the words used to describe inauguration, the ‘inauguration markers’ are listed.

A question mark (?) indicates the poem is listed in bardic poetry database, as *possibly* featuring inauguration, but I was unable to check on this, as I did not have access to an edition. An x and a hyphen (-) indicate there is mention of inauguration, but there are no direct inauguration markers. For the ones with an x, there are no inauguration markers listed in the bardic poetry database,, but I was unable to look them up. It is possible that they do have inauguration markers that are just not listed in bardic poetry database,. The poems with a hyphen have all been checked. Poems with inauguration markers but no reference have not been published, or I did not have access to these publications. The inauguration markers for these poems appear as listed in bardic poetry database,.

### Inaugural Odes

#### **Bean ar n-aitheirghe Eire**

Date: mid 14<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: -<sup>71</sup>

#### **Cia as urra d’ainm an iarthair**

Date: c. 1640

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: *an anma d’foillseaghadh*<sup>72</sup>

#### **Cia thagras Eire re hAodh**

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: ?

#### **Cionnas mheadar macamh og?**

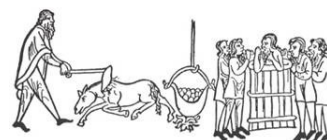
Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: x

<sup>71</sup> Cuthbert Mhág Craith (ed.), *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* (Dublin 1967) № 1 vol. 1. 1-9, vol. 2. 1-4

<sup>72</sup> Ronald Black, ‘Poems by Maol Domhnaigh Ó Muirgheasáin (II)’ *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 13/1 (1987) 46-56.  
*foillseaghadh*: reveal, disclose. Modern Irish *foilsigh*



**Clu oirbeart uaislighes neach**

Date: mid/late 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *gairm, togha*

**Coir aitreabhadh ar (..iath Gaileang?)**

Date: mid 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: -<sup>73</sup>

**Congaibh rom th'aighidh a Aodh**

Date: early 13<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *Carn Fraoich*

**Coroin Eireann ainm I Neill**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *leac Tulach Oig, coroin*

**Do fhidir Dia Cineal Conaill**

Date: mid 13<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: -<sup>74</sup>

**Doirbh dar ceadseal cinneamhain tairngeartaigh**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: droighneach  
 Inauguration: *gairm Iarla*

**Fa urraidh labhras leac Teamhra**

Date: late 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *rioghaidh*

**Fuair Breifne a diol do shaoghlonn**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht bheag  
 Inauguration: *togha*<sup>75</sup>

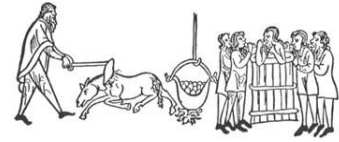
**Fuigheall formaid fonn Sligidh**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: x

<sup>73</sup> This poem survives only fragmentary. Lambert McKenna (ed.) *The book of O'Hara : Leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin 1951) 372-5

<sup>74</sup> Williams *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* 74-81

<sup>75</sup> James Hardiman (ed.) *Irish minstrelsy or bardic remains of Ireland with English poetical translations* 2 vols. (London 1831, reprinted Shannon 1971) vol. 2 286-305



**Fulang annroidh adhbhar soidh**

Date: late 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>76</sup>

**Gabh umat a Fheidhlimidh**

Date: late 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: ae freislighe  
 Inauguration: *carn, carn Fraoich, ríoghadh, do thogha, banais*<sup>77</sup>

**La da rabha os raith Luimnigh**

Date: mid 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *ríoghadh, do thogadh, gairm Ó Bhriain*<sup>78</sup>

**Mairg danab oighrecht Eire**

Date: late 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *slat sheilbhe*

**Marthain t'anma duit a Dhomhnaill**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *ainm*

**Mor ata ar theagasg flatha**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: x

**Mor theasda dh'obair Ovid**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>79</sup>

**Ni fada on Fhodla a tath a ttuaidheamhain**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: droighneach  
 Inauguration: x

**Ni hainimh oige i bhflaithibh**

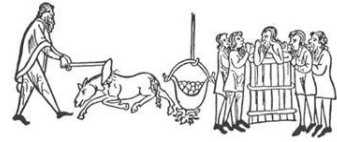
Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *oirneadh, togha, Niall and the hag*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Fraser, J., Grosjean, P. and O'Keeffe J.G. (ed.) *Irish texts* vol. 2 (London 1931) 25-31

<sup>77</sup> Dillon 'The inauguration' 191-3

<sup>78</sup> Lambert McKenna (ed.) *Aithdioghluim Dána* vol. 1 104-114, vol. 2 63-69

<sup>79</sup> Pádraig A. Breatnach 'Metamorphosis 1603: Dán le hEochaidh Ó hEódhasa' *Éigse* 17 169-180



**Rob ionann greim gebhas sin/Mor ata ar theagasg**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: ?

Inauguration: x

**Rug cabhair ar Chloinn gCoileain**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: x

**Rug cobhair ar Chonallchaibh**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: casbhairdne

Inauguration: -<sup>81</sup>

**Seacht ngradha fileadh fuair Aonghus**

Date: early 15<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deachnadh mór

Inauguration: x

**Siobhlach ar cheilibh Crioich Branach**

Date: early/mid 17<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: séadhna

Inauguration: -<sup>82</sup>

**Tainig an Chroibhdhearg go Cruachain**

Date: late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: séadhna

Inauguration: *Carn Fraoich, do-ríoghsat*<sup>83</sup>

**Tri uaithne ar inis Gaoidheal**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: -<sup>84</sup>

**Tuar righe rath tighearna**

Date: early 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: casbhairdne

Inauguration: -<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Niall of the nine hostages is referenced to, but the story is not retold. Thadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.) *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (Dublin 1931) 166-171 quatrain 21

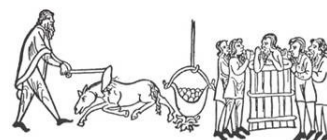
<sup>81</sup> As with *Fill th'aghaidh uainn a Eire*, only an extract is published in Knott, ISP 70-71

<sup>82</sup> Seán Mac Airt (ed.) *Leabhar Branach: The book of the O'Byrnes* (Dublin 1944) 239-243, 397

<sup>83</sup> Quiggin 'A poem by Gilbride Macnamee' 167-177

<sup>84</sup> An extract is published in: Standish Hayes O'Grady and Robin Flower *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Library [formerly British Museum]* 2 vols. (London 1926, reprinted Dublin 1992) vol. 1 485-486

<sup>85</sup> Myles Dillon 'Ó Chonchobhair Chiarraige' *Celtica* 6 (1963) 173-183



## Poems with inauguration occurring as a motif

### **Aderar easbacc...**

Date: Unknown  
 Metre: séadhna  
 inauguration: *slat sheilbhe*

### **An ail libh seanchas Siol gCein**

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *slat sheilbhi, ríoghad*<sup>86</sup>

### **Atam ionchora re hAodh**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *oirneadh*<sup>87</sup>

### **Ceathrar as fheile fuar Flann**

Date: mid/late 13<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *righamar, righad*<sup>88</sup>

### **Cia a-deir gur imthigh Eamonn**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *slat tighearnais*

### **Cia ar a bhfuil th'aire a Eire?**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *ri do thogha, coroin*

### **Cia rer fuirghedh feis Teamhra**

Date: late 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *coroin*<sup>89</sup>

### **Coir Connacht ar chath Laighean**

Date: late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> McKenna, *The book of O'Hara* 34 quatrain 36 and 40

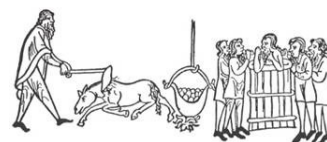
<sup>87</sup> Mhág Craith, *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* № 4 vol. 1 23-25, vol. 2 10

<sup>88</sup> Fraser *Irish texts* vol. 2 1-6

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 96-103

<sup>90</sup> Séamus Mac Mathúna 'An inaugural ode to Hugh O'Connor?' *Zeitschrift für Celtologische Philologie* 49-50 (1997) 548-575





**Congaibh riot a raith Cruachan**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *Carn Fraoich, banais*

**Da mhac rugadh do righ Chonnacht**

Date: mid 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: -<sup>91</sup>

**Deacair innreamh na hoige**

Date: early 17th century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *gairm riogh, slat na righe*

**Dileas gach eandúine a eidhrecht**

Date: mid 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *slat na seilbhe*

**Diol fuatha flaitheas Eireann**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *oir dhneadh*

**Diomdhach do Conall clann Dalaigh**

Date: early 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *rigad, Niall and the hag*<sup>92</sup>

**Do bhriseadh riaghail riogh Sacsann**

Date: mid 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *slat sheilbhe*<sup>93</sup>

**Do chonnarc cheithre rabhaigh**

Date: mid 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: x

**Do mhinigh Dia na deich n-aithne**

Date: mid 15<sup>th</sup>  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *lion togha, priomhaidh*

<sup>91</sup> Lambert McKenna *Aithdioghluim Dána: A miscellany of Irish bardic poetry, historical and religious, including the historical poems of the duanaire in the Yellow Book of Lecan* 2 vols. Irish Texts Society 37 en 40 (Dublin 1935 [1939] and 1938 [1940]) № 31, 74-77

<sup>92</sup> Niall is mentioned, but not the story. Fraser *Irish texts* vol 2. 45-49

<sup>93</sup> McKenna, *Aithdioghluim Dána*, № 38 152-157

**Do ni clu ait oighreachta**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: casbhairdne  
 Inauguration: ?

**Do sguir cogadh criche Fanad**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *gairm anma*

**Fa gníomhraidh meastar mic riogh**

Date: mid 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht mhór  
 Inauguration: *gairm anma*

**Fa'n raith imrid aicme Ir**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *slat seilbhe*

**Fada a-deartar na deich righ**

Date: late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht mhór  
 Inauguration: *leac na Riogh*<sup>94</sup>

**Fill th'aghaidh uainn a Eire**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>95</sup>

**Fogra cruinnighthe ar chru mBroin**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *gairm ríogh, do togadh*<sup>96</sup>

**Isligh do mheanma a Mhaoilir**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>97</sup>

**Iomchuir th'athtuirse a Aodh Ruaidh**

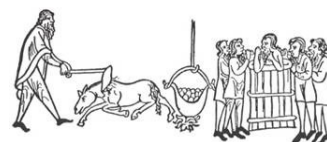
Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *ríoghthar*<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Fraser *Irish texts* vol. 2 31-35

<sup>95</sup> I have not looked at the poem in its entirety, only at the extract in Knott, *Irish syllabic poetry* 37-38.

<sup>96</sup> Mac Airt, *Leabhar Branach* № 28, 116-120

<sup>97</sup> Eleanor Knott, *A bhfuil aguinn dár chum Tadgh Dall Ó hUiginn: Idir mholaidh agus marbhnadh; aoir agus ábhlacht; iomarbaigh agus iomchasaoid* 2 vols. (London 1922) vol. 1 149-155, vol. 2 99-103



**Leachta carad a ccath Briain**

Date: mid 13<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>99</sup>

**Leanam croinic Clann Dalaigh**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: x

**Leitheid Almhan i nUltaibh**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: -<sup>100</sup>

**Mathair don eagna an fhuil riogh**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *gairm anma*

**Mor iongabhail anma riogh**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *slat na righe*<sup>101</sup>

**Mur do thogh Seanchan mar so (aceph)**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *ríoghadh*<sup>102</sup>

**Ni ar aois roinntear rath buanna**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *am togha*

**Ni deireadh d'anbhuaín Eireann.Ni he crioch ..**

Date: mid 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *O'Neill do dhenamh*

<sup>98</sup> Pádraig A. Breatnach 'An address to Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill in captivity, 1590' Irish Historical Studies 25 (№ 97 may 1986) 198-213

<sup>99</sup> McKenna 'Irish Bardic poems – no. 82' 175-186

<sup>100</sup> Knott, *Tadgh Dall Ó hUiginn* vol. 1 195-201, vol. 2 130-4

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. vol. 1 140-149, vol. 2 92-98, № 20 quatrain 42

<sup>102</sup> James Carney (ed.) *Poems on the O'Reillys* (Dublin 1950) 71-74, № 13 quatrain 10



**Ni teid an eigan i n-aisgidh**

Date: late 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: *ainm flatha*<sup>103</sup>

**Ni trath aithreachais d'fhuil Chonail**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: séadhna  
 Inauguration: x

**Ni triall corrach as coir dh'Aodh**

Date: mid 14<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht mhór  
 Inauguration: *gairm anma*

**Oiníoch Banbha a mBranachuibh**

Date: mid/late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: casbhairdne  
 Inauguration: *aonasa*<sup>104</sup>

**Realta Connacht clu Pilib**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht bheag  
 Inauguration: *slat shealbha*, Niall and the hag<sup>105</sup>

**Roinn leithe ar choigidh Connacht**

Date: late 14<sup>th</sup>/mid 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *Carn Fraoich*, golden chair?

**Sa raith-se rugadh Muire**

Date: early 13<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *gairm riogh, ríoghadh*<sup>106</sup>

**Seacht dtroighe mo thir duthchais**

Date: late 15<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht bheag  
 Inauguration: *slat seilbhe*

<sup>103</sup> Brian Ó Cuív 'A poem for Fínghin Mac Carthaigh Riabhach' *Celtica* 15 (1983) 96–110

<sup>104</sup> Mac Airt, *Leabhar Branach* 29. I think the *aonasa* (gs of *ais*, sandal with prefixed *aon*, one) single sandal, is in this context not connected with inauguration as such, but as the attribute of a person of high standing, or an inaugurated chief. It appears in the stanza as *fear scéith óir is aonasa*: a man of a golden shield and single sandal. See also M.A O'Brien 'Fear an énaís' *Celtica* 2 (1954) 351-3

<sup>105</sup> Carney, *Poems on the O'Reillys* 34-41

<sup>106</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, 'A poem on the infancy of Christ' *Éigse* 15 (1974) 93-102



### Sead fine teisd Thoirdealbhaigh

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: casbhairdne  
 Inauguration: *an ais órsholais*<sup>107</sup>

### Sealbh Eireann ag aicme Neill

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *ar do bhroig deis*<sup>108</sup>

### Siol feile fuil Dhiarmada

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: casbhairdne  
 Inauguration: ?

### Sona sin a chlanna Cuinn

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *coroin righ*<sup>109</sup>

### Suirgheach Cruacha re clu Taidhg

Date: mid 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: rannaigheacht mor  
 Inauguration: *carn*

### T'aire riot a Riocaird Oig

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: *déanamh ríogh, rí dá mhaoidhimh*<sup>110</sup>

### Tairnig an seal-sa ag Siol Neill

Date: late 12<sup>th</sup> century  
 Metre: deibhidhe  
 Inauguration: Niall and the hag<sup>111</sup>

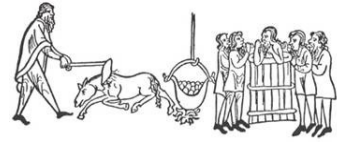
<sup>107</sup> Ó Cróinín, D.I. 'A poem to Toirdhealbhaigh Luinneach Ó Néill' Éigse 16/1 1975 58 *Mac Néill an ais órsholais*: Mac Néill of the shining golden shoe. Again this is used to denote an inaugurated chief.

<sup>108</sup> Again, I did not have access to the text of this poem and was thus unable to establish if this is really about inauguration.

<sup>109</sup> McKenna, *The book of O'Hara* 130-142, № 9

<sup>110</sup> Knott, *Tadgh Dall Ó hUiginn* vol. 1 106-14, vol. 2 160-8 *mhaoidhimh* is a verb: declare, state, celebrate. This poem is an advice to the patron not to take up an English title. The inauguration features in a story that is used as a metaphor for the foolishness of the patron, were he to bond with the English. In a strange land, a new king is made by an assembly (*tionól*) every year, while the former king has to spend the rest of his life on an uninhabited island.

<sup>111</sup> Brian Ó Cuív, 'A poem composed for Cathal Croibhdhearg' 157-174



**Tainig tairngire na n-earlamb**

Date: mid 13<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: séadhna

Inauguration: *ríoghadh, Carn Fraoich*<sup>112</sup>

**Teamhair Chonnacht cuir riogh Breiffne**

Date: mid 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: snéadbhairdne, crosantacht

Inauguration: ?<sup>113</sup>

**Teasda Eire san Easpainn**

Date: early 17<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: *fuair ainm, Niall and the hag*<sup>114</sup>

**Toghaidh Dia neach ‘n-a naoidhin**

Date: early/mid 15<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: deibhidhe

Inauguration: *togha, ríoghadh*<sup>115</sup>

**Uirim Fodhla ag enduine**

Date: late 16<sup>th</sup> century

Metre: casbhairdne

Inauguration: -<sup>116</sup>

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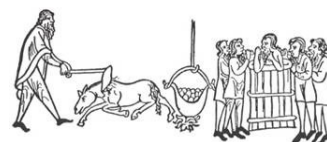
<sup>112</sup> *Conaill ó Charn Fraoich*, the Connall of Carn Fraoich. Williams, *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* 68-69, quatrain 21

<sup>113</sup> In the bardic poetry database this poem is listed to mention inauguration sites. Unfortunately I was not able to follow this up, as there is no translation or edition.

<sup>114</sup> Pádraig A. Breatnach ‘Marbhna Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnail’ *Éigse* 15 (1974) 31-50 Niall is mentioned, but not the saga.

<sup>115</sup> McKenna, *Aithdiogluim Dána* vol. 1 146-51, vol. 2 86-9, quatrain 9

<sup>116</sup> Mac Airt, *Leabhar Branach* 74-78



## Appendix 2: Occurrence of inauguration markers in the poems

The following table shows the number of poems from the list of appendix 1 that feature several ‘inauguration markers’ i.e. the words that are used to describe inauguration. They are sorted by date. When the same word is used several times in a poem, this is counted only once in the table. If several, different words are used in one poem, they are all listed in the table.

Variations in spelling, inflections and variant usages of the idiom are all listed under one marker. For example, several inflections of the verb *ríoghadh* are used. There are many different occurrences of the idiom *gairm anma*, ‘calling of the name.’ Sometimes only *gairm* is used, sometimes only *ainm* but with a similar meaning. All these occurrences are grouped together, also because I was unable to check on some of the poems that appear with just *gairm* in the bardic poetry database

The motif of marriage, *banais*, is excluded from this survey, as this motif is more complicated than the rest of the terminology. Sometimes just the word *banais* is used, but the kingship marriage can also be described or alluded too. Besides, I felt for this I could not rely on the concise descriptions in the bardic poetry database.

The motif of the single, or golden sandal, is excluded as well. These do not necessarily refer to inauguration. For this, see the notes on the instances of shoes in appendix 1.

Some words only occurred once and are not included in the table. These are:

*priomhaidh* ‘ordain’ From the mid 15th century poem *Do mhinigh Dia na deich n-aithne déanamh ríogh* ‘make king’ and *rí dá mhaoidhimh* ‘declare a king.’ From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century poem *T’aire riot a Riocaird Oig*

The usage of just the surname to denote a king occurs twice: *O Neill do dhenamh* and *gairm Ó Bhriain*, from the mid fifteenth and mid sixteenth century respectively.

		early		mid	late	early		mid	late	early		mid
	13th	14th	15th	15th	15th	16th	16th	16th	16th	17th	17th	17th
<i>ríoghadh</i>	4	1	2		1		2	2				
<i>gairm anma/gairm.../.ainm..</i>	1	2			1		1	2	4	2		
<i>carn (Fraoich)</i>	3		1		1			1				
<i>togha</i>			1	1	1		1	4	1	1		
<i>slat seilbhe</i>				2	2		1	1	3			
<i>oirneadh</i>								2	1			
<i>slat tighearnais</i>								1				
<i>slat na righe</i>								1	1			
<i>leac</i>			1					1				
<i>coroin</i>					1			2	1			

Translation of the terms in the table:

<i>ríoghadh</i>	inaugurating, enkinging
<i>gairm anma</i>	declaring of the name
<i>carn (Fraoich)</i>	mound, or carn Fraoich
<i>togha</i>	electing
<i>slat seilbhe</i>	the rod of possession
<i>oirneadh</i>	ordaining
<i>slat tighearnais</i>	the rod of lordship
<i>slat na righe</i>	the rod of kingship
<i>leac</i>	stone
<i>coroin</i>	crown



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