

# *Stair Mlaise ar Dhartraighibh déin* by Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín: A Poem on the Rights and Obligations of the Coarb of Saint Molaise

## *Abstract*

*Stair Mlaise ar Dhartraighibh*, a poem of 14 verses, by a fourteenth-century author called Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín, gives an account of the rents to be paid by the Uí Mhithighéin to the Uí Thaithligh in their capacity as *comharba* [coarbs] to Saint Molaise (d. 562) on Daimhinis [Devenish Island, county Fermanagh].

## *Key-Words*

Saint Molaise- Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín – Ó Mithighéin – Bealach Uí Mhithighéin / Ballymeehan –  
Dartraighe – Ó Taithligh – Daimhinis / Devenish – *Comarba* – Coarb — Tribute

## Introduction

*Stair Mlaise ar Dhartraighibh déin*, a poem of fourteen quatrains, is ascribed to Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín. The text recounts the nature and extent of the tribute to be paid by the Uí Mhithighéin (*or* Uí Mhithidhéin) of Bealach Uí Mhithighéin in the territory of Dartraighe to Ó Taithligh (*or* Ó Taichligh) of Daimhinis,<sup>1</sup> coarb of Saint Molaise.<sup>2</sup> It also states the time-scale for its delivery. Recent research by Ó Scea has demonstrated that the *airchinnecht* of Daimhinis at 3,182 acres was the largest in Fermanagh.<sup>3</sup>

## Context

*Stair Mlaise ar Dhartraighibh déin* is one of a series of seven poems that deals with the *comarbacht* of Saint Molaise:<sup>4</sup> (i) *Sloinnfead do chách ceart Mlaisi*, a poem of 30 quatrains by Somhairle Ó Cannann;<sup>5</sup> (ii) *Cia is fearr cairt ar dháil Mlaisi*, a poem of 22 quatrains attributed to Gilla Mo-Dutu Úa

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Lowry-Corry, 'St. Molaise's House at Devenish, Lough Erne and its Sculptured Stones' *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 66 (1936) 270-84.

<sup>2</sup> Ciarán Ó Scea has suggested that the 'title *comarba* has come to denote a series of ecclesiastical positions from overlordship of an ecclesiastical jurisdiction to abbot of a monastic establishment or to the rectoryship of a comorbanship'; see Ó Scea, 'Erenachs, erenachtships and Church Holdings in Gaelic Fermanagh, 1270-1609' in *Proc. Royal Irish Academy*. Section C, 112 C (2012) 271-300: 273.

<sup>3</sup> Ó Scea, 'Erenachs, erenachtships and Church Holdings in Gaelic Fermanagh, 1270-1609', 294.

<sup>4</sup> See Charles Plummer (ed.), 'Vita Sancti Lasriani seu Molaissi Abbatis de Dam Inis', *Vitae Sanctorum Hibernia*, 2 vols (Oxford 1910) ii, 131-40. Charles Doherty, 'The Earliest Cult of Molaise' in Henry A. Jeffries (ed.), *History of the Diocese of Clogher* (Dublin 2005) 13-24.

<sup>5</sup> London, British Library Additional (Henceforth: 'BL Add. ') 18205, vellum; saec. XVI; scribe unknown; fols 18<sup>r</sup>-19<sup>v</sup>10. For a description of the manuscript, see Robin Flower (comp), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library [formerly British Museum]*, 3 vols (London 1926; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Dublin 1992) ii, 462-65: 463-64. For an edition and translation of the poem, see Tomás G. Ó Canann, 'A Poem on the Rights of the Coarb of Saint Molaise', *Clogher Record* 15, No. 1 (1994) 7-24.

Casaide (fl. 1147),<sup>6</sup> (iii) *Cia thairngir Mlaisse ria theacht*, 12 quatrains ascribed to Gilla Mo-Dutu;<sup>7</sup> (iv) *Cindus fuair Mlaise in bealach?* 17 quatrains attributed to Gilla Caomhain Ó Cuirnín;<sup>8</sup> (vi) *Stair Mlaisi ar Dhartraighibh déin*, the present poem by Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín; and (vii) *Molaisi eolach na hecna*, another 20 quatrains, also attributed to Gilla Mo-Dutu Úa Casaide;<sup>9</sup> all are appended to *Betha Mholaise Dhaimhinse*, ‘The Life of Molaise’.<sup>10</sup>

#### Manuscripts

*Stair Mlaisi ar Dhartraighibh déin* survives in three manuscripts:

**B:** London, British Library, Additional 18205, fols 20<sup>v</sup>-21<sup>r</sup> [pp. 21-22];<sup>11</sup> saec. XVI; scribe unknown.<sup>12</sup> Robin Flower believed that the manuscript was ‘probably written in co. Fermanagh in the sixteenth century, though no evidence of provenance appears.’<sup>13</sup>

**R:** Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 23 A 43 (No. 368) pp. 102-105; saec. XIX; scribe Edward O’Reilly.<sup>14</sup>

**C:** Belfast, Central Library (formerly, Belfast Public Library), Bryson-McAdam Collection, Manuscript XXV, pp. 100-103;<sup>15</sup> undated, saec. XIX [?]; unsigned, scribe Edward O’Reilly [?].

#### Relationship of the Manuscripts

The only substantive difference between the three copies of the poem is the fact that B is laid out in the traditional manner whereby every piece of space on each line is used, while R and C adhere to the modern convention of stanzaic lay-out. A detailed comparison of the three manuscripts demonstrates that the scribal slip of *gumlaid* for *gu m[b]laid* (14c) has been repeated in all three manuscripts. Almost every abbreviation that is found in B has been replicated in R and C. One of the few scribal slips that distinguishes RC from B is that the reading *fē* for (*déin* : *fēin*, 1a-b)<sup>16</sup> is mistakenly expanded by RC as *fēn*. A mechanical error whereby R has *odhartraighibh* at the end of line 7b in anticipation of the beginning of line 7c where it should stand is recognised as an error in R and has been deleted. This error has not been repeated in C.

It has been here concluded that there is only one line of transmission. B contains the earliest extant copy of *Stair Mlaise ar Dhartraighibh déin*. R is a transcript of B. The latter manuscript has a table of contents and the following introductory note: ‘This faithful transcript of a very curious document was thus copied by the late Edward O’Reilly (author of the English-Irish Dictionary) from an ancient vellum MS, the property of Robt. Lemon, Esqr., of H.M. State Paper Office.’<sup>17</sup> Comparison of the contents of R with those of B support this assertion. Finally, Richard Sharpe has suggested that C is probably a copy of R; no extant evidence refutes this suggestion.

#### Editorial Policy

This edition is based on B, which is the earliest extant witness to Sighraidh Ó Cuirnín’s original, and adheres as closely as possible to its readings. Deviations are rare and where they occur they have been recorded in the manuscript readings. The manuscript readings have been reproduced to the right of the edition. Readings from R and C differ so little from those of B as not to merit reproduction among the manuscript readings.

In B, the first couplet is generally laid out across a single line, while lines *c* and *d* of the second couplet typically occupy a half-line above and a half-line below respectively. Here, as in O’Reilly’s R and C, the quatrains are laid out according to the modern convention of a four-line verse. The name *Molaise*,

<sup>6</sup> BL Add. 18205, fols 19<sup>r</sup>11-20<sup>v</sup>5. For a discussion of this poem and its author, see Kevin Murray, ‘Gilla Mo Dutu Úa Caiside’, in John Carey, Máire Herbert & Kevin Murray (eds), *Cin Chille Cúile: Texts, Saints and Places. Essays in Honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth 2004) 150-63: 156-59.

<sup>7</sup> BL Add. 18205, fol. 20<sup>v</sup>6-20<sup>v</sup>6. See also Murray, ‘Gilla Mo Dutu Ua Caiside’, *Cin Chille Cúile*, 156-59.

<sup>8</sup> BL Add. 18205, fols 20<sup>v</sup>7-21<sup>r</sup>18. See Peter J. Smith, ‘Contending coarbs: *Cindus fuair Mlaise in Bealach?*’ in *Peritia* 24-25 (2013-2014) 230-240.

<sup>9</sup> BL Add. 18205, fol. 22<sup>r</sup>1-22<sup>v</sup>14.

<sup>10</sup> Standish H. O’Grady (ed. & trans.), ‘Betha Mholaise Dhaiminse’, *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols (London 1892), i, 17-37; ii, 18-34.

<sup>11</sup> The manuscript originally bore no page or folio numbers. Pencil has been used to insert a folio number in the upper right corner of each folio on the recto. In his catalogue, Flower indicates verso with the letter ‘b’.

<sup>12</sup> Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, ii, 462-65: 463-64.

<sup>13</sup> Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, ii, 462.

<sup>14</sup> Lilian Duncan, *Catalogue of Irish MSS in the RIA*, Fasciculus 8 (19??) 996-997.

<sup>15</sup> Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Clár na Lámhscribhinní Gaeilge i Leabharlann Phoiblí Bhéal Feirste, Leabhair Thaighde, 7ú Imleabhar* (BÁC 1962) 20.

<sup>16</sup> In these illustrations, the normal practice has been to cite the reading as it occurs in the manuscript; thereafter the text of the edition and its corresponding line reference are given within parentheses.

<sup>17</sup> Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, ii, 462.

regularly abbreviated in R as either *ml-*. (e.g. 1a, 2a, 3a) or *.m*. (e.g. 4a, 5b), has been expanded as *Mlaise*. Square brackets have been used to indicate that a letter or letters have been editorially supplied as in, for example, *gumlaíd* (*gu m[b]laídh*, 14c). Italics denote that lenition or nasalization has been editorially supplied as in: *do Mlais*; (*do Mhlais*, 14c).

Since the spelling used in the manuscript is indicative of the Early Modern Irish period, the temptation to standardize the orthography has been resisted as much as possible. Thus, for example, the variation *-ea-* versus *-e-* in words like *ceall* (*ceall*, 4c) and *bealach* (*mBealach*, 11a) remains unchanged. Similarly, the variation between palatal *-gh* and *-ch* as in *Thaithlaich* (5c) and *Ó Taithligh* (8c) has been allowed to stand. One notable exception to the policy of preserving the orthography of the base manuscript in the edition is the treatment of the confusion of *-gh* and *-dh*. It has been deemed necessary to restore historical *dh* for scribal *-gh* in final position in the word *fhlegh* (*fhledh*).

Editors of Middle Irish texts generally write final *-e* for *-i* where that *-i* is in final position in an unstressed symbol and represents *schwa*. That policy has not been adopted here. Thus, scribal *Misi*, for example, has been retained in the edition as *Misi* (14a). Similarly, scribal *treisi* (9c), which rhymes with *Daimh-innsi* (9d) has been retained as *treisi* (9c). The preposition *i n-* ‘in’; ‘into’ is written in this manuscript as *a n-*; the older form has not been restored. Thus, scribal *a nDaiminis* is printed as *a nDaimhinis* ‘in Devenish’ rather than as *i nDaimhinis* (4b).

Abbreviations for *-u(i)s* / *-a(i)s*, *con*, *acht*, *m*, *n* and the compendium, *-a(i)r* are common in the manuscript and have been silently expanded throughout. The symbol  $\gamma$  has been expanded as *is*. Instances where some doubt is attached to the expansion of an abbreviation are recorded in the manuscript readings.

Lenition of *g*, *b* and *d*, in addition to lenition of *c*, *p*, *t*, *s* and *f* has been indicated regularly in the manuscript by the insertion of the punctum or a similar mark over the relevant consonant in the manuscript; such scribal lenition has been indicated silently in the edition. In a few instances, the scribe omits to mark lenition; lenition has been supplied editorially in such cases in the form of an italicised *h*, as for example in scribal *fa cis cruaidh* (*fa chis cruaidh*, 6a) and *oircis-* (*oirchiseacht*, 10b). Nasalization is occasionally omitted, and italics have also been used to indicate instances in which it has been editorially supplied.

It is frequently difficult to distinguish whether the *síneadh fada* is a ‘hair-mark’ whose function is to distinguish the *i*-minim or an indication of vocalic length as exemplified by scribal *día* (*Dia*, 3b). In such instances, the Modern Irish convention has been followed and that mark has been disregarded. In instances where a mark over the letter *i* could be interpreted as either a mere hair-mark or as a misplaced mark of vocalic length as in manuscript *dEín* (*déin*, 1a), the latter interpretation has been adopted. Where *i* was historically long and does indeed bear such a mark, it is taken to be a marker of length as in, for example, *dob fhír* (2a). The scribe’s practice of writing a *síneadh fada* over *ó* in the vocalic group *-eó-* has been retained in the edition as illustrated by scribal *innEósad* (3b).

The Middle Irish diphthong *áe* / *ái* / *óe* / *oí* appears as *ai* or *ái* as exemplified by scribal *craibhe* (*craibhe*, 2b). Ligatured *-ao-* sometimes carries a length mark as is the case in scribal *nanáomh* (*na naomh*, 2b) where there is rhyme with *fhír* in the line above (2a). In such instances, it can be extrapolated that the successor to the old *óe* / *áe* diphthong in the form of *-ao-* had probably at least two pronunciations in the fourteenth century: [*i:*] and [*e:*].

Where lacking, the *síneadh fada* has been silently supplied as in, for example, *dEin* (*déin*, 1a); *ader* (*adér*, 1d); *cain* (*cáin*, 2c), *fala Ega* (*fa lá éga*, 5a), *fashela* (*fa shéla*, 5b), *doibh* (*dóibh*, 9a) etc. The macron has not been used in such instances. So-called ‘tall’ *E* / *É* for Middle Irish *-e-* / *-é-* and Modern Irish *-ea-* / *-éa-* is common in this manuscript and has been printed as *e* / *é* in the edition, as for example, in scribal *Erlamh* (*érlamh*, 2b) and *oschEd* (*ós ched*, 3b). Punctuation has been supplied. Hyphens have only been used in compound words where it has been felt necessary to illustrate the workings of *rinn ocus airdrinn*.

## Metre

The metre is *Deibhidhe Scaoilte*<sup>18</sup> which takes the form:  $7^x 7^x + 1 \text{ or } 2$ ;  $7^x 7^x + 1 \text{ or } 2$ . Our poem is in the *ógláchas* rather than the *dán díreach* variety of syllabic poetry.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the most superior type of

<sup>18</sup> Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics* (Dublin 1961; repr. 1973) 65. See also Eleanor Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry, 1200-1600* (Dublin 1957; repr. 1981) 18-20.

<sup>19</sup> In *Irish Syllabic Poetry*, Knott defined *ógláchas* as ‘a loose imitation of *dán díreach*’ in which the rules pertaining to the counting of syllables are observed, ‘but rimes are fewer and simpler than in strict verse, and there are no rules of consonance or alliteration’ (p. 2).

*rinn ocus airdrinn*, that is, the  $7^17^2$  or  $7^27^3$  variety is often replaced by two inferior types either (a)  $7^17^3$  or (b)  $7^1 + 7^1$  or  $7^2 + 7^2$ , so-called *guilbnech*.<sup>20</sup>

Instances where the optimum kind of *rinn ocus airdrinn* are found are limited to: *a-bhus : eolus* (1c-d), *tlas : eolas* (3c-d), *a-bhus : eolus* (4a-b), *chomhair : lánamhain* (6c-d), *thaigh : Taithligh* (10c-d), *thráth : comlán* (11c-d), *dál : comhrádh* (12a-b), *ttigh : Taithligh* (12c-d), *rath : bliadan* (13a-b) *thair : chéd-stair* (13c-d); *mblaidh : chruaidh-sdair* (14c-d). All the other couplets contain *rinn ocus airdrinn* rhymes which are in some respect defective, either on syllabic or phonological grounds. Examples include: *ceall : cansam* (4c-d) which falls short of the standards because the historical form of *ceall*, would not allow perfect rhyme to occur; rhymes of the  $7^17^1$  type such as *déin : féin* (1a-b); rhymes of the  $7^27^2$  type such as *éga : shéla* (5a-b); rhymes of the  $7^17^3$  type are found in . Rhymes involving the place-name *Daimhin(n)is* are frequently imperfect according to the standards of *dán díreach*. Into this category fall: *a-bhos : nDaimh-inis* (5c-d); *deisi : Daimh-innsi* (7c-d) and *Mlaise : Daimh-innsi* (8c-d). Perfect *rinn ocus airdrinn* rhyme according to the standards of *dán díreach* is found in only 11 out of 28 possible instances, or 39.2% of instances.

A further feature of *deibhidhe* is internal rhyme between a stressed word in line *c* and a stressed word in line *d*. Only one instance of such rhyme has been identified: *dhingne : inbhe* (3c-d).

Also identified are the following examples of *uaim* ('alliteration'): *ordaigh sé féin* (reading scribal *f* as lenited *f*, 1b); *oraibh a-bhus* (1c); *cis nó cáin* (2c); *féin 'na aonará[i]n* (reading scribal *f* as lenited *f*, 2d); *m'inbhe is m'eolas* (3d); *féin a-bhus* (4a); *crích ar chansam* (4d), *fa chís cruaidh* (6a); *Dhartraighibh is deisi* (7c); *faithí phuirt* (8d), *bainne, bí* (10b); *Cuirnthir céad* (12a); *cuanacha in comhrádh* (12b), *Taithligh thair* (13c), *Sidhruidh, suairc saor* (14a), *a ccreidimh, doba chruaidhsdair* (14d). A total of 15 out of 56 lines contain alliteration, that is, 26.7%.

#### Subject Matter

The poem focuses on the Uí Mhithighéin's requirement to fulfil their obligations as *comarba* of St. Molaise by paying tribute to the Uí Thaithligh. The Uí Mhithighéin exercised control over Bealach Uí Mhithighéin at Ros Inbhir in the barony of Ros Clochair which linked the pilgrimage path that began at Inis Muiredhaigh, county Sligo, in the west with the culmination of the pilgrim's path in the east at Molaise's monastic foundation on Devenish Island, county Fermanagh. An obit in the Annals of the Four Masters only serves to emphasise the close links between Saint Molaise and the Uí Mhithighéin: *Ó Mithidhén comarba Mo Laisi do écc* (AFM 1336.14).<sup>21</sup>

By the time of the composition of our poem, control over Daimhinis, the focal point of the cult of St. Molaise, was firmly in the hands of Uí Thaithligh. A consequence of that take-over of control of the *comharbacht* may have been the marginalization of other potential claimants such as the Uí Mhithighéin. That possibility may explain why Ó Mithighéin's epithet changes from *Comarba Mo Laisi* in 1336 to *Comharba an Bhealaigh* 'the Coarb of the *Bealach* or Pass', in the references to the deaths of Lasairfhiona in 1381<sup>22</sup> and of Giolla na Naomh Ó Mithidhén in 1419.<sup>23</sup>

The extant collections of annals identify Maol Caidigh Ua Taichligh, who died in 1049, as the first successor to Molaise to have belonged to the Uí Thaithligh family.<sup>24</sup> The next coarb of Molaise to be recorded in the extant annals is Flann Mac Flannchadha who died in 1114 (AFM 1114.2). This means that the *comharbacht* had fallen under the control of the lordship of Dartraighe for at least a period during the early twelfth century. A precedent existed as evidenced from the *Chronicon Scotorum* which records that

<sup>20</sup> For the various kinds of *deibide nguilbnech* whereby one fully stressed syllable rhymes with another fully stressed syllable, see Murphy, *Early Irish Metrics*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> John O'Donovan (ed and trans), *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* [henceforth = AFM], 7 vols (Dublin 1848-1851; repr. 1856) sub anno 1336. References here are to the electronic version on the Celt Website at: <https://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G100005A/index.html>

<sup>22</sup> *Lasairfhiona inghen Ferghail Uí Duibhgennáin bean Uí Mhithidhén an Bhealaigh d'écc* (AFM 1381.14)

<sup>23</sup> See AFM 1419.22. The continuity of tradition in this area is remarkable. In July 1834 O'Donovan met Aodh Ó Mithighéin (Hugh O'Meehan), whose grandfather held the Tearmann under the Church of Ireland Bishop of Kilmore. The Tobar Mholaise still stands in the townland of Derranahemerick. Nearby stood the church and house of Ó Mithighéin. See also O'Donovan, *Annala Rioghachta Eireann*, iii, 559, n. x.

<sup>24</sup> AFM 1049.2

one Martan, (d. 869), who had been abbot of Clonmacnoise and Devenish, was of the Dartraighe: *Martan do Dartraigib Daiminnsi ab Cluana Muc Nois & Daiminnsi quieuit* (CS 869).<sup>25</sup>

The extant annals record no names for the *comharbacht* of Molaise between 1114 and 1325 until they register the death of Giolla na nAingéal Ua Taichligh in 1325: *Giolla na n-Aingéal Ó Taichligh airchinnech Dam Innsi mortuus est* (AU 1325.5),<sup>26</sup> while the Annals of the Four Masters describe the same individual as *airddechain [Daimh] Innsi* (AFM 1328.5). 1347 saw the death of *Maol Maedhóg Ó Táichligh oifficél Locha h-Erne* (AFM 1347.1) and in 1390 the Annals of Ulster recorded the death of Niall Ua Taichligh ‘canon chorister of Clochar and superior of Daim-inis’ (AU 1390.6).

Fragmentary evidence, however, suggests that the Uí Thaithligh had been active in the church during the thirteenth century, if not earlier. A section of a now lost register from the diocese of Clogher tells us that a certain Maitiú Ó Taichlich, ‘a priest and celibate of Devenish’, appeared among the witnesses brought before a court that focused in a dispute between Ó Domhnaill and Gilbert Ó Flannagáin, the lord of Tuath Rátha regarding ownership of the territory of Mag nÉna in the year 1278.<sup>27</sup> Annalistic evidence suggests that the Uí Thaithligh lost control over the *comharbacht* of Molaise to the Uí Chathasaigh by the early fifteenth century. The Annals of Ulster state: *Concobur h-Ua Cathusaigh, airchinnech Ferainn Muinntiri Cathusaigh i n-Daim Inis, d’h-eg* (AU 1411.11).

Despite the pressures from rival such as Muinter Cathasaigh and Uí Fhlannagáin of Tuath Rátha, the Uí Thaithligh did not retire quietly into the background. A reference in the *Papal Register* under the year 1428 (7 Kal. May) notes that Nioclás Ó Flannagáin, Priest of the diocese of Clogher, was granted the *comharbacht* of Molaise on the death of a certain Medocius Othaichlych [Máedóc Ó Taichligh].<sup>28</sup> The Uí Thaithligh were evidently not prepared to cede their control of the *comharbacht*, however. Canon James McKenna alludes to a ‘war of attrition’ that was conducted between Brian Ó Cathasaigh ‘perpetual vicar’ and Niall Ó Taichligh, ‘a married clerk.’ Ó Cathasaigh had a small income of three marks per year. Drawing down the remnants of the *comharbacht* of Molaise, was deemed the simplest means for Ó Cathasaigh to increase his income. That benefice was in the hands of Niall Ó Taichligh and took the form of ownership of the lands of Gort an Locháin. The pope ruled in favour of Ó Cathasaigh and ordered Ó Taichligh to surrender the lands of Gort an Locháin in the year 1454.<sup>29</sup>

To the prior of St. Mary's, Druymlethan, in the diocese of Kilmore (*Triburnen.*) and John Magamran and Fergal Ofyrgussa, canons of Kilmore. Mandate, as below. The pope has learned that two lands or possessions called the ‘coledatus (*sic*) de Gart Elagachan’ in the diocese of Clogher, wont to be assigned as a title of a perpetual benefice to secular priests called ‘culdees’ (*coledi*), who are present at divine offices in the church, reputed a collegiate church, of St. Laserianus de Damynys, in the said diocese, are void and have been so long void that (*fn. 2*) there is no certain knowledge as to the true and last mode of avoidance, and that their collation has by the Lateran statutes lapsed to the apostolic see, although Nolanus (*i.e.* Nelanus) Othalaich, a married clerk of the said diocese, usurping them as if they belonged to him like hereditary goods, has unduly detained possession for some years, taking the fruits. The pope therefore (holding to be expressed by these presents the quality and condition of the said Nolanus. and the number of years during which he has detained the said lands or possessions, and the specific and determinate cause from which it is clearly evident that he has no right in the said lands or possessions) hereby orders the above three to collate and assign to Bernard Oathasaich, priest, of the said diocese (whom the pope hereby absolves from all sentences of excommunication etc. as far only as regards the taking effect of these presents, and who from fear of Nolanus's power has no hope of

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<sup>25</sup> W. M. Hennessy (ed & trans), *Chronicum Scotorum*, Rolls Series 46 (London 1866; repr. Wiesbaden 1964). Gearóid Mac Niocaill’s edition, which is available on the Celt Website, has been used for the present study. See <https://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G100016/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> William M. Hennessy & Bartholomew MacCarthy, *Annala Uladh: Annals of Ulster Otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat: a Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 431 to A.D. 1540*, 4 vols (Dublin 1887-1901, repr. [with fresh introduction and bibliography, ed. Nollaig Ó Muraíle] Dublin 1998). Volume i, AD 431–1056; volume ii, 1057–1378; volume iii, 1379–1588; volume iv, introduction and indexes. Seán Mac Airt & Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed. & trans.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin 1983). The edition used here was the digital edition which is available at <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G100001A/index.html>. Accessed 22 April 2017.

<sup>27</sup> K. W. Nicholls, ‘The Register of Clogher’, *Clogher Record* 7, No. 3 (1971-1972) 361-431: 392.

<sup>28</sup> J. A. Twemlow, *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters. AD 1427-1447* (London 1909) viii, 67.

<sup>29</sup> Canon J. E. McKenna, *Devenish (Lough Erne): Its History, Antiquities and Traditions* (Dublin & Enniskillen 1931; second edition) 94-95.

obtaining justice in the city and diocese of Clogher) the said lands or possessions, to which appointment has from of old been made by election, their value not exceeding 3 marks sterling, summoning and removing the said Nolanus; notwithstanding that the pope lately ordered provision to be made to Bernard of a certain perpetual vicarage, with cure, of the said church [of St. Laserianus], value likewise not exceeding 3 marks sterling, with which he is hereby dispensed to receive and retain for life the said lands or possessions.<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, the *comharbacht* of Molaise on Daimhinis appears to have been controlled at various times by the Dartraighe, who resided in what is now north Leitrim. However, they appear to have been ousted during the fourteenth century by the Uí Thaithligh, whose home-place was in the west Tyrone-Fermanagh borderlands. The Uí Thaithligh in turn were obliged to cede power to the Muintir Cathasaigh and the Uí Fhlannagáin during the fifteenth century.

#### Authorship

The Uí Chuimín were an important scholarly family in the North Connacht region. Their background has been discussed in a previous article on the poem *Cindus fuair Mlaise in Bealach?*<sup>31</sup> Quatrain 14, the final quatrain of *Stair Mlaisi ar Dhartraighibh déin*, attributes the poem to Sighraidh Ó Cuimín. It is here suggested that the author of this poem may be one and the same person who is mentioned in the obit which states: *Clann Uí Chuimín, Siodhraidh, Cairpre, & Giolla Patraic do mharbhadh la Galluibh Laighen* ('The family of Ó Cuimín, [namely], Siodhraidh, Cairpre and Giolla Pátraic were killed by the foreigners of Leinster'. AFM 1388.4; cf. 1388.5).

Other annalistic collections shed even more light on Sighraidh. The Annals of Ulster identify Sighraidh's father as Adhamh (AU 1388.2): *Clann h-Uí Cuirmin do marbadh do Ghallaibh Cundae Osraidhe, .i. Sigraidh & Cairpri & Gilla Padraig, meic Adaimh. Esbaidh mor don eladhain in bas-sin Sigraidh.* ('The sons of Ua Cuirmin, namely, Sigraidh and Cairpri and Gilla-Padraig, sons of Adam Ua Cuirmin, were killed by the Foreigners of the County of Ossory. Great loss to learning was that death of Sigraidh.')

Moreover, Sighraidh had at least one son, if not two. The *Annals of Connacht* (AC 1399.16) record: *Domnall Ruad mac Sigraigh. Curnin adbar ollaman na Brefni do ecc don plaig in hoc anno* ('Domnall Ruad son of Sigraid O Cuimín, prospective ollav of Brefne, died of the plague this year.').<sup>32</sup> The previous entry in the same annal (AC 1399.15) refers to: *Cormac h. Curnin adbur ollaman na Brefne do ecc in hoc anno* ('Cormac O Cuimín, prospective ollav of Brefne, died this year').

A certain *Sigraíd Hua Cuirrdín* undertook the 'renovation' of *Lebor na hUidre* at the behest of Domnall mac Muirchertaigh meic Domnaill Uí Chonchobair, the Lord of Cairpre (1362-1395).<sup>33</sup> On a blank space at the end of *Scéla na Esérgi* at p. 37b of that manuscript is written a note which Bergin and Best attributed to *Sigraíd Hua Cuirrdín*.<sup>34</sup>

Orait do Moelmhuiri mac Ceileachair. mac meic Cuind na mbocht ro scrib 7 ro scrút a lebraib egsamlaib in lebur sa. Oráid do Domnall mac Muirchertaigh meic Domhnaill meic Taidhg meic Briain meic Aindrias meic Briain Luighnigh meic Toirrdelbaigh moir issie in Domnall sin ro fthuráil athnúidhiughadh na pearsainni sin ler scribadh in scíamhlebhhar sa ar Sigraíd Hua Cuirrdín 7 ca ferr duind. ar mbeandacht do chur a mbel duine go fer in liubhair sea na a fágbaíl aigi; ...<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> J A Twemlow (ed.), *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Volume 10: 1447-1455*, (London 1915). For the online text, see *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-papal-registers/brit-ie/vol10> [accessed 9 June 2017]. The text is from Lateran Regesta 496: 1454-1455, Pages 720-727.

<sup>31</sup> Peter J. Smith, 'Contending coarbs: *Cindus fuair Mlaise in Bealach?*', *Peritia* 24-25 (2013-2014) 230-240.

<sup>32</sup> A. Martin Freeman, *Annála Connacht: the annals of Connacht (A. D. 1224-1544)* (Dublin 1944). The edition used here was the digital edition which is available at <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G100011/index.html>. Accessed on 22 April 2017.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard I. Best & Osborn Bergin (eds), *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin 1929; repr. 1992) x; 88.

<sup>34</sup> Best & Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, [89], n. 1 states: 'Written on a blank space at end of preceding tract, no doubt by Sigraíd Hua Cuirrdín.'

<sup>35</sup> Best & Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, [89], lines 2764-2771.

Pray for Máel Muire son of Ceileachar grandson of Conn na mBocht who wrote and devised this particular book from diverse books. Pray for Domhnall son of Muirheartach son of Domhnall son of Tadhg son of Brian son of Aindrias son of Brian Luigneach son of Toirrdhealbhadh Mór. He is the Domhnall who enjoined upon Sigráid Húa Cuirrdín the restoration [of the work] of the author by whom this illustrious book was written; and which is the better course of action for us: either to send over to the owner of this book our blessing or to leave it with him; ...<sup>36</sup>

Paul Walsh first identified Sighraídh, who was killed in 1388, as the scholar who restored *Lebor na hUidre* in 1380.<sup>37</sup>

Apart from the Sighraídh Ó Cuirnín who died in 1388, there was another Sighraídh Ó Cuirnín who could have written our poem. His obit is preserved in the Annals of the Four Masters: *Sídhradh Ó Cuirnín saoi fhileadh & ollamh na Bréifne e-sidhe do ecc* (AFM 1347.13). This reference from the Annals of the Four Masters, however, is not corroborated by any other collection of annals. In the final analysis, it appears likely that the Sighraídh Ó Cuirnín who wrote his poem is the scholar who died at the hands of the Englishmen of Leinster in 1388.

One of the few other poems by Sighraídh Ó Cuirnín to have survived is *Seanchas Maodhóg meabhan linn*. The text of 144 lines concerning St. Máedóc has been preserved in Dublin, Trinity College MS H. 2. 6 (no. 1297), Section II, pages 99-102. Seán Mag Shamhradháin wrote that particular manuscript in 1716 for Brian Mag Uidhir.<sup>38</sup>

Date and Provenance

*Stair Mlaisi ar Dhartraighibh déin* appears to have been written during the fourteenth century somewhere in the region extending from Cairbre in the West,<sup>39</sup> to Devenish, adjacent to Enniskillen in the East. The poet implies on several occasions that he is writing the poem while on Daimhinis Island. The lines in question are: *Do chaith Mlaisé féin a-bhus / a nDaimhinis gan follus* ('Molaise himself partook in this place, / in Devenish with clear testimony', 4a-b). The Uí Thaitlich are depicted as being *abos* 'in this place' on Daimhinis (5c-d), while the Uí Mhithghéin are *thiar* 'in the west' at Bealach Uí Mhithghéin (3a, 11a). However, these allusions may be nothing more than a poetic conceit.

Language

The language of the poem is Early Modern Irish. The register appears to belong to the middle range. It is a classic example of the kind of verse written by scholars who were professional historians rather than professional 'bardic' poets.

## Text

1.	Stair Mlaisi ar Dhartraighibh déin sloinnfed mar ordaigh sé féin; ní cheilebh oraibh a-bhus, a-dér mar atá m'eolus.	ml- sloinnf7; fē abos mur
2.	A-dubhairt Mlaisi, is dob fhír, na craibhe érlamh nó naomh, do dhlighfedh cís nó cáin acht é féin 'na áonará[i]n.	Adub-t; ml- nanáom̄ dliǵf7. nanáonarā
3.	Mar do roinn Mlaisi in cís thiar inneósad, ós ched le Dia, a ra roinn, ní dhingne tlas, do bhroinn m'inbhe is m'eolas	ml- ísiar día  7 meolas

<sup>36</sup> My translation differs slightly from that of Best & Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, x.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Walsh, 'Restoration of LU, 1380', *Catholic Bulletin* 29 (Nov., 1939) 733-36.

<sup>38</sup> T. K. Abbott & E. J. Gwynn (comps.), *Catalogue of the Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin 1921) 74-78: 99.

<sup>39</sup> The northern boundary of the territory of Cairbre is constituted by the line that runs from the point where Lough Melvin flows into the Drowes and thence into the sea at Tullaghan. The southern boundary is formed by the line which runs from where Lough Gill flows into the Garavogue and thence into the sea at Sligo Town.

4.	Do <i>chaith</i> Mlaise féin a-bhus a nDaimhínis gan follus; cís Dartraighe ó chaimthí ceall, as é so crích ar chansam.	.m.; abos ġ follus o <i>chaimthí</i> ase; <i>dot over c</i> in cansam [?]
5.	An cís sin, fa lá [a] éga, do fhág Mlaise fá shéla ag muintir Thaithl<a>ich a-bhos a <i>tresmhír</i> a nDaimh-inis.	fala Ega .m. <i>muinntir</i> <i>atrEsmír</i>
6.	Céd árc, céd uan, fa <i>chís</i> cruaidh, laogh is luilgheach ar gach buaibh ag Dartraighibh fa chomhair is bonn ar gach lánamhain.	.c. úan  g <sup>c</sup>
7.	Lán in tsoiscéil bhic is fír is dá lámh cléirigh re thaíbh ó Dhartraighibh is deisi do chomarba Daimh-innsi.	tsoiscéil taib  daiminnsi
8.	Ag sin gacha seachtmadh Cásca gach ní dá <i>fuil</i> mé do rádha leis Ó Taithligh a huacht Mlaise gu faithí phuirt Daimh-innsi.	dafuil <i>huacht</i> .m.
9.	D[o] Íbh <i>Mhithián</i> , labhram dóibh, a nDartraighibh caidhe a <i>treóir</i> ? áiremh cá mhéd a treisi dá m[b]eadh ar lár Daimh-innsi.	Dibmitā <i>atrEuir</i> [?] cañ <sup>7</sup> dam <sup>7</sup> .
10.	<i>Tresmhír</i> Daimhinnsi gu b[e]acht: bainne, bí is oirc <sup>h</sup> iseacht, biadh Cásca is Nollag dá <i>taigh</i> cuiridh gu muintir Taithligh.	<i>gubacht</i> <sup>7</sup> oirciseacht <sup>7</sup> nollag <i>dataig</i> <sup>40</sup> <i>muinntir</i>
11.	A sochair sa <i>mBealach</i> thiar inneósad mar 'tá mo chiall; bhail a fág ann Malaise thráth cóir a fhoillsiughadh go comlán.	<i>sabEalach</i> siar <i>innEosad</i> mur a fág // ann ; .m. ġcomlan
12.	Cuirmthir céd, ba sásta in dál, sa <i>mBealach</i> cuanacha in comhrádh uadh Ó Mithidhán dá <i>thigh</i> , do <i>chomharba</i> Ua Taithligh.	.c. <i>sabealach</i> cuaña incomrad omit; dā dat; g
13.	Cís Mlaise féin, is mór rath, in fhledh sin gach tres bliadan a tabhairt d'Ua Taithligh thair rádha Mlaise sa chéd-sdair. sdair Molaise ar Dartraighibh.	.m. fleg; g <sup>c</sup> ; bl-a atab-t .m.; .c. <i>sdair</i> S. T. A. I. R. M. A. R. D. AIR.
14.	Misi Sidhruidh, suairc saor Ó Cuirnín, innisim daíbh mo dhuan do <i>Mhlaisi</i> gu m[b]laidh a ccreidimh, doba <i>chruaidhsdair</i> . sdair Molaise ar Dartraighibh	<i>sidruid</i> ; sáor <i>innisim</i> ; daib do <i>Mlaisi</i> ; <i>gumlaid</i> <del>doer</del> doba <i>cruaidhsdair</i> S. A. I. R. M.

<sup>40</sup> A second dot appears to have been inserted over *d* in order to cancel out mark of lenition.



# Translation

1. The history of Molaise's dominance over the forceful Dartraighe will I describe as he himself decreed it;  
I will not hide it from you in this instance,  
I will tell it as I know it.
2. Molaise said, and it was the right  
of the successor to the founding-fathers [or] the saints,  
that the entitlement to [exact] tribute or to [levy] tax  
could only be his [and his] alone.
3. The manner by which Molaise apportioned the tribute in the West  
will I relate, since God permits it,  
— that which he has apportioned will not engender pity —  
from the bosom of my capacity and my knowledge.
4. Molaise himself partook in this place,  
in Devenish with clear testimony  
of the tribute of the Dartraighe from which the Church used to be treated well;  
this is the purpose of everything we have chanted.
5. That tribute, it was [on] the day of his death,  
that Molaise bequeathed under his seal  
to Muintir Taithligh in this place  
their third [portion] in Devenish.
6. One hundred coffers, one hundred lambs, it was a harsh tribute,  
a calf and a suckling calf on every cow  
to be kept in readiness among the Dartraighe  
and a groat to be imposed on every married couple.
7. The entirety of the small gospel-book, it is true,  
and the two hands of a cleric together,  
from the Dartraighe who are closest  
to the coarb of Devenish.
8. Therewith every seventh Easter  
everything which I am mentioning  
belongs to Ua Taithligh by the will of Molaise  
up to [and including] the lawns of the monastery of Devenish.
9. Concerning the Uí Mhithighéin, let us speak of them,  
in Dartraighe, what are their directions?  
a reckoning of the extent of their third  
should they be in Devenish.
10. Devenish's third portion with precision [is as follows]:  
milk, food and alms,  
food for Easter and for Christmas for their house  
let you send to the household of Ó Taithligh.
11. Their dues in the Pass to the West  
will I recount to you as I understand them;  
the circumstances which Molaise had left on record at one stage  
it is proper to reveal [them] completely.

12. Ale for a hundred, the arrangement was convenient,  
in the bay-indented Pass [was] the dialogue;  
from Ó Mithidhéin to his house  
to the coarb, Ua Taithligh.
13. The tribute of Molaise, for its part, great the bounty,  
that feast [is to be held] every third year  
it is to be given by Ua Taithligh in the East  
in accordance with the declaration of Molaise in the first historical record.  
[That is] the history of Molaise's dominance over the Dartraighe.
14. I am Sighraidh, joyous and noble,  
Ó Cuirnín, I relate to them,  
my poem concerning Molaise with renown  
in religion, it was a harsh history.  
[That is] the history of Molaise's dominance over the Dartraighe.

## Textual Notes and Commentary

**1c a-bhus] aḃos.** The older spelling in *-us* has been restored for the sake of rhyme with *eolus* (1c-d).

**2a-b A-dubhairt Mlaise, is dob fhír, / na craibhe érlamh nó naomh.** *fír* is here taken as a masculine noun meaning ‘what is true; a pledge; attestation; right, due’; (eDIL s.v. 1 *fír* or dil.ie/22171) which is qualified by the following phrase. However, an alternative way of looking at this line might be to take the phrase *dob fhír* as a cheville and read: ‘Thus said Molaise [who was] of the line of the founding-fathers or of the the saints — and it was true —.’

**4c ó chaimhthí ceall]** This is the 3 sg. passive imperfect indicative of *caomhuighim* ‘I maintain, cherish, nurture’ from Old Irish *cáemaid* ‘treats kindly, is gracious towards’ in an indirect relative clause; see eDIL s.v. *cáemaid* or dil.ie/7598. See Dinneen, *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla*, sub *caomhnaim* (163).

**5a an cís sin, fa lá [a] éga]** For clarity's sake, the 3 sg. masculine possessive has been supplied editorially.

**6a fa chís cruaidh]** *fa* is taken here as a late form of 3 sg. past indicative of the copula, *ba*. Lenition has been restored.

**7b is dá láimh cléirigh re thaibh]** ‘and the two hands of a cleric together’. I take this to mean ‘in addition to a cleric's prayer.’

**8d gu faithí phuirt]** feminine *iā*-stem *faithche*, *faidche* means ‘A green or lawn in front of a fort or residence or church’; see eDIL s.v. *faithche*, *faidche* or dil.ie/21214. The form here appears to the accusative plural. An alternative would be to read the line as *gu fáithí phuirt*, taking *fáithí* as the accusative plural of masculine *i*-stem *fáith* ‘seer, prophet’ (cf. eDIL s.v. *fáith*, *fáid* or dil.ie/21211) and to translate as ‘until [it reaches] the prophets of the port of Devenish’. *Phuirt* is a lenited form of the genitive singular of *port* ‘monastic settlement’; ‘landing-place, haven’; cf. eDIL s.v. 1 *port* or dil.ie/34476. There appears to be no grammatical reason for the lenition. I suggest that it is phonologically motivated, that is, by the desire for alliteration with *faithí*.

**9a D[o] Íbh Mhithián]** Elided *o* has been restored for the sake of the syllabic count. The earliest spellings of Ó Mithighéin / Ó Mithighén as a surname appears to be represented by: *Maelfinnen Ó Mithigén quievit* (Annals of Loch Cé, AD 1260.18). The Four Masters use the spelling *Ó Mithidhéin*, as in AFM 1336.14. In *Cindus fuair Mlaise in Bealach?* the ‘Classical’ spelling of the surname is used in the phrase *muinntír mithidhan* (BL Add., 18205, p. 21.1 = 9b), while the late form *mithian* is used in the phrase *ag mithian* (BL Add., 18205, p. 21.5 = 11a) and *glór í mhithián* (BL Add., 18205, p. 9 = 13b). The northern dialects appear not have palatalised the final consonant of the genitive form of such surnames; cf. *Ó Cathán* for *Ó Catháin*.

**9d dá m[b]eadh ar lár Daimh-innsi]** The radical initial of the 3 sg. dependent form of the conditional mood of the verb *bí* / *atá* has been restored here.

**10a Tresmhír Daimhinnsi]** This is a compound of the adjectival number *tress* ‘a third; one of three’ (eDIL s.v. 2 *tress*; dil.ie/41835) and *mír* ‘part, division, share’ (eDIL s.v. *mír* or dil.ie/32335); compare *treis mír uaire* one-third of an hour, ITS 14, 136.22. The Ulster Inquisitions (18<sup>th</sup> Sept., James I., an. 7) record:

Devenish Parish. – “In the said barony of Magheraboy and Twora is the parish of Devenish, the parish church whereof standeth within the Iland (*sic*) of Devenish; and that in the said parishe is both a parson and a viccar, collative; and that the tithes are paid in kinde, one fourth part to the bishop of Clogher, another fourth parte to the viccar, and the other two fourth partes to the parson of the said parish, and the charge of repairinge and maintaineinge the parishe church to be borne as before; and they (the jurors) alsoe say that the said parson paieth yerely for proxies, unto the said bishop of Clogher eight shillinges, and the said bushopp of Clogher eight shillinges, and the said vicar fower shillinges per ann. (Ambrose Coleman, *De Annatis Hiberniae: A Calendar of the First Fruits’ Fees Levied on Papal Appointments to Benefices in Ireland A. D. 1400 to 1535, Volume 1: Ulster* (Dundalk 1909) 53.

**10c dá [t]taigh** Reading uncertain. The original reading appears to have been *dhá*. The scribe then seems to have tried to erase the dot which indicated lenition. Thus read: *dhá t[h]aig* ‘to his [Ó Taithligh’s house]’ or *dá [t]taig* ‘to their [Uí Thaithligh’s house]’. The latter option has been followed in the edition.

**11a sa mBealach** Nasalisation has been restored on the basis of the phrase *sa mbealach*; cf. BL Additional 18205, p. 21.13 = *Cindus fuair Mlaise in Bealach?*, 15b.

**12b sa mBealach cuanacha in comhrádh** On restoration of the nasalisation of the initial of *Bealach* after *sa*, see the note above. A suspension mark sits over *n* in *cuanach* in the manuscripts. It is here expanded as *ach*. Old Irish *cúanach* means ‘having harbours, havens, stretches of water’ (eDIL s.v. 2 *cúanach* or dil.ie/13340); cf. *baile . . . cuanach, coilltech* (of Glendalough), BNnÉ 144.14 ‘abounding in havens’. The havens referred to here are the sheltered inlets of Lough Melvin which *Bealach Uí Mhithighéin* abuts.

**12c Ó Mithidhán dá thigh** The scribe has omitted to show lenition of *t* by insertion of a dot over *t*. We should read *Ó Mithidhán dá thigh* and translate ‘from Ó Mithidhán to his [i. e. Ó Taithligh’s] house’.

**14a Sidhruidh** The usual spelling of this name during the Early Modern Irish period is *Sighraidh*. The name is relatively uncommon. People who bore the name include *Sigraoid O Baigill*, who was killed by his own brother in 1259 (*Annals of Connacht* 1259.13.) and the scribe called *Siograidh Ua Maoil Chonaire* who was involved in the restoration of the fifteenth-century manuscript which is now known as Oxford Bodleian Laud Miscellany 610.<sup>41</sup>

#### Index of Personal Names

Mlaise 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, et passim.

Ó Taithligh (Ó Taichligh) 8c.

Ó Mithidhán (Ó Mithidhán) 12c.

Ó Cuirnín, Sighraidh (Ó Cuirnín, Sidhruidh)

#### Index of Population and Place Names

Daimhinis 4a, 7d, 8d, 9d, 10a.

Dartraighe 1a, 4c, 6c, 7c, 13e, 14e.

Uí Mhithighéin (Uí Mhitháin) 9a.

Uí Thaithligh (Uí Thaichligh) 5c.

<sup>41</sup> See B. Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries, Part 1: Descriptions* (Dublin 2001) 63.