Études irlandaises

34.1 | 2009
Varia

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/2697>
DOI: 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.2697
ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Rennes

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2009
Number of pages: 113-143
ISBN: 978-2-7535-0935-1
ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

David A. Hutchison, « Links to Pagan Ritual in Medieval Irish Literature », *Études irlandaises* [Online], 34.1 | 2009, Online since 30 June 2011, connection on 02 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/2697> ; DOI : 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.2697

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Links to Pagan Ritual in Medieval Irish Literature

David A. Hutchison

Introduction

- 1 This article uncovers links to pagan Irish rites which can be deduced from excerpts in the form of lists from medieval literature. There are three presented here: from *Aidedh Ferghusa Maic Léti*¹ (Death of Fergus Mac Leide, c. 1100 A.D.), from *Buile Shuibhne*² (Frenzy of Suibhne, 17th-century manuscripts³), and from the Book of Leinster (*Lebar na Núachongbála*, 11th century⁴). It is seen in all cases that, when list items are rendered in a language ancestral to Irish (henceforth termed Goidelic) and recited in order, poems result which describe pagan rituals. This Goidelic is reconstructed on the basis of Indo-European linguistics and well-known sound laws governing the evolution of the Irish tongue. It will be seen that the Goidelic language used herein has much the same grammatical structure evinced by early ogam inscriptions in Ireland and even by Gaulish itself. Furthermore, the prosody and scansion of these Goidelic poems match features seen in a Gaulish inscription datable to c. 0-300 A.D. discovered at Chamalières, France in 1971.
- 2 The Goidelic dialect of the poetry reconstructed below seems more archaic than the Irish ogam inscriptions of 300-600 A.D. and will be shown to date to the first two centuries of the Common Era⁵. We will also notice some recurring features in the rites described therefrom:
 - The desired outcome of the rite is stated only in the vaguest terms, if at all.
 - Each poem constitutes a recitation addressed to the deity by a “witness” or “master of ceremonies” acting on behalf of other participants. Reciprocally, it is hoped that the godhead will observe the ceremony and grant the wishes of the celebrants.
 - Duality in the ritual is readily apparent; e.g., a sacred double fire, or rituals and declarations at two sites, etc.⁶.

- Each poem emphasizes that the rite takes place at a sacred locale where the wishes of the performers ought not to be refused. Such locales may be boundaries between natural elements; e.g., the crest of a hill (boundary between earth and sky), a beach or shoreline (boundary between earth and water), or a path between the two.

Inscription at Chamalières, France

- 3 In 1971, a Gaulish inscription was discovered on a tablet in a stream bed at Chamalières, near Clermont-Ferrand amongst other votive objects. The inscription ends with four lines of poetry, perhaps a chant or song. Descriptions and attempted decipherments of the tablet are many. The one used here follows [Henry, 1984] ⁷, who offers this translation and transliteration of the final four-line poem:

Gaulish (0-300 A.D.):

1. **Meion, ponc sesit, buet-id ollon. Regu-c cambion.**
/ * * / * / * / * / (*)*
2. **Exops pissiiumi isoc canti risu ison son bissiet.**
/ * * (*)/ ** / * / * / * / (*)*
3. **Luge dessummiis, luge dessumiis, luge desumiis**
/ * * / ** / * * / ** / * * / **
4. **Luxe!**
/ *

English translation:

- When [the god Maponos] had bound [the oath], what was small will become great. I straighten what is crooked.
- In time to come⁸ I shall see it so happen through this [magical] song inscription.
- I am preparing them for the oath (3 times).
- Swear!

Reconstruction and Background:

- 4 The preamble (not shown here) to this Gaulish ritual poem mentions one **Floros Nigrinos**, who styles himself as **adgarios** (literally, “pleader”), a title which designates him as master of ceremonies (cf. O. Ir. *gair-*, “call”). The god **Maponos** is mentioned by name to whom Nigrinos acts as a *witness* (cf. line 2: **Exops pissiiumi**, literally, “In time to come I shall see...”) visualizing the desired outcome. Note that there is only the vaguest notion in the inscription of what that outcome might be, other than **Meion, ponc sesit, buet-id ollon**.
- 5 The Gaulish phrase **ponc sesit**, “once he [the god Maponos] has bound it”, contains the notion of binding an oath or constraining events to come through ritual. We note P. Henry’s final paragraph:
- ... All of the cham [sic] is highly dynamic or performative, particularly [the poem lines], which visualize the desired effects taking shape in the future. At the very end

the adgarios can he heard marshalling the oathmakers and exhorting them to swear in order to set the chain of desired events in motion.

Scansion:

- 6 The first three lines of the poem show six accents per line, mainly on the penultimate syllable⁹. The exception is the relative pronoun **ison**, which is followed by the object pronoun **son**. The latter acts as an enclitic and draws the accent to the syllable immediately preceding¹⁰. Hence the accentuation **isón** on the last syllable. We now can see that the final successive vowels in line 1's cadence, namely **e-u-a-i-o** fan out to accented vowels in the second line:

Line 1:	...Regu-c cambion.
Line 2:	Exops pissiiumi isoc canti risu ison ...

- 7 The first three lines show repeated vowel sequences:

Line 1:	o-o-e:	Meion ponc sesit ... ollon. Regu-c
Line 2:	i-i-u-i-o:	... pissiiumi isoc ...canti risu ison ...
Line 3:	u-e-e-u-i-i:	Luge dessumiiis (3 times)

- 8 It is also seen that rhyming accented syllables in some feet in line 1 are matched by identical or similar syllables after the accent in the same feet in line 2:

Line 1, 1 st , 2 nd and 5 th feet accent e :	Meion ... sesit ... Regu-c
Line 2, 1 st , 2 nd and 5 th feet lead to -xo/-so :	Exops pissiiumi isoc ... ison son

- 9 Likewise, the i-rhyme in line 2's fourth and sixth feet is matched by the syllable **-on** after the main accent in the same feet in line 1:

Line 2, 4 th and 6 th feet accent i :	...risu ... bissiet
Line 1, 4 th and 6 th feet lead to -on :	...ollon ... cambion

- 10 One should also note that an ABBA vowel sequence at the start of line 1 (**e-o-o-e: Meion ponc sesit...**) is matched by a similar sequence at the close of the second line: (**i-o-o-i: ...ison son bissiet**).
- 11 Thus we can see the following prosodic features in the poem:
- Fixed number of accents or feet per line, except for a foreshortened final line.
 - Fanning out of successive cadence vowels in line 1 to accented syllables in the following line.

- Repeating successive vowel sequences in each line.
- Rhyming accented vowels in one line matched at the same feet by identical or similar syllables after the accent in another line.
- ABBA vowel sequence at a certain position (i.e., number of feet from the start) in one line followed by a similar ABBA sequence at the opposite position (i.e., same number of feet from the end) of the next.

12 We shall see all of these in the Goidelic examples reconstructed below.

13 3. Iubdán's Lay to Fer Dédh

14 In Ulster, Leprechaun King Iubdán spies Fer Dédh, the fire servant of King Fergus, heaving a log onto the fire bound round by woodbine. Iubdán implores him to spare that tree, and proceeds with this lay:

15 Middle Irish, c. 1100 A.D (1st six lines lettered for subsequent analysis).

a) A fhir fhadós teine	sac Fergus na fled:
b) Ar muir ná ar tír	sna loisc ríg na fed.
c) Airdrí feda Fáil	sim nach gnáth sreth sluaig:
d) Ní fann in feidm ríog	ssníom im gach crann cruaid.
e) Dá loisce in fid fann	sbud mana gréch nglonn:
f) Ro sia gábad renn	snó bádad trén tonn.
Ná loisc aball án	sna ngéc faroll fæn:
Fid man gnáth bláth bán	slám cháich na cenn chæm.
Deorad draigen dúr	sfid nach loiscenn sær:
Gáirid elta én	strén a chorp cid cæl.
Ná loisc sailig saír	sfid deimin na nduan:
Beich na bláth ac deol	smian cáich in cró cæm.
Cærthann fid na ndruid	sloisc cæmchrann na gcær:
Sechain in fid fann	sno loisc in call cæm.
Uinnsenn dorchá a dath	sfid luaite na ndroch:
Echlasc lám lucht ech	sa cruth ac cládh chath.
Crom feda déin dris	sloisc féin in ngéir nglais:
Fennaid gerraid cois	ssrengaid nech ar ais.

Bruth feda dair úr	só nach gnáth nech seim:
Tinn cenn tís ó a dhúil	stinn súil ó a ghrís ghéir.
Na fern urbadb fheda	sin crann as teo i ngliaid:
Losc go derb do deoin	sin fern is in sciaig .
Cuilenn loisc a úr	scuilenn loisc a críon:
Gach crann ar bith becht	scuilenn as dech díob.
Trom dana rúsc ruad	scrann fírhona ar fíor:
Loisc co mbeith na gual	seich na sluag a síod.
Cid na fharrad fæn	sbéithe ba blad buan:
Loisc go deimin derb	scainnle na mbalg mbuan.
Léig síos madat maith	scrithach ruad na rith:
Loisc co mall co moch	scrann 'sa barr ar crith.
Sinnser feda fois	sibar na fled fis:
Déna ris anois	sdabcha donna dis.
Da derntá mo thoil	sa Fhir Dédh dil:
Dot anam dot chorp	sní bud olc a fhir.

- 16 The method by which we shall proceed is to list all the bolded Irish tree names in a table, render each in Goidelic and recite them in order. For example, the first two trees mentioned are the woodbine and apple, respectively *féithlenn* and *aball* in Irish. Goidelic reconstructions of these would be **Weitis (w)*I*nas** and **abal(n)a** (see the included Glossary), with bracketed consonants w and n possibly no longer pronounced, even at this early stage in the language. Running these words together approximates the first line of the Goidelic poem about to be reconstructed: **Wete swela nassa b(w)alæn**, “Observe the turns [of the fire drills] which may bind good fortune”. A more complete discussion appears subsequently.

Table 1. List from M. Ir. Poem, Translated to Goidelic

M. Ir. in Poem	English	Actual O. Ir.	Goidelic
ríg na fed, Airdrí feda Fáil	woodbine	féithlenn	weitis (w)*I*nas ^a

aball	apple	aball	abal(n)a
draigen	blackthorn	draigen	dragenas
sailig	willow	sail	salih s
cærthann	rowan	cærthenn	kairatinas
call	hazel	coll	koslas
uinnsenn	ash	uinnius, uinnsiu	osnis(t)iu
dris	briar	muin(e)	moni / moniwian
dair	oak	daur	darus
fern	alder	fern	wernas
sciaig	whitethorn	scé	squiat-
cuilenn	holly	cuilenn	kolinas
trom	elder	trom	trusmas
béithe	birch	béithe	betwias
crithach	aspen	crithach, crithech	krit*kas
ibar	yew	eo	iwas
a. See Carl Marstrander, "Hibernica", p. 410, shows Indo-Eur. examples of names for woodbine.			

Goidelic Poem Concerning Waterside Ritual (scansion at right):

1. Wete swela	snassa bwalæn ¹¹	/ * / * / * / *
2. Trâg(e)i in æssei	sau wliska ei raddei;	/ * / * / * /
3. (Y)an naskûs læssowous	snis(t)ui monu	* / * / ** / * /
4. In torous wernæs	sco(m)wii ad kouli;	* / * / * / ** /
5. (Y)an nastri (y)ouhsmi	sadsfehtwiei ahsei	* / * / / ** / *
6. Qritou (y)akkias	sseiw* ahsei.	/ * / ** / / *

English Translation:

- Observe the turns [of the fire drills] which may bind good fortune
- To/At the strand in the path from the bough around the offering:

- I then bind at two lights¹² to the promenade by the deed
- Within two fire drills the posts as a way to the two woodpiles.
- Then let the joinder [i.e., of the fire drills] be bound that there should appear on the *axis*
- The shape of a balm¹³ during the ritual activity at the marsh.

17 The above Goidelic ritual poem makes use of a clever pun: the word **ahsei** can mean both “on the axis¹⁴” or “at the marsh”. Elision takes place (unbolded vowels) whenever a final open syllable collides with an initial vowel in a subsequent word. Exceptions occur (a) before nouns (but not connectives or conjunctions) beginning with possible initial **y** or its remnant; e.g., **(y)ouhsmi**, (b) after any word starting a declarative sentence⁸, possibly after a connective such as **(y)an**, “then”¹⁵.

Reconstruction and Background:

- 18 It is seen that (a) *féithlenn*, “woodbine” appears as such only in the preamble before the lay, (b) two other list elements use synonyms: *dris*, “briar” replaced by O. Ir. *muin(e)*, *ibar*, “yew” by *eo*.
- 19 Clearly the setting of the Goidelic poem is the water’s edge, or boundary between land and liquid. This boundary is deemed imbued with magical significance, within whose presence no request should be denied. The rites indicated include time-honoured offerings cast into a lake or bog. From ancient times and over many settings, the archaeology and documentation within Celtic realms has constantly borne this out. Examples include the votive offerings at Lake La Tène near Neuchâtel, Switzerland¹⁶, Toulouse, Lynn Cerig Bach in Wales, Loch Beg and Loch na Séad in Ireland¹⁷.
- 20 The remainder of the Goidelic poem deals with the “deed” within two fire drills, undoubtedly a human or animal sacrifice, and associates this repeatedly with various forms of the verb “bind”: **nassa bwalæn**, “that may bind good fortune”, **naskûs læssowous**, “I bind at the two lights [fires] ...”, **nastri (y)ouhsmi**, “let the joinder [of the fire drills] be bound/constrained ...”. The central idea is that the desires of whoever presides as master on behalf of his devotees must come to pass by virtue of the proper ritual having been performed at the sacred locale.

Comparison of M. Ir. and Goidelic Poems:

- 21 Some of the verse lines in M. Ir. prove apt for the associated lines in the Goidelic poem. For example, when Iubdán admonishes *Ar muir ná ar tír*, “Whether afloat or ashore ...”, he foreshadows the upcoming introduction of line 2, **Trâg(e)i**, “to/at the strand”. The apple tree *na ngéc faroll fæn*, “of spreading and low-sweeping bough”, matches the Goidelic phrase in line 2: **au wliska ei raddei**, “bough around the offering”. Still within Goidelic line 2, the blackthorn is described as *Deorad* “wanderer”, suiting the word **æssei**, “in the path”. The M. Ir. lines concerning the willow end *mian cáich in cró cæm* “All love the little cage”. But *cró* could also mean “barn” or “enclosure”. Indeed, the above-mentioned **au wliska ei raddei**, “bough around the offering” constitutes a sacred enclosure demarcated from the real world prior to offering. Alder, deemed *teo i ngliaid* “hottest in the fight”, matches Goidelic line 4: **wernæs ko(m)wii ad kouli**, “posts ...way to the two woodpiles” (for sacred fires). Finally, the birch tree covers the Goidelic phrase **adsfehtwiei ahsei**, “that there should appear [a flame as balm] on the *axis*”. The latter notion contains the essence of the Celtic fire rite, that the flames drive out witches and bad spirits and so

improve the luck of the people. Consider this description of the Scots highland Beltane fire from John Ramsay, laird of Ochtertyre:

... This fire had the appearance of being immediately derived from heaven, and manifold were the virtues ascribed to it. They esteemed it a preservative against witchcraft, a sovereign remedy against malignant diseases, both in the human species and in cattle; and by it the strongest poisons were supposed to have their nature changed ¹⁸."

Scansion:

- 22 Unaccented syllables at the front of any line should be considered as the end of the previous line. As such, it becomes apparent that line 2 reverses the scansion of line 1, line 4 that of line 3, and line 6 that of line 5, as shown in the numbered feet below:

Line 1: (1) /* (2) /* (3) /* (4) /*	Line 2: (4) /* (3) /* (2) /* (1) /* ¹⁹
Line 3: (1) /* (2) /** (3) /* (4) /*	Line 4: (4) /* (3) /* (2) /** (1) /*
Line 5: (1) /* (2) / (3) /** (4) /*	Line 6: (4) /* (3) /** (2) / (1) /*

Rhyme:

- 23 Each couplet shows identical or nearly identical end rhyme:

Lines 1-2, a-a/æ:	...bwalæn /	...raddei / (Y)an ...
Lines 3-4, o-i:	...monu / In	...kouli ²⁰
Lines 5-6, a-ei:	... ahsei /	... ahsei

- 24 It is also seen that the final vowel sequence of any line fans out to successive accented vowels in the next one:

Lines 1-2, a/â-æ:	...bwalæn: /	Trâg(e)i in æssei ...
Lines 2-3, a-a/æ:	...raddei / (Y)an	naskûs læssowous ...
Lines 3-4, o-ui/we:	...monu / In	torous wernæs ...
Lines 4-5, a-ou-ia:	...ad kouli / (Y)an	nastri (y)ouhsmi adsfehtwiei ...

Lines 5-6, i-a-ei:	...adsfehtwiei <u>ahsei</u> / Qritou (y)ak <u>kias sei</u> w* ...	
--------------------	--	--

- 25 Certain vowel sequences repeat throughout each line, at times through to the beginning of the next:

Line 1-2, a-a/æ-a/â:	... swela <u>nassa</u> <u>bwalæn</u> / Trâg(e)i
Line 2, a-(e)i-a-ei ²¹ :	Trâg(e)i in æssei ...wliska ei raddei
Line 3-4, o-ou/u-i:	...læssowous <u>nis(t)ui monu</u> / In
Line 4, o/ou-i-a:	...ko(m)wii <u>ad kouli</u> / (Y)an
Line 5-6, a-e/ei-i:	...adsfehtwiei <u>ahsei</u> / Qritou

- 26 Finally, when certain feet in a line possess identical or similar syllables after the accent, another line in the poem sees those same feet accent the same vowels. Recall that **k**, **t** immediately after **n** or **s** are equivalent to **g**, **d** respectively.

Line 1, 2 nd , 4 th foot leads to -la/æn:	...swela <u>nassa</u> ... <u>bwalæn</u>
Line 6, 2 nd , 4 th foot accents a:	...(y)ak <u>kias</u> ... <u>ahsei</u>

Line 2, 1 st , 3 rd foot leads to -g(e)i/-kei:	...Trâg(e)i ... wliska <u>ei</u>
Line 5, 1 st , 3 rd foot accents a:	...nastri ... adsfehtwiei

Line 3, 3 rd , 4 th foot leads to -ui:	...nis(t)ui <u>monu</u> / In
Line 4, 3 rd , 4 th foot sequence o-i-a:	...ko(m)wii <u>ad kouli</u> / (Y)an

- 27 In the entire discussion above, diphthong **æ** is seen to be everywhere equivalent to **a**, thus predating the Irish ogam inscriptions. Nevertheless, diphthongs **au** and **ou** are coming together: kouli, “two wood piles” instead of original *kauli. (See Glossary).

Scansion and Prosody in the Later Irish Poem:

- 28 In this section, we analyze the lettered line groups in the late M. Ir. poetry above in comparison with the corresponding numbered lines of the reconstructed Goidelic poem. Unlike other trees, six whole lines in Iubdán's Lay are devoted to the woodbine. Upon inspection, we readily see that these lines have a structure mimicking that of the Goidelic poem in many ways. Note that when a “fifth” or “sixth” foot in a 4-foot Goidelic verse line is mentioned, this denotes the first or second foot in the subsequent line:

Line a, 3 rd , 4 th and 5 th feet accent ²² e:	...teine ac Fergus na fled
Line 1, 3 rd , 4 th and 5 th feet accent a/â:	... <u>n</u> assa <u>b</u> wal <u>a</u> en / Trâg(e)i

Line a, 2 nd and 4 th feet lead to -s:	...fhadós ...Fergus
Line 1, 2 nd and 4 th feet lead to -la/æn:	...swel <u>a</u> <u>n</u> assa <u>b</u> wal <u>a</u> en

Line b, 2 nd and 4 th feet accent í:	...tír ...ríg
Line 2, 2 nd and 4 th feet accent a/æ:	... <u>æ</u> ssei ... <u>r</u> addei

Line b, 1 st and 4 th feet lead to -na/á:	Ar muir <u>n</u> á ...ríg <u>n</u> a
Line 2, 1 st and 4 th feet lead to -(e)i...n:	Trâg(e)i <u>i</u> n ... <u>r</u> addei / (Y) <u>a</u> n

Line d, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent ío:	...ríog sníom
Line 4, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent o:	...ko(m)wii ad kouli

Line e, 1 st and 6 th feet accent o:	Dá loisc ...nglonn
Line 5, 1 st and 6 th feet accent a:	(Y) <u>a</u> n <u>n</u> astri .../(y) <u>a</u> kkias

Line e, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent a:	...fann bud mana
Line 5, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent a:	... <u>a</u> dsfehtwiei <u>a</u> hsei

Line e, 3 rd and 6 th feet lead to -nn:	...fann ...nglonn
Line 5, 3 rd and 6 th feet lead to -i...a...s:	... <u>a</u> dsfehtwiei <u>a</u> hsei / ... <u>(y)</u> akkias

Line f, 2 nd and 4 th feet accent á:	...gábad ...bádad
Line 6, 2 nd and 4 th feet accent a:	... <u>(y)</u> akkias ... <u>a</u> hsei

Line f, 1 st four accented vowels i-á-e-a:	Ro sía gábad renn no bádad ...
Line 6, accented vowels i-a-ei-a:	Qritou (y) <u>a</u> kkias seiw* <u>a</u> hsei

- 29 At times, the “lead to” sequence in the M. Ir. and Goidelic poems includes elements of a subsequent accented syllable:

Line c, 1 st and 2 nd feet lead to -f:	Airdrí feda Fáil
Line 3, 1st and 2nd feet lead to -(o)us:	(Y)an naskûs læssowous

Line c, 4th and 5th feet lead to -ths:	...gnáth sreth sluaig
Line 3, 4th and 5th feet lead to -ui/we:	...monu / In torous wernæs

Line d, 1st and 5th feet lead to -nn:	...fann ...crann
Line 4, 1st and 5th feet lead to -r...ou...s:	In torous .../(Y)an nastri (y)ouhsmi

Line f, 2nd and 4th feet lead to	ad: ...gábad ...bádad
Line 6, 2nd and 4th feet lead to	sei: ... (y)akkias seiw* ahsei

- 30 All of the above evidence shows that the structure of some form of the original Goidelic poem was borne in mind when the M. Ir. poem or its forerunner was constructed. It also proves that pagan prosodic features from the continent survived in Ireland until that time.

Recapitulation:

- 31 The above Goidelic poem describes a ritual performed at the water's edge. Duality of sacrifice is maintained “at two (fire) lights”, “by the deed / Within two fire drills”. Repeated use of the verb “bind” (**nassa**, **naskûs**, **nastri**) portrays a hoped-for constraint on the future outcome which includes a successful kindling of the sacrificial pyre. Furthermore, the structure of the first six lines of the M. Ir. poem shows many features in common with the Goidelic verse.

Eulogy for the Natural Beauty of Glen Bolcáin

- 32 Suibhne praises the beauty of his surroundings at Glen Bolcáin in three stanzas. The Goidelic poem reconstructed therefrom deals with propitiatory rituals performed near a well.

Irish²³:

a) Uisge Ghlinne Bolcáin báin,	seisteacht re a énlaith iomláin,
b) A shrotha millsí nach mall,	sa innsi ocus ²⁴ a abhann .

c) A chuilenn cliuthar's a choill ,	sa duille , a dreasa , a dercoinn ,
d) A sméra áille uagha,	sa chna , a áirne ionnúara,

e) Iomad a chúan fo chrannuibh,	sbúiredhach a dham nallaidh,
f) A uisce iodhan gan gheis.	sNí liom-sa robá miosgais.

- 33 Close attention must be paid in this instance to the declension of each bolded item in the above three stanzas, as these are reproduced in list from which the Goidelic poem is reconstructed.

Table 2. Item List from Poem²⁵

From M. Ir. Poem	English	Actual O. Ir.	Goidelic
uisge	water	uisce ^{NS}	udeskia - ^{NS}
énlaith ^{OP}	birds	énaibh ^{OP}	etnisu ^{LP a}
shrotha ^{NP}	streams	srotha ^{NS}	srutowes ^{NP}
innsi ^{NP}	islands	insi ^{NP}	enis(t)ís ^{NP}
abhann ^{NP}	rivers	abann, aibinn ^{NP}	abones ^{NP}
chuilenn ^{NS}	holly	cuilenn ^{NS}	kolinas ^{NS}
choill ^{NP}	hazels	cuill ^{NP}	kosli ^{NP}
duille ^{NP}	leaves	duilne ^{NP}	dolinia ^{NP b}
dreasa ^{NP}	brambles	drissi ^{NP}	dre(h)s(t)ís ^{NP}
dercoinn ^{NP}	acorns	dercoinn ^{NP}	derwuggones ^{NP}
sméra ^{NP}	berries	sméra ^{NP}	sme(y)erâs ^{NP}
chna ^{NP}	nuts	cnoi ^{NP}	knowes ^{NP}
áirne ^{NP}	sloes	áirne ^{NP}	agrinia ^{NP}
chúan ^{GP}	packs of hounds	cuan ^{GP}	kounan ^{GP}
damh ^{GP}	stags	damh ^{GP}	daman ^{GP}
uisce ^{NS}	water	uisce ^{NS}	udeskia - ^{NS}

a. Indo-Eur. locative plural for **o**-decl. is usually reconstructed as ***-oisu** (cf. Skt. *vrkesu*, “among wolves”). The unaccented diphthong *oi* becomes **i** in Celtic, e.g., **i**-suffix of **o**-decl. Hence the reconstructed **-isu** suffix.

b. Indo-Eur. nouns denoting diminutives or smaller portions of larger entities usually take the neuter gender; e.g., Germ. neuter nouns in *-chen* (e.g., *das Mädchen*, “maiden”). So suffix **-inion** (plural **-inia**) creates neuter nouns. Neuter plurals of these evolved the ending *-ne* in post-apocope Irish and came to be transferred to the **ia**-decl. with feminine gender; e.g., *duil(n)e*, *áirne*, etc.

Goidelic Poem Concerning Well Ritual:

1. Oude squiæ(-n?/-s?) weiti	▲nihstra au towes(t)u eni
/ * / * /	/ * / * /
2. Ehs tisi abon(*) eiskan	▲lîni asquous wlidau.
* / / * / *	/ / * / *
3. Lînu ²⁶ adreihses ²⁷ derw*	▲kon-(y)a-esmo ei er(s)aus kon-(y)*-awîs;
/ * / * * / *	* / * / * * / *
4. (Y)an qrinu ei adga(y)ei won(d)*n	▲dâma in awēdd(*) iskia(-n?/-s?).
* / * * / * / *	/ * / * / **

i. Recall that final vowels of the first non-conjunction word in any declarative sentence do not elide. As a result of **-NK->-gg-**, we likely have a pronunciation **(Y)A'-ggWRINU...**, approximating the first two syllables of list item **AGRINIA**.

ii. Goidelic change of unaccented **-ES->-IS-** may not yet have taken place.

English Translation:

- He has offered thorn(s) from the withe that would be cleansed from the first of the waters
- From the path at/from the river of a complement of fish at the declarations of two feasts.
- To the net may you bind for sure that which we may partake by the two ends [of the sacred path] which you watch;
- Then I purchase, hard by the interval [between the two path “ends” of line 3.], a favour(?) from the folk in the bier of the waters.

Reconstruction and Background:

- 34 Ireland continues the ancient European custom of reverence for sacred wells, as described by Lady Wilde²⁶. Although these rites smack of bygone paganism, it is important to realize that their devotees perform them in Christ’s name in the most devout manner. In fact many of the Irish wells so used are consecrated to known saints:

In the parish of Killady, county Cork, is St. Ita’s Well, where “rounds” are still paid. An oblong hole in the ground not far distant is called “St. Ita’s Bed”, where, if child-bearing women roll themselves, they will not suffer the pains of childbirth²⁷.

- 35 Yet the rites performed have antecedents which definitely predate Christianity. In the quid-pro-quo world of the ancient supernatural, the ritual must include an offering to

placate the ambient deities. Pliny the Younger proves this notion's antiquity with the following passage from *Epistles*:

The spring emerges ... and ... opens out to the view with a broad expanse, clear and transparent, so that you are able to view and count the small coins thrown into it ²⁸

...

- 36 In place of coins, the Goidelic poem describes an offering of thorn(s) from an encompassing withe dressing a well likely alongside a stone monument perhaps referred to figuratively as “bier of the waters”. There are some additional clues as to the season of this ritual: “the first of the waters” (either the initial skimming of the well or of May dew at Beltane, both thought of as highly curative for a wide range of ailments). More insightful is the ending of line 2, *declarations of two feasts*. This is reminiscent of the Scots Highland Beltane ritual whereby the *bannoch* bread is offered in *two* stages: in the first stage, bannoch pieces are presented to beneficial spirits, imploring them to protect and bestow good fortune; the second offering is to the harmful forces such as predatory animals (“This to thee, O Fox. Spare thou my lambs...”)²⁹. In Irish myth (*Lebor Gabala Érenn*³⁰), when the Milesians reach Ireland, their archdruid Amairgin recites two declarations of the bounty of Ireland: one when first reaching the Irish shore (“*I am a wind on the sea, / I am a wave of the ocean...*”) and the second after banishment by the *Túatha Dé Danann* into a storm beyond the ninth wave (“*I seek the land of Ireland / Forceful the fruitful sea ...*”). As with the Highland bannoch offering, the appropriate occasion is Beltane³¹.
- 37 The poem above closes with a deliberate purchase of godly favour or unnamed wish at the extremities of the sacred path or interval (**tisi**, **adga(y)ei**). Such boons can only be granted at auspicious locales, in this case the two ends (**er(s)aus**) of this path trod by the participants. In the final line, the verb **kon-awi-** constitutes part of an exhortation for the deity to *observe* (cf. initial verb **Wete** in the previous section) the ritual and grant its desired outcome.

Scansion and Prosody:

- 38 As before, unaccented syllables at the start of any line are to be regarded as final syllables of the previous one. The metre after any *cæsura* either repeats what appears before it (line 1: /* /* /*, line 2: / /* /* /*, line 3: /* /* /* /*) or reverses it (line 4: /* /* /* followed by its inverse /* /* /* /*).
- 39 We can also see instances where rhyming feet in one line are matched elsewhere in the poem by another line whose feet culminate in or lead to identical or similar syllables:

Line 1, 2 nd & 4 th feet accent i:	... <u>squi</u> æ(n/s) ... <u>ni</u> hstra ...
Line 2, 2 nd & 4 th feet lead to -n*s:	... <u>abon</u> <u>eiskan</u> <u>lîni</u> <u>adsquous</u> ³² ...
Line 3, 3 rd & 4 th feet accent e:	... <u>derw</u> * ... <u>kon</u> -(y)a- <u>esmo</u> ...
Line 4, 3 rd & 4 th feet end in -*n:	... <u>won</u> (d)* <u>n</u> <u>dâma</u> <u>in</u> ...
Line 3, 3 rd & 5 th feet end in -kon:	... <u>derw</u> * <u>kon</u> -... <u>er</u> (s)aus <u>kon</u> -...
Line 4, 3 rd & 5 th feet accent o/aw:	... <u>won</u> (d)* <u>n</u> ... <u>aw</u> ġdd(*) ...

- 40 The latter provides important evidence for dating the poem. It shows that the altering of diphthong **au** to **ou** has already taken place. Since this feature has been dated in Britain to the late first century A.D., it would seem that this is the earliest possible era for the composition of the stanza³³.
- 41 If we choose **squiæ**, “thorns” (favouring **udeskias**) over singular **squiæn**, then some additional correspondences appear in lines 1 and 2:

Line 1, 2 nd & 5 th syllable end in -æs w/-esu:	... squiæ s weiti ... towes(t)u ...
Line 2, 2 nd & 5 th syllable accent a:	... abon (*) ... adsquous ...

- 42 As in the previous section and also at Chamalières, each line shows repeating vowel sequences:

Lines 1-2, e/ei-e/ie-i:	... weiti ni hstra ... eni / Ehs tisi
Line 2, i/i-ia-o/ou:	... tisi abon (*) lîni adsquous
Line 3, a-ei/e-e/ei-e:	... adreihses derw * kon -(y) a-esmo ei er (s) aus
Line 4, a-a-ei/i:	... adga (y) ei ... dâma in

- 43 A vowel sequence at the start of the first line replicates itself as a sequence of accented vowels further on:
- 44 Line 1, initial vowel sequence **ou-e-i-æ-ei-i**:

Oude squiæ (-n/-s) weiti ...

- 45 Lines 1-2, accented vowel sequence **ow-e-i-a-ei-î**:

... towes(t)u eni / Ehs tisi abon (*) eiskan lîni ...
--

- 46 Finally, end rhyme is apparent between line 1 and 4 and between lines 2 and 3. However, as in the later 17th century Irish poem, unaccented syllables rhyme with accented ones and vice versa. In the case of line 1, the rhyme continues into the following line.

Lines 1-2, e-i-i-a:	... eni / Ehs tisi abon (*) ...
Line 4, e-i-i-a:	... awēdd (*) iskia (-n/-s).

- 47 We also obtain the following end rhyme between lines two to four:

Lines 2-3, ou-i-au-î-u:	... adsquous wlīdau / Līnui
Lines 3-4, aw-î-a-i-ù:	... kon-(y)*-awīs / (Y)an qrinu ...

- 48 The above match is possible if (a) **au/aw** has developed to **ou** and (b) unaccented **a** of conjunction **(y)an** (older ***(y)on**) is equivalent to **o**.

Scansion and Prosody in the Later Irish Poem:

- 49 The later Irish excerpt above shows the matching of rhyming feet in a line with identical *consonants or syllables* after the accent in the same feet of the line before or after ³⁴. There are indeed correspondences between the M. Ir. and Goidelic poems. Some examples here illustrate the process:

Line a, 2 nd and 4 th feet lead to -n:	... <i>Ghlinne</i> ... <i>báin</i>
Line b, 2 nd and 4 th feet accent i:	... <i>millsi</i> ... <i>innsi</i>

Line a, 1 st and 5 th feet lead to -s:	<i>Uisge</i> ... <i>eisteacht</i>
Line 1, 1 st and 5 th feet lead to -es:	Oude squiæ(-s?/-n?) ... towes(t)u
Line b, 1 st and 5 th feet accent o:	... <i>shrotha</i> ... <i>ocus</i>
Line 2, 1 st and 5 th feet accent a:	abon(*) ... adsquous

Line c, 2 nd and 5 th feet lead to -sa:	... <i>cliuthar 'sa</i> ... <i>dreasa</i>
Line d, 2 nd and 5 th feet accent ái:	... <i>áille</i> ... <i>áirne</i>
Line 4, 2 nd and 5 th feet accent a:	... adga(y)ei ... awēdd(*)

Line c, 5 th and 6 th feet accent e:	... <i>dreasa, a dercoinn</i>
Line d, 5 th and 6 th feet lead to -r:	... <i>áirne ionnúara</i>

Line e, 4 th and 6 th feet lead to -dh:	... <i>búiredhach</i> ... <i>n-allaidh</i>
Line f, 4 th and 6 th feet accent io:	... <i>liom-sa</i> ... <i>miosgais</i>

Line e, 3 rd and 6 th feet accent a:	... <i>chrannuibh</i> ... <i>n-allaidh</i>
Line f, 3 rd and 6 th feet lead to -s:	... <i>gheis</i> ... <i>miosgais</i>

Recapitulation:

- 50 The setting appears to be a well-side ritual, matching the death setting of Suibhne himself. However, there is further allusion to the season and links to spring rites. Also in evidence is a request to the godhead expressly perpetrated at betwixt-and-between locales; i.e., the land-water and water-sky boundaries. Once again we perceive duality in the ceremony (“declarations at two feasts”, “at two ends (of the sacred path)”).

Amairgin’s Lay at the Shore of Ireland

- 51 Amairgin Glúngel (White Knee), archdruid of the sons and tribe of Míl Espáne, retires his people beyond the ninth wave from Ireland, abiding by the judgment of Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht and Mac Gréne, the three kings of the Túatha Dé Danann. Unbeknownst to Míl’s people, the wizards of the Túatha raise a mighty tempest. It is only becalmed when Amairgin places his right foot upon the Irish shore and recites this lay (from *Book of Leinster* with similar variants from *Lebor Gabala Éirenn*):

Irish³⁵:

a) Am gæth i mmuir (ar domni) ³⁶ .	sAm tond trethan (i tír) ³⁷ .	
b) Am fúaimm mara .	sAm dam secht nd[í]rend ³⁸ .	sAm séig i n-aill.
c) Am dér gréne .	sAm caín (lubæ) ³⁹ .	sAm torc ar gail.
d) Am hé i llind.	sAm loch i mmaig.	sAm brí a ndaí.
e) Am brí dánæ .	sAm gæ ⁴⁰ i fodb feras fe[o]chtu.	
f) Am dé delbas do chind codnu.		

52 ...

- 53 The above is an initial excerpt which proceeds in a more verbose manner through two more verses. However, by tabulating those nouns tagged in lines beginning *Am* (“I am”), we can derive the following Goidelic fragment.

Table 3. Item List from Poem ⁴¹

From Poem	English	Actual O. Ir.	Goidelic
gæth ^{NS}	wind	gæth ^{NS}	goita ^{NS}
tond ^{NS}	wave	tond ^{NS}	tunda ^{NS}
mara ^{GS}	sea	mara ^{GS}	maro(y)os ^{GS}
dam ^{NS}	stag, ox	dam ^{NS}	damas ^{NS}

séig ^{NS}	hawk	senén ^{NS a}	senetnas ^{NS}
gréne ^{GS}	sun	gréne ^{GS}	greisnisas ^{GS b}
lubæ ^{GP}	plant	lubæ ^{GP}	lobian ^{GP}
torc ^{NS}	boar	torc ^{NS}	t(w)orkas ^{NS}
hé ^{NS}	salmon	é ^{NS}	esahs ^{NS}
llind ^{OS}	pool	lind ^{OS}	lindei ^{LS}
loch ^{NS}	lake	loch ^{NS or OS}	loku ^{NS} , lokou ^{LS}
mmaig ^{OS}	plain	maig ^{OS}	magis ^{LS}
brí ^{NS}	height	brí ^{NS}	brîhs ^{NS}
dánæ ^{GP}	art	dán(æ) ^{GP}	dānan ^{GP c}
gæ ^{NS}	spear	gæ ^{NS}	gaisan ^{NS d}
dé ^{NS}	god	dé ^{NS}	deiwas ^{NS}

a. Noun *séig* (O. Ir. *sebacc*) is actually derived from Anglo-Saxon *heafoc* and cannot have a Goidelic antecedent. See Rudolf Thurneysen, “A Grammar of Old Irish” for an explanation of the replacement of the initial consonant of loanwords by *s*. The native Ir. word is *senén*, lit. “old bird”.

b. We find in this poem that unaccented *-es-* has already become *-is-*; e.g., ogam **TOWISAKI** (< ***towestaki**).

c. Originally neut. *o*-stem. See Glossary.

d. Originally neut. *o*-stem, cf., Lat *gaesum*. See Glossary.

Goidelic Poem Concerning Waterside and Beltane Ritual:

1. Ko(m)-wita tunda maro(y)os

* / * / * / *

2. Greisnisas lobiau e(n)towou;

/ ** / * / *

3. Al(n)a koimou agis bristæn

* * / / * / *

▲dâmæn sînan tenowous :

/ * / * / * *

▲orkou in sisâhs sflind(e)i

/ * / * /

▲ængwa îhsæn deiwas.

/ / * / *

English Translation:

- A sea wave was surrounding the folk of storms on two sides:
- [The side] of the gathering of two herbs of the sun; [and the side of] two piglets where [the god] shall seek upon the flagstone
- Beyond two comely kine, the battle din from the track that the god shall find.

Reconstruction and Background:

- 54 Once again, duality of sacrifice is readily apparent at the description of two distinct rites: the gathering of two sacred plants at the waterside likely for Beltane, and the animal offerings on land. In more recent Irish folk custom, the former usually took the form of rowan and marsh marigold. The latter rite again splits into two, or quadruple sacrifice: two piglets on one side and two cows (calves?) on the other. Note the use of the flagstone to denote the advent of a king or conquering deity ⁴² (in this case “King Summer” or his human representative).

Scansion and Prosody:

- 55 We continue the habit of counting unaccented syllables at the end of the line as part of the previous one. The cæsura either divides the line symmetrically (line 1: (1)* (2)/* (3)/* (4)/*, followed by (4)/* (3)/* (2)/* (1)*; line 2: (1)/** (2)/* (3)/*, followed by (3)/* (2)/* (1)/**) or into repeating metres (line 3: / /* /* twice). Taken as a whole, line 2 is seen to reverse the scansion of line 1:

Line 1:	(1)* (2)/* (3)/* (4)/*	(5)/* (6)/* (7)/**
Line 2:	(7)/** (6)/* (5)/*	(4)/* (3)/* (2)/* (1)*

- 56 We can also see instances where feet which rhyme accented vowels in one line are matched in the next by the same feet containing similar syllables after the accent:

Line 1, 1 st and 5 th feet accent <u>i</u> / <u>î</u> :	Ko(m)-wīta ...sīnan
Line 2, 1 st and 5 th feet lead to -sas/sâhs:	Greisnīsas ...sisâhs

Line 2, 5 th and 6 th feet accent <u>i</u> :	...sisâhs sflīnd(e)i
Line 1, 5 th and 6 th feet lead to -na/-no:	...sīnan tenowous ⁴³

- 57 It is also evident that vowel sequences (including elided ones) in the cadence of the first two lines repeat themselves in the subsequent line:

Lines 1-2, <u>i</u> / <u>î</u> - <u>a</u> - <u>e</u> - <u>o</u> - <u>ou</u> :

... <u>sînan</u> <u>tenowous</u> / ...lobiau <u>e(n)towou</u>

Lines 2-3, â/a-i-ei/i-a/æ-a/æ -oi/ai:	
---------------------------------------	--

...sisâhs sflind(e)i / Al(n)a koimou agis bristæn ængwa îhsæn ...

- 58 Finally, ABBA vowel sequences appear in all lines. One should note that equivalences are allowed here; i.e., unaccented **a** and **o**, **a** and **æ**, etc.

Lines 1-2, last and 1 st feet ABBA vowel sequences e-o-o-e , i-a⁴⁴-o-i :
--

...tenowous / Greisnisas lobiau ...

- 59 The last line also shows an ABBA vowel sequence at the second and third feet:

Line 3, a-i-i-æ:	...agis bristæn...
------------------	--------------------

Scansion and Prosody in the Later Irish Poem:

- 60 In this section, we analyze the lettered line groups in the late poetry shown above. When we do this, we see that patterns of construction and rhyme seen in the later Irish verse match similar constructs in the Goidelic poem *at the same lines and feet*. We include here the phrases *ar domni* (*domun?*), *i tír* present only in the Book of Leinster, and the word *lubæ* without which line c makes little sense. Here are some examples, with lettered lines from the later Irish excerpt, and numbered ones from Goidelic:

Line a, 1 st and 5 th feet accent (a)eth:	...gæth ...trethain
Line 1, 1 st and 5 th feet accent i/î:	Ko(m)-wîta ...sînan

Line a, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent o:	...domni ...tond
Line 1, 3 rd and 4 th feet accent a/â:	...maro(y)os ...dâmæn

Line b, 1 st and 5 th feet lead to -m(m):	...fúaimm ...nd[i]rend. Am
Line 2, 1 st and 5 th feet lead to -sa(h)s:	Greisnisas ...sisâhs

Line b, 5 th and 6 th feet accent e/é:	...ndrenn ...séig
Line 2, 5 th and 6 th feet accent i:	...sisâhs sflind(e)i

- 61 Certain additional rhyme patterns suggest that the original stanza after which the later Irish poem was fashioned was not the early form given above, but instead a later version datable to the end of the period of ogam inscriptions (5th century). For example, if we allow **tunda**, **Greisnisas**, **lobiau**, **sflind(e)i** to evolve into **tunna**, **Grênnia**, **lobio**, **slinni** respectively, the following additional matches are achieved:

Line a, 2 nd and 6 th feet lead to -r:	...muir ...tír
Line 1, 2 nd and 6 th feet lead to -na/-no:	...tunna ...tenowo(u)s

Line b, 1 st , 2 nd , 6 th feet lead to -m:	...fúaimm mara. Am ..n-aill / Am
Line 2, 1 st , 2 nd , 6 th feet lead to -io/-ia:	Grênnia lobio ...slinni / Al(n)a

- 62 Rendering line c's *caín* in its more archaic form *cáin*, we achieve a near rhyme with final word *gail*. A similar near rhyme between **bristæn** and **deiwas** (or their later equivalents) is found in Goidelic line 3:

Line c, 3 rd , 6 th feet accent -ái/aí:	...cáin ...gail
Line 3, 3 rd , 6 th feet accent (e)i:	...bristæn ...deiwas

- 63 All of the above analysis proves a persistence of ancient prosody into medieval times. In this case, however, it seems that a version of the above Goidelic poem lasted till the end of the pagan period, with all its subsequent vowel and consonant alterations. This later form served as a basis for the construction of Amairgin's lay.

Recapitulation:

- 64 Once again, the Goidelic poem describes dual rites, including the gathering of two sacred herbs by the waterside, matched by two double animal offerings on land. As before, the deity is exhorted to observe (literally "seek" and "find") the flagstone where ritual combat takes place, likely between "King Summer" and a winter scapegoat. Because unaccented -es- and -is- have become equivalent, the above poem likely postdates prior examples; e.g., late 2nd or 3rd century, with at least one version surviving later.

Summary

- 65 We have seen how poetry preserved in medieval Irish manuscripts contains lists which, when rendered in a Goidelic dialect and recited in order, describe pagan rituals known or inferred from folklore or ancient sources. These rites are led by a master of ceremonies

who intercedes on behalf of the celebrants, and it is he who recites the poetry reconstructed above.

66 This Goidelic dialect seems more archaic than any evidence from ogam inscriptions ⁴⁵:

- Sibilant clusters **-sl-**, **-sm-**, **-sn-** and perhaps **-st-**⁴⁶ are preserved.
- Consonant **s** never drops at the end of a word or between vowels.
- Syllable ***an** before **t** or **k** has not yet developed into long **ê**. The evidence instead shows a vowel here reconstructed as **æ** which rhymes most often with other **a**-syllables. Likewise, older ***-ans**, ***-âns** becomes **-æs**.
- Final syllable **-an** has not yet become **-en**. Instead, we reconstruct **-æn**, which tends, as above, to rhyme usually with other **a**-syllables.
- Noun cases other than genitive are preserved. This includes distinct locative ⁴⁷ (sing. **-(e)i** or **-ou** for **u**-decl., du. **-aus**, **-ous**, pl. **-su**), dative, ablative and possibly instrumental. By O. Ir., these are merged into a single oblique case.

67 On the other hand, there are these similarities with the ogam inscriptions:

- Clusters **-nk-**, **-nt-** are already pronounced **-gg-**, **-dd-** respectively.
- Unaccented short **o** and **a** are equivalent.
- Diphthongs **-au-**, **-ou-** and vowel **-o-** rhyme with one another. This seems a step towards the levelling of all diphthongs, as found in ogam inscriptions.
- On occasion, **-ou-** is found where more archaic **-au-** is expected. This feature is datable in Britain to the late 1st century A.D.⁴⁸

68 The balance of the evidence suggests a date of second century A. D. for the reconstructed Goidelic poetry in this article. There would then be a close match in age with the famous map of Ireland given in Ptolemy's *Geographia* ⁴⁹. At least one tribe shows the typical ogam-style alteration **o>a** in unaccented syllables: **USDIAE** (Gk.). Similar final syllables also occur in the more northern tribe **ROBOGDII**, matching O. Ir. adjectival ending **-aidhe**, **-dhae** <Goidelic **-dias** <**-dios** ⁵⁰. **USDIAE** preserves the final vowel **a** of **-dias** and adds a Greek or Latin plural ending.

69 We would be naïve to suppose that the sound laws and dialectal peculiarities described above apply universally over all Ireland in the second century. But we can be more specific concerning the locale. Aside from unaccented **o>a** noted in the tribe name **USDIAE**, we also note **EDROS** (Ir. *Beann Éadair*) showing **-nt->-dd-**. This would suggest a location of East Central Ireland for the focus of the ritual settings shown in this article. Recall that this is where Roman material has been unearthed dating to the first and second centuries A. D. Lambay Island is typical in this respect, showing a grave in British style with Roman artifacts. Perhaps we should regard the Roman goods as being borne to Ireland by British and continental Celts promulgating European ideas and bringing Irish ritual more in line with them.

NOTES

1. Standish H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, T. P. Cross, C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, Caitlín & John Matthews, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom*, p. 359-376.
2. Thomas P. Cross, Clark H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, J. G. O'Keefe, D. Nutt, *Adventures of Suibhne Geilt*, web site [<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G302018/>].
3. Three 17th to 18th century manuscripts: p. 82a-95b, paper manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy: written between 1671 and 1674 by Daniel O'Duigenan; p. 131-180, paper manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy: written in 1721-1722 by Tomaltach Mac Muirghiosa; Brussels 3410, folia 59a-61b, paper manuscripts is in the Royal Library, Brussels, written by Michael O'Clery, 1629.
4. Sources: Dublin, Trinity College Library, Manuscript 1339 (H 2.18, Book of Leinster) T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn (eds.) *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin 1921) 158-161; R. I. Best, Osborn Bergin, M. A. O'Brien and Anne O'Sullivan (eds.) *The Book of Leinster, formerly Leabar na Núachongbála* (6 volumes) (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1954-1983). Digitized at [<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G800011A/index.html>].
5. For reconstruction of Goidelic, consider the following articles and texts: Anders Ahlquist, "Relative Endings of the Old Irish Simple Verb", *Ériu*, Vol. 36, p. 137-142, 1985; Warren Cowgill, "Origin of the Insular Celtic Conjunct and Absolute Vernal Inflexions", *Flexion und Wortbildung* (ed. H. Rix), p. 40-70, Wiesbaden, 1975a; Warren Cowgill, "Two Further Notes on the Origin of the Insular Celtic Absolute and Conjunct Verb Endings", *Ériu*, Vol. 26, p. 27-52, 1975b; Warren Cowgill, "On the Prehistory of the Celtic Passive and Deponent Inflexion", *Ériu*, Vol. 34, p. 73-111, 1983; Warren Cowgill, "On the Origin of the Absolute and Conjunct Verbal Inflexions of Old Irish", *Grammatische Kategorien: Funktion und Geschichte* (ed. N. Schlerath), Wiesbaden, 1985; Kenneth H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1953; Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bern, 1949-59; Peter Schrijver, "The Development of Primitive Irish *aN before Voiced Stop", *Ériu*, Vol. 42, p. 13-25, 1991; Rudolf Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, Dublin Institute for Advanced studies, Dublin, 1946; Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique Étymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien*, Dublin, 1959; Calvert Watkins, "On the Pre-History of the Celtic Verb Inflection", *Ériu*, Vol. 26, p. 1-22, 1969.
6. Alwyn & Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, p. 162-163 for Roman and Indian Brahmin rites. Also cf., Amairgin's two incantations to call forth the fertility of Ireland for the Milesians.
7. Patrick L. Henry, "The Gaulish Inscription of Chamalières", *Études Celtiques*, Vol. 21, p. 141-150, 1984.
8. Literally, "Beyond sight" or "Beyond the eye". Lat. *ab oculo*, a direct translation, becomes Fr. *aveugle*, "blind".
9. In the Auvergne (<tribe name *Ar(e)vérni*) the preference is for penultimate, as in the Chamalières poem. However, the fore-runner of Fr. *change*, Sp. *cambio*, is seen in **cambion**, which likely accents its first (possibly antepenultimate) syllable, given this evidence.
10. See John T. Koch, "Prosody and the Old Celtic Verbal Complex".

11. Sound change **nt>dd** likely caused pronunciations **bwalæ'-ddrâg(e)i**, **i'-ddorous**, matching initial **d** of list elements **dragenas** and **darus**. Note that n. pl. nouns (**swela**) govern *singular* verb forms (**nassa**) as in Gk., Skt. and other more archaic Indo-Eur. languages.
12. i.e., two sacrificial fires.
13. i.e., healing flame.
14. Compare Ir. *aisling*, “vision” <Goidelic ***ahsilinga**, literally “axis leap”.
15. For these two reasons, the final vowel of “initial” subjunctive verb **nastri** fails to elide.
16. Myles Dillon, Norah Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms*, p. 1, 33, 137, 287, 290.
17. Barry Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland*, p. 178-199.
18. Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 618.
19. The final syllable of the last foot of lines 2 and 4 is actually the conjunction **(y)an**, “then” at the start of lines 3 and 5 respectively. Likewise the final syllable of line 3 is really the initial preposition **in** of line 4.
20. Elided vowels do not vanish. But they meld into any succeeding one, and therefore can take part in rhymes.
21. As at Chamalières, elided vowels may be included in the sequence.
22. Umlauting and consonant classes are ignored, so that; e.g., *loisc* shares an accented vowel with *glonn*.
23. Lines here given after each *cæsura* appear as separate lines in the manuscript. Line pairs are thus grouped together and lettered for the sake of subsequent analysis.
24. Appears as *agus* in the manuscript. *Ocus* is the older version, and provides the rhyme.
25. List members are superscripted to indicate case and number; e.g., NS = nominative singular, NP = nominative plural, OS = oblique singular, GP = genitive plural, LP = locative plural, etc.
26. Lady Wilde, *Irish Mystic Charms and Superstitions*, p. 69-71.
27. W. G. Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faith in Ireland*, p. 89.
28. Iona Opie, Moira Tatem, *A Disctionary of Superstitions*, p. 439.
29. Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 619.
30. The modern spelling, *Leabhar Gabhála Eireann*, as opposed to *Lebar* or *Lebor*, etc., usually refers to more recent rescensions of the widely used manuscript.
31. Caitlín & John Matthews, *Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom*, p. 11-15.
32. It is permissible to extend as far as the accented syllable in the following foot, as in these two examples.
33. Cf. previous instances of **kouli**, supported by rhyme, in place of more archaic ***kauli**.
34. In O. Ir. poetry, final words in a line may avoid rhyme, but instead share an identical consonant after the accent; e.g., *tír/ ...lár*. German analysts; e.g., Bergin, Thurneysen, etc. referred to this as *Assonanz*, or in English, *assonant rhyme*.
35. Lines here given after each *cæsura* appear as separate lines in the manuscript. Lines are thus grouped together into sections of at least six accented words or feet and lettered for the sake of subsequent analysis.

36. This phrase only in *Book of Leinster*. Perhaps should be read *doman* or *domun*?
37. *Ibid.*
38. The more common version of this word is either *drenn* or *dreng*.
39. In *Lebor Gabala Érenn* and most other versions, but not *Book of Leinster*.
40. In *Book of Leinster* as **gai**, but **gæ** elsewhere.
41. As above, case and number are indicated in superscripts; e.g., NS for nominative singular.
42. See *Togbail Bruidne Dá Derga* (*Taking of Dá Derga's Hostel*), where two stones, *Blocc* and *Bluicne* come apart to allow the chariot of the true king to pass. In like manner, the *Symplegades* or *Cynæan Rocks* permit Jason and the Argonauts to pass through the Bosphorus. The renowned *Lia Fáil* at Tara provides an Irish exemplar, while the royal stone at Scone and the *Dál Riata* coronation stone at Dunadd are two Scottish examples.
43. As seen previously, unaccented **a** and **o** are equivalent.
44. We have already seen how unaccented **a** and **o** are equivalent.
45. R. R. Brash, *The Ogam-Inscribed Monuments of the Gaedhil in the British Isles*. **Note:** Most ogam inscriptions occur in southwest Ireland and are datable from 300–600 A.D.
46. Consider the town of Cashel (Ir. *Caiseal*) derived from Lat. *castellum*, “small fort”. This toponym shows that the first two syllables of the Latin word were borrowed as is and *later* subjected to the well-known Ir. sound law *-st->-ss-, -s-*. The earliest Roman objects discovered in or near Ireland, at Drumanagh, Lambay Island and Tipperary date to the first and second centuries A. D. For Roman material in Ireland, please consult the following texts: Nick Constable, Karen Farrington, *Ireland*, p. 54; Peter Harbison, *Pre-Christian Ireland*, p. 180–182.
47. Compare Gaul. *in Alixie*, “in Alesia”, Celtiberian loc. sing. article *somei* distinct from dat. sing. *somui*. Possible *i*-decl. loc. sing. *-i* seen in Gaul. phrase *Pape boudi*, “in each victory”. For du. cf., Skt. *-yôh* <Indo-Eur. **(y)*us*. For pl. cf., Skt. *vr̥ kēsu*, “among wolves”, *senâsu*, “in armies”.
48. Kenneth H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, p. 305–307, 1953. This change is not universal in the Celtic world all at once, cf., Gaulish (Menapian) usurper *Mausaeus Carausius*, late 3rd century A.D.
49. Claudius Ptolemæus flourished in the 2nd century. His map of Ireland, originally Greek, based upon late 1st-century material from Marinus of Tyre, survives as various mediaeval manuscripts in Greek and Latin, the earliest of which (in Latin) records Howth (Ir. *Beann Éadair*) as **EDROS**. Other Greek copies give this name instead as **ΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙ**, **ΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙ** (<earlier **ANTRO-*). In just this example, we see the Goidelic sound change *-nt->-dd-*. Navan Fort (Ir. *Eamhain*) shows up as **ISAMNIUM** (or Gk. *Ισαμνιον* **ΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙ** c. **ΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙΕΙ** O. Ir. mythical isle of *Emne*), clearly preserving intervocalic *-s-*. Underscoring the piecemeal nature of early dialect evolution, we also have a tribe name to the north of **EDROS** called **VOLUNTII** where *-nt->-dd-* has not occurred. Likewise, tribes **AUTINI** and **CAUCI** preserve **au**. See Peter Harbison, *Pre-Christian Ireland*, p. 173.
50. Cf. Gk. adjectival suffix **ΕΙ**-οιδῆς, -οιδῆ]

ABSTRACTS

This article uncovers links to pagan Irish rites which can be deduced from excerpts in the form of lists from medieval literature. There are three presented here: from *Aidedh Ferghusa Maic Léti* (Death of Fergus Mac Leide, c. 1100 A.D.), from *Buile Shuibhne* (Frenzy of Suibhne, 17th century manuscripts), and from the *Book of Leinster* (*Lebar na Núachongbála*, 11th century). It is seen in all cases that, when list items are rendered in a language ancestral to Irish (henceforth termed Goidelic) and recited in order, poems result which describe pagan rituals. This Goidelic is reconstructed on the basis of Indo-European linguistics and well-known sound laws governing the evolution of the Irish tongue. It will be seen that the Goidelic language used herein has much the same grammatical structure demonstrated by early ogam inscriptions in Ireland and even by Gaulish itself. Furthermore, the prosody and scansion of these Goidelic poems match features seen in a Gaulish inscription datable to c. 0-300 A.D. discovered at Chamalières, France in 1971. We will also notice some recurring features in these poems: (a) The desired outcome is stated only in the vaguest terms, if at all. (b) Each poem constitutes a recitation addressed to the god or goddess by a “witness” or “master of ceremonies” acting on behalf of other participants. (c) Duality in the ritual is readily apparent; e.g., a sacred double fire, or rites and recitations at two sites, etc. (d) A sacred locale is emphasized before the deity where the wishes of the performers ought not to be refused.

Cet article révèle des liens avec des rites païens irlandais qui peuvent être déduits de la lecture de fragments de littérature médiévale présentés sous forme de listes. Trois sont présentés ici : *Aidedh Ferghusa Maic Léti* (La mort de Fergus Mac Leide, vers 1100 après J.-C.), *Buile Shuibhne* (La Folie de Suibhne, manuscrits du xvii^e siècle), et du *Livre de Leinster* (*Lebar na Núachongbála*, xie siècle). Dans chaque cas, on s'aperçoit que lorsque les éléments de la liste sont traduits dans une langue plus ancienne que l'Irlandais (que l'on nommera le Goidelic) et récités dans l'ordre, on découvre des poèmes décrivant des rites païens. Le Goidelic est reconstitué sur la base de la linguistique de l'Indo-européen et de lois phonétiques bien connues sous-tendant l'évolution de la langue irlandaise. On verra que la langue Goidelic utilisée ici a une structure très comparable à celle dévoilée par les premières inscriptions ogam et même par le Gaulois. De plus, la prosodie et la scansion de ces poèmes goidelic ont des traits communs avec ceux repérés dans une inscription gauloise datée de 0-300 après J.-C. et découverte à Chamalières en 1971. Nous remarquerons aussi quelques traits récurrents dans ces poèmes : (a) Le but désiré n'est révélé qu'en termes très vagues, ou pas du tout. (b) chaque poème constitue une récitation adressée à un dieu ou une déesse par un “témoin” agissant au nom d'autres participants. (c) Une dualité du rituel est très apparente : c'est-à-dire, un double feu sacré, ou une recitation dans deux sites, etc. (d) Un lieu sacré est mis en évidence devant la divinité, où les vœux des pratiquants ne devraient pas être refusés.

INDEX

Keywords: tales and legends, linguistics, Middle-Ages, poetry, poetry - prosody, languages in Ireland - Goidelic, paganism

Mots-clés: contes et légendes, poésie - prosodie, Moyen-Age, paganisme, langues en Irlande - Goidelic, poésie