

Who was Ailill Mošaulum?



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ABSTRACT

Ailill Áulomm, recorded in the genealogies as a common ancestor of the Éoganachta, Dál Cais and other population groups, and a well-known character in literary and historiographical tradition, plays an important role in medieval Irish stories about the Battle of Mag Mucrama. This paper will consider why his name as found in one of these stories, *Scéla Mošauluim*, should deviate from the usual form of his name in other sources.

To anyone familiar with the stories about the battles of Mag Mucrama and Cenn Abrat, or with the traditional history of Munster, the question in my title may not immediately be felt to require an answer: Ailill Mošaulum was the man who was better known as Ailill Áulomm, familiar from his pivotal role as a common ancestor of many Munster population groups and dynasties. Indeed, I do not intend to suggest in this article that the literary figure Ailill Mošaulum was distinct from that of Ailill Áulomm: a less succinct though perhaps more accurate question might be, ‘Why was Ailill Áulomm sometimes called Ailill Mošaulum?’ According to historical and genealogical tradition, Ailill Áulomm – whose death *AFM* places in the year 234 – was the father of Éogan Mór, the eponymous ancestor of the Éoganachta, who included the dominant ruling peoples of Munster for much of the early and medieval historical period. Other eponymous ancestors, such as Cormac Cass, eponym of Dál Cais, and Cian, from whom the Cianachta and other groups were said to have descended, were also grafted onto the traditional genealogical framework as purported sons of Ailill. Ailill Áulomm is therefore a very important figure within this framework, and is well known from both genealogical and literary sources. Throughout these fairly copious sources, as far as I am aware, Ailill’s epithet – if such it is – takes the form of *Áulomm*, or of an orthographical variant thereof.¹

There is, however, one source that departs from the others, namely, *Scéla Mošaulu[i]m ⁊ Maic Con ⁊ Luigdech*,² often shortened in secondary literature, as it will be here, to *Scéla Mošauluim*. Only one copy of this story survives, in the fifteenth-century Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 610, ff. 94vb17–96ra34, and it displays, to my mind, quite a composite nature.

¹I use *Áulomm* in spelling this epithet throughout this essay for convenience, although the spelling varies considerably in the sources themselves.

²MS *luigdech*. The most recent edition and translation is by Máirín O Daly (ed. and trans.), *Cath Maige Mucrama: The Battle of Mag Mucrama*, ITS 50 (London 1975), 74–87, 129–44. The scribe concludes the story with the remark *Scéla Maic Con ⁊ Aililla co rice so* (ibid. 84.694), which occurs a few lines before the end of O Daly’s edited text.

As we have it, it is made up of various episodes centred on one or more of the three characters of the title: Ailill Mošaulum, his foster-son Mac Con, and Lugaid Loigde, Mac Con's father. An account of the traditional alternation of kingship and judgeship between Lugaid Loigde's descendants and those of Ailill Áulomm is found near the beginning (§3),³ followed closely by a description of a legal case over which Lugaid Loigde presided (§6). The text gives brief accounts of the reigns of Mac Con and Ailill Áulomm (§§4–8), and a description of the contention between Mac Con and Ailill's sons over an otherworld musician (§9), which led to the battles of Cenn Abrat and, subsequently, Mag Mucrama (or Áth Mucraime; §10), which battles are also alluded to. The text ends with Ailill's vengeful killing of his foster-son Mac Con (§§11–14), an act that was in turn avenged by Finn ua Baiscne (§§15–16).⁴

Scéla Mošauluim was dated by Máirín O Daly to the first half of the ninth century, but comprises elements 'which point to archaic sources, as early perhaps as 700'.⁵ It is part of the extensive tract published by Kuno Meyer under the title 'The Laud genealogies and tribal histories', a composite collection of genealogies, poetry and origin stories.⁶ Eoin Mac Néill proposed that the compilation represented by the Laud tract was made around the end of the tenth century, but he dated the older narrative material contained in it (which would include *Scéla Mošauluim*) to the eighth century.⁷

The story of how Ailill got his epithet (most frequently analysed, explicitly or implicitly, as *áu* 'ear' + *lomm* 'bare') is found in a number of sources, discussed below, but not in *Scéla Mošauluim*. It is alluded to two folios earlier in the manuscript, however, in another, non-narrative, section of the Laud tract, headed *Do miniugad senchais Fer Muman*:

Mog Nūadat dano, dā mac lais .i. Lugaid Lāga ⁊ Ailill Ōlom. Is eside rogab Áne ingin Fir [ingen fir MS] hÍ maic Eogabail co ndechaid chuici fo chētdōir, co roben si a chlūais de in tan bás oc tīachtain, conid do sin rodngeguín Ailill Ōlom.⁸

³Paragraph references are to O Daly's edition (see n. 2 above).

⁴Kuno Meyer, *Fianaigecht: Being a Collection of Hitherto Inedited Irish Poems and Tales Relating to Finn and his Fiana*, Todd Lecture Series 16 (London, 1910), xxi, pointed out that Heinrich Zimmer 'considers this rightly as a later insertion' (Heinrich Zimmer, 'Keltische Beiträge III', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 35 (1891), 1–172, at 115). However, it is suggested by Kevin Murray that the Finn element in this text might be quite old, perhaps as old as c. 700 (Kevin Murray, 'A reading from *Scéla Mošauluim*', *ZCP* 53 (2003), 198–201, at 200 n. 22; idem, 'Fionn, fian agus Corca Laoithe', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 113 (2008), 24–27, at 25). Since Finn was a member of the *fian* of (Lugaid) Mac Con, according to sources such as *Sanas Cormaic* (Kuno Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts* IV (Halle, 1912), 97 (§1084 *rinne*)), Meyer included the text and translation of *Scéla Mošauluim* in his collection of some of the oldest material about Finn to demonstrate 'the gradual growth of the cycle connected to him' (see Meyer, *Fianaigecht*, xvi).

⁵O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 18.

⁶K. Meyer, 'The Laud genealogies and tribal histories', *ZCP* 8 (1912), 291–338.

⁷John MacNeill [= E. Mac Néill], 'Notes on the Laud genealogies', *ZCP* 8 (1912), 411–18, at 416.

⁸Meyer, 'The Laud genealogies', 303.21–4. My own translation.

‘As to Mog Nuadat, he had two sons, Lugaid Lága and Ailill Áulomm. It is the latter who seized Áine the daughter of Fer Í son of Éogabal, and immediately mated with her, so that she cut his ear off him while he was having intercourse [with her], and it is because of that that she wounded Ailill Áulomm.’

This story is referred to elsewhere in the genealogical corpus, where the aetiological connection is made more explicit:

Ailill Aulomm a mac is hē ro gab Āine ingen Fir-hii meic
Éogabuil ^scoro ben a chluais de^s unde dicitur Aulomm.⁹

‘Ailill Áulomm, his [Mog Nuadat’s] son, it is he who seized Áine daughter of Fer Í son of Éogabal so that she cut his ear off him, whence “Áulomm” is said.’

Cath Maige Mucrama, a slightly later text than *Scéla Mošauluim*, according to O Daly’s analysis,¹⁰ gives a more detailed account of Ailill’s rape of the otherworld woman Áine and her consequent disfigurement of his ear:

Luid Ailill iarum aidchi shamna do [f]reacaire a ech i nÁne Chliach. Dérghithér dó is’ tilaig. Ro lommad in tilach in n-aidchi-sin 7 ní fés cíá ros lomm. Fecht fo dí dó fon inna[s]-sin. Ba ingnad les-seom. Fóidis techta úad co Ferches mac Commáin éices ro baí i mMaírg Lagen. Fáith side 7 fhénnid. Do-lluid-side dia acallaim. Tiagait a ndiis aidchi shamna issin tilaig. Anaid Ailill is’ tilaig. Baí Ferches frie anechtair. Do-fuitt didiu cotlud for Ailill ic costecht fri fogilt na cethrae. Do-llotar asint síd 7 Éogabul mac Durgabuil rí int sída ina ndiaid 7 Áne ingen Éogabuil 7 timpán créda ina láim oca seinm dó ara bélaib. At-raig dó in Ferches co toba(i)rt buille dó. Ro ráith Éogabul reme issa síd. Atn-úarat Ferches di gaí mór co rróemid a druim [trit in tan ran-ānic isin síth. Con-rānic dano Ailill] frisín n-ingin. Eret ro buí i ssuidiu ro den in ben a ó cona farcaib féoil na crocand fair (7) connáro ássair fair ríam ónd úair-sin. Conid Ailill Ó-lomm a ainm ó sein.

‘Ailill went then one Samhain night to attend to his horses on Áne Chliach. A bed is made for him on the hill. That night the hill was stripped bare and it was not known who had

⁹M. A. O’Brien (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae I* (Dublin, 1962), 190 (147 b 24–5); my translation. For the text between g-g, the Book of Lecan reads *cor bean māeth na cluaisi de co roibi in chluas lomm cen māethān fuirri 7 ad-eir araile do leabraib cor beanad in cluas ōn smit de* ‘and she cut the soft part of the ear off him so that the ear was bare without cartilage on it, and other books say that the ear was cut off him from the lobe’, while the Book of Ballymote reads *cor bean a cluas de intan do badhas aga tichtain* ‘and she cut his ear off him while he was having intercourse with her’ (ibid.).

¹⁰O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 2, 18–36.

stripped it. So it happened to him twice. He wondered at it. He sent off messengers to Ferches the poet son of Commán who was in Maigr of Leinster. He was a seer and a warrior. He came to speak to him. Both go one Samhain night to the hill. Ailill remains on the hill. Ferches was aside from it. Sleep then comes to Ailill while listening to the grazing of the beasts. They came out of the fairy mound with Éogabul son of Durgabul king of the fairy mound after them and Áne daughter of Éogabul with a bronze *timpán* in her hand playing before him. Ferches rises up to meet him and struck him. Éogabul ran on into the fairy mound. Ferches attacks him with a great spear so that his back broke when he reached the fairy mound. Ailill had intercourse with the girl. While he was so engaged the woman sucked his ear so that she left neither flesh nor skin on it and none ever grew on it from that time. So that Ailill Bare-ear is his name since then.¹¹

A poetic example of the story is found in the poem beginning *Iarfaiged nech acaib dam*, perhaps dating to the eleventh century.¹² This version differs from others in providing the detail that Áine cut off Ailill's ear with a knife:

Dolluid co Áne Ailill,
ros traith 7 ros tairind;
is dachúaid ina gnáis ar sain,
ní ar áis acht ar éicin.

‘Ailill came to Áne,
overpowered her and laid her down;
and he had knowledge of her then,
not by consent but by force.

Darat Áni scéin d’Ailill,
nocor immarbrécc [...]:
tall a chlúais deiss dá chind chromm;
de ros len Ailill Ólom.

Áne used a knife against Ailill,
it was not a lie (?) [...]:
she cut the right ear from his crouching head,
so that he was called Ailill Bare-Ear.¹³

As might be expected, the story of the origin of Ailill's epithet is covered in *Cóir Anmann*, both the earlier version, the compilation of which was dated by Sharon Arbuthnot to the latter half of the twelfth century, and the later, expanded version. Arbuthnot dated this later compilation to the thirteenth century, perhaps the first half, although it drew extensively on a wide range of pre-existing sources.¹⁴ Neither version mentions the rape of Áine, while the

¹¹Ibid. 38–9 (§3).

¹²The poem is attributed to Cormac mac Cuilennáin (d. 908) in the Book of Leinster, but contains forms which must be later, as its editor, Myles Dillon, pointed out: ‘The yew of the disputing sons’, *Ériu* 14 (1946), 154–65, at 154.

¹³Ibid. 157, 162 (§§11–12).

¹⁴Sharon Arbuthnot (ed. and trans.), *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names*, 2 vols, ITS 59–60 (London 2005–7), i, 60–72.

later version presents her stripping of Ailill's ear as an act of revenge for her father Éogabal's death:

Cóir Anmann, earlier version:

Ailill *Ólom*: ar ní raibe craiceann na feoil *fora* cluais iarna lomadh do Aine ingen Eoghabail. *Nó* Aulom .i. aula lom .i. lom-aula .i. a righdai gan fial tairisi ara beodacht.

'Ailill Ólom [*< ó* "ear" + *lom* "bare"]: for there was neither skin nor flesh on his ear after it was stripped by Áine daughter of Eogabal. Or Aulom [*< aula* (Lat.) "palace" + *lom* "bare"], i.e. a bare palace, i.e. bare-palace, i.e. his palace had no covering over it because of his vigour."¹⁵

Cóir Anmann, later version:

Oilill *Ólom*: cidh 'ma n-apur fris? Ni *ansa*. Ar ní roibhe croicinn na feoil *fora* chlúais íarna lomadh d'Áine ingen Eogabhail a nDruim Eoghamuil. Ina chodlad *dano* ro bhoí Oilill in tan rus lom an *ingen* a ó *fora* chinn. – Ar ní fág an *ingen* día chlúais *for* Oilill *acht* colum na cluaissi namá. – Dúiscis Oilill iar sin asa chodlad γ do airigh *go* mór a ó arna lomadh don *ingin*. *Ocus* ba hannsum lais. Isbert Oilill: 'Is ger in póg sin, a *ingen*,' ar Oilill, 'as lom do fágais mo ó *formo* chinn.' Isbert Aine fri hOilill: 'Do mharbhaisi mh'athairsi anocht, a Oilill,' or Áine, 'i. Eogabal Sídhach, ocus ag sin mo chuitsi do dhighail mh'athar fort, a Oilill,' or Áine, 'γ bid ainm sloinnti duit co brath Oilill Ólom.' Cona[d] dé sin ro lil Oilill *Olom* dé. *Nó* Oilill Aulom .i. aula reigis .i. righthech ind rígh .i. lom a aula .i. a righduí .i. a ríthech. Ar ní roibhe fial tairis ara bheódacht .i. ní roibhe fál na cumdach timcholl a thighi ara omhan la cách.

'Ailill Ólom [*< ó* "ear" + *lom* "bare"]: why is he so called? It is not difficult. For there was neither skin nor flesh on his ear after it had been stripped by Áine daughter of Eogabal in Druim nEogabuil. Ailill had been asleep when the girl stripped his ear on his head. – For the girl left nothing of Ailill's ear but only the sinew of the ear. – Afterwards Ailill awoke from his sleep and he perceived clearly that his ear had been stripped by the girl. And he took it very hard. Ailill said: "That kiss was sharp, girl. You have left my ear bare on my head." Áine said to Ailill: "Ailill, you killed my father tonight, i.e. Eogabal Sídhach, and there is my revenge on you for my father, Ailill, and the name that signifies you for ever will be Ailill Ólom." That is why [the name] Ailill Ólom stuck to him. Or Ailill Aulom [*< aula* (Lat.)

¹⁵Ibid. 80–1, 120–1 (§2).

“palace” + *lom* “bare”], i.e. *aula regis*, i.e. the palace of the king, i.e. his palace was bare, i.e. his royal dwelling, i.e. his royal house. For there was no covering over it because of his vigour, i.e. there was neither enclosure nor construction around his house because everyone was afraid of him.¹⁶

T. F. O’Rahilly was sceptical of the antiquity of the story of Ailill’s rape of Áine, and was of the opinion that it was ‘invented primarily with the object of accounting for Ailill’s epithet *aulomm*, “bare-eared”, and secondarily in order to explain how enmity, engineered by Áine, arose between Lugaid and Ailill’s son, Eógan’.¹⁷ He pointed to Gilla Mo-Dutu’s contrary description of Áine as *ben d’Ailill* ‘wife of Ailill’ in the metrical *Bansenchas*;¹⁸ the prose *Bansenchas* also describes her as such.¹⁹

Despite Ailill’s impeccable connection with the Éoganachta in the medieval genealogical tradition (as father of the eponymous Éogan), O’Rahilly argued that he was in fact ‘taken over from the traditions of the Érainn’,²⁰ who included the Corcu Loigde, who had enjoyed a significant degree of power in Munster before their displacement by the Éoganachta by the seventh century,²¹ and to whom belonged Lugaid Mac Con. O’Rahilly also noted ‘a strong tendency among the genealogists to expand an uncommon mythical name by prefixing to it another name of a common type, to which it is placed in apposition,’ and cited ‘Ailill’ *Aulomm* as an example of this practice;²² he pointed out that in the version of the story of the expulsion of the Déssi that is also found within the Laud genealogical tract, Ailill’s descendants are referred to not as **clanna Ailella* (*Auluim*) but as *Clanna Auluim*.²³ This designation *Clanna Auluim* is also found in *Scéla Mošauluim*.²⁴ That *Aulomm* was in origin a personal name,

¹⁶Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann*, ii, 12–13, 88–9 (§41). The following entry (§42), which is concerned with the name *Ailill*, etymologising it as *ail* ‘blemish’ + *oll* ‘great’, also makes reference to Ailill’s bare ear, as one of three blemishes that he suffered as a result of his encounter with Áine. The other two blemishes were a black tooth (poisoned by his spear, which had been bent by a stone after having transfixed Áine, as he tried to straighten it with his tooth), and the foulness of his breath that resulted from the poisoning of his tooth.

¹⁷T. F. O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 289 n. 6.

¹⁸*Ibid.*; see Margaret C. Dobbs (ed. and trans.), ‘The Ban-shenchas’, *RC* 47 (1930), 283–339; *RC* 48 (1931), 163–233; *RC* 49 (1932), 437–89; this passage is at *RC* 47, 300.

¹⁹*Fa bean fos do Oilill .i. Aine ingen Fhir Hi m. Eogabail* (Dobbs, ‘The Ban-shenchas’, *RC* 48, 212).

²⁰O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 289.

²¹See, for example, Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (Oxford, 1973; second ed. Dublin, 2001), 180–1; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Corcu Loigde: land and families’, in Patrick O’Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttner (eds), *Cork: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1993), 63–81, at 63; Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Nations and kingdoms: a view from above’, in T. M. Charles-Edwards (ed.), *After Rome* (Oxford, 2003), 23–58, at 33.

²²O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 53.

²³*Ibid.* 53 n. 2; Kuno Meyer (ed.), ‘The Expulsion of the Déssi’, *Ériu* 3 (1907), 135–42, at 140.162–4.

²⁴O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74.518 (*la clanna Auluim*), 74.520 (*la maccu Auluim*). These examples occur in a similar context to that of the passage from ‘The Expulsion of

and not an epithet, may also be indicated by the presence in the genealogies of other characters so called, such as a son of Fergus mac Rossa, from whom were named Dál nÁulaim(m).²⁵ Áulomm mac Fergusa was also associated with an ear injury:

D'öenbreith ructha Ōlom 7 Conrī dā mac Fergusa 7 is amlaid
[rucad] Conrī 7 clūas Āulaim ina bēolu ĩarna tescad de.²⁶

‘Áulomm and Conrí, two sons of Fergus, were born in a single birth and it is thus that Conrí was born: with Áulomm’s ear in his mouth, having severed it from him.’

Ailill Áulomm is, however, only fairly rarely referred to in surviving sources by the second element of that name alone. With the exception of the usage in ‘The Expulsion of the Déssi’ just noted, and a couple of other exceptions which will be mentioned below, *Scéla Mošauluim* stands out from other sources concerned with Ailill Áulomm in its absolute use of the second onomastic element. There is, however, variation in how Ailill Áulomm is named in *Scéla Mošauluim*. *Ailill* alone is most common, being found nineteen times in all, with a fairly even distribution throughout the text. *Ailill Aulum* is only found once, in the section of the text that describes the arrangement that allegedly obtained between the Dáirfine and the Dergthine (also called *clanna* or *maic Auluim*, as mentioned above), whereby they would each hold the kingship and judgeship of Leinster and Munster alternately.²⁷ There are various indications in *Scéla Mošauluim* as a whole of its composite nature (as there are, indeed, in the Laud genealogical tract of which it is a part), and this particular section seems to stand apart from the general thrust of the narrative.²⁸ Moreover, an

the Déssi’ referred to above, i.e. an account of the kingship/judgeship alternation between the Dergthine and Dáirfine, from whom the Eóganacht and Corcu Loígde, respectively, proceeded.

²⁵O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 279 (157, 29–30); Nollaig Ó Muraíle (ed. and trans.), *Leabhar Mór na nGenelach: The Great Book of Irish Genealogies Compiled (1644–66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh*, 5 vols (Dublin, 2003), ii, 346 (§502.14). Dál nÁulaim is given as a branch of Clanna Fergusa in *Senchas Sil Ír*, which also, however, lists one Cú Coirpe Auluimb as a descendant of the same Fergus: Margaret E. Dobbs, ‘The history of the descendants of Ír’, *ZCP* 14 (1923), 44–144 at 48. Interestingly, the *Vita Tripartita* tells us that the tributary peoples subject to the Uí Amalgada (a gloss refers to these peoples as *senchenéla*) refused to accept as ruler a king with a nickname (*forainm*): Whitley Stokes (ed. and trans.), *The Tripartite Life of Patrick, with Other Documents Relating to that Saint*, 2 vols (London, 1887), i, 126.20–2, 127; Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin, 1939), 79.1454–80.1456.

²⁶Meyer, ‘The Laud genealogies’, 332; my translation. Cf. O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 279 (157, 31).

²⁷See n. 24 above. The occurrence of *Ailill Aulum* is at O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74.517.

²⁸We may note Margaret E. Dobbs’s comments in this regard: ‘From this and other evidence the earliest authority for Mac Con’s story, *Scéla Mos Auluim*, is, I think, a compilation from at least four different sources which of course may go back much earlier than the tenth century. I think the editor found a tract on Dáire Doimthech, etc., and added to it a tract on Mac Con’s quarrel with Ailill, then a short paragraph on the battle of Mucrima, lastly a full account of Mac Con’s death’ (‘Who was Lugaid Mac Con’, *JRSAI* 20/2 (1930), 165–87, at 181).

analogue of this particular section, the only one containing the collocation *Ailill Aulum*, is found elsewhere.²⁹ It would seem quite plausible, therefore, that the isolated use of *Ailill Aulum* in this section has been inherited from a source other than those which were used for the rest of the story. Throughout the rest of the text, *Mošaulum*, and not *Aulum*, is the only form of the second onomastic element found, whether used alone (six times, three of which are in verse), or in collocation with the name *Ailill* (five times).³⁰

As far as I have been able to establish, *Scéla Mošauluim* is the only place in which *Mošaulum* (with -š-) as a form of *Ailill*'s epithet is found. We may compare a quatrain which is found in *Scéla Mošauluim* but also, in slightly different form, elsewhere:

Scéla Mošauluim

Mairg dam-sa indiu, mairg do Chliu
fo-frith Fer Hí ina hÍu,
conid apath Art mac Cuind
7 *secht* maic Mošauluim.

‘Woe to me today, woe to Clíu,
that Fer hÍ was found in his yew-tree,
so that Art son of Cond
and the seven sons of Mošaulum died.’³¹

Cath Maige Mucrama

Mairg dam-sa de, mairgg do Chliu,
dia frith Fer Fíth inna íu;
is de do-cer Art mac Cuind
7 uii. *meic* MoÁuluim.³²

Aided Meic Con

Mairg damsas, a Dé, mairg do Chliu,
dia frith Fer Fí ina dí[u]
is de ro bí Art mac Cuind
la secht maccu Mo Úlaim.³³

Moreover, apart from one other possible (though I think doubtful) exception, discussed below, the last line in this quatrain in *Cath Maige Mucrama* and *Aided Meic Con* is, as far as I am aware, the only place, other than *Scéla Mošauluim*, in which *Ailill Áulomm* is referred to by his usual epithet *Áulomm* preceded by *Mo-* only, and not by *Ailill*. Even when *Ailill* is mentioned in other parts of the Laud genealogical tract, his epithet, when given, always has the form *Áulu(i)m/Ōlum*. In secondary literature, *Mošaulum* would seem simply to be taken as a variant of these forms, presumably incorporating a first person singular possessive, such as is found in hypocoristic name-forms. This appears to be how M. A. O’Brien took it, or at least his inclusion of *Mo Šaulom* in a list of hypocoristic names beginning with *Mo-/Do-* is the nearest I have come across to this being explicitly suggested.³⁴ The versions of the quatrain cited above from *Cath Maige Mucrama* and *Aided Meic Con* would seem to suggest that the name was understood there to contain a first person singular possessive.

²⁹See n. 24 above. Cf. O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 190 (147 b 11–16).

³⁰My figures differ slightly from those given by O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 11.

³¹O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 78–9 (§7).

³²Ibid. 58 (§62).

³³Myles Dillon (ed. and trans.), ‘The Death of Mac Con’, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 60/2 (1945), 340–5, at 342 (§4); translation at 344.

³⁴Rolf Baumgarten (ed.), ‘Old Irish personal names: M. A. O’Brien’s ‘Rhŷs Lecture’ – Notes, 1957’, *Celtica* 10 (1973), 211–36, at 220. In a note to O’Brien’s list, Baumgarten remarked that the second elements of the names *Mo Femis*, *Me Druí*, and *Mo Šaulom* ‘are not themselves hypocoristic formations’ (n. 17), unlike the other hypocorisms listed.

Is, then, *Mošaulum* simply a variant of *Moaulum*? The variation between a form with *-š-* and one without would seem to me somewhat unusual, although we may note at least one possible parallel in the various hypocoristic forms of St Sárán's name, such as *Mošacra*, *Moacra*, *Doacra*, *Momacra*, *Tacra*, among others,³⁵ where, however, the *s* is certainly radical. As Baumgarten noted, however,³⁶ even if we take *Mo-* as a hypocoristic prefix, *-(š)aulum* would not seem to display typical features of hypocoristic name-formation, such as shortening, suffixation, gemination of consonants, or palatalisation.³⁷ Paul Russell has described hypocoristic names incorporating the prefix *Mo-* as 'markedly ecclesiastical',³⁸ in surviving texts, when *Mo* precedes a proper name in non-ecclesiastical contexts, it is predominantly found in vocative position.³⁹ We may further note that the quatrain cited above is put into the mouth of Sadb, Ailill's wife, and so the possessive in this particular context may have a true genitival/possessive or honorific function. On the other hand, in a comment made at the presentation of a previous version of this paper at the Fourteenth International Congress of Celtic Studies, Maynooth, in 2011, Donnchadh Ó Corráin suggested that non-ecclesiastical hypocorisms may have been more common than surviving sources indicate. An interesting parallel may be presented by the example of a Leinster king, Muiredach Sníthe, the second element of whose name is also found in seemingly hypocoristic form, Muiredach Mo-Sníthech.⁴⁰

Returning to the quatrain cited from various sources above: while *Scéla Mošauluim* is generally considered to be the earliest of the three tales that contain it, Margaret Dobbs was of the opinion that the quatrain was in existence before the compilation of *Scéla Mošauluim*.⁴¹ Which of these, then,

³⁵Pádraig Ó Riain, *A Dictionary of Irish Saints* (Dublin, 2011), 498–9 s.v. *Moshagra*. *Mosacra* appears in the list of guarantors of *Cáin Adomnáin*, and Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha noted variant forms of this name, 'The guarantor list of *Cáin Adomnáin*, 697', *Peritia* 1 (1982), 178–215, at 180, 189 and 189 n. 1.

³⁶See n. 34 above.

³⁷See the discussion in Paul Russell, 'Patterns of hypocorism in early Irish hagiography' in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Pádraig Ó Riain (eds), *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars* (Dublin, 2001), 237–49, at 245–6.

³⁸Ibid. 243.

³⁹Joseph Vendryes noted the examples (*a*) *mo Nere* from *Audacht Morainn*, and *a mo phopa Laíg* from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ('Sur le hypocoristiques celtiques', *EC* 2 (1937), 254–68, at 258), to which more could be added, including *mo Luigid Luigde* from *Scéla Mošauluim* itself (O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 76.562). See also Rolf Baumgarten, 'The syntax of Irish *ar marb*, *ar mbeo*: *ar mairb*, *ar mbi*?', *Ériu* 40 (1989), 99–112, at 101–2.

⁴⁰He is called *Muiredach Sníthe* in the genealogies of Uí Bairrche, where it is also stated that *robo rí hÉrenn Muiredach Sníthe* (O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 47 (121 ab 54, b 1–3)), citing Laidcenn mac Bairceda's poem *Nídu dír dermait*, in which Muiredach is referred to as *Muiredach Mo-Sníthech* (ibid. 9 (116 c 44)). This would seem to involve the rather uncommon hypocoristic suffixation of *-ach*, although Paul Russell notes that hypocorisms using this suffix are not found in combination with the prefixation of *Mo-/To-* (Russell, 'Patterns of hypocorism', 245). Although the final syllable of *Sníthe* is denoted by a suspension stroke in the references given above, and could therefore theoretically be rendered *Sníthech*, *Sníthe/Sníthi* is found written *plene* elsewhere (e.g. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 50–1 (122 a 2, 18), 335 (311 ab 60); Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson B. 502 f. 48ra49).

⁴¹Dobbs, 'Who was Lugaid mac Con?', 181.

preserves the better reading? Myles Dillon suggested that the compiler of *Cath Maíge Mucrama* may have drawn on a source now represented by *Aided Meic Con*,⁴² in which case we need not think of them as two independent witnesses. If so, however, that source is not represented flawlessly in *Aided Meic Con*, since *ina dí[u]* in the second line of that version would seem to be an error not found in *Cath Maíge Mucrama*. The variants in the third line (*-apath / do-cer / ro bí*) do not really help in ascertaining the earliest version of the quatrain, and while the form of Ailill's alias in *Aided Meic Con* and *Cath Maíge Mucrama* reflects the general attestation of his epithet across early Irish material at large (i.e. Ailill Áulomm), it may be a *lectio faciliior*. There is good cause, therefore, to take the form in *Scéla Mošauluim* as genuine.

If we were to interpret this form, *Mošaulum*, as containing a possessive, then that which is possessed is not *Aulum* but *Saulum*. In that case, the lenition on the *s* (which is clear in the manuscript) presumably indicates the beginning of either another word or the second element of a compound beginning with *s*-.⁴³ Therefore, whether we see a possessive in this form or not, we should not expect to find its explanation in the 'bare ear' etymology. Indeed, this etymology may not necessarily be giving us the true origin of *Aulomm* either. Investigation of this question is beyond the scope of this paper, but it seems to me that there are other words that might be read in the first syllable of the compound, the vocalism of which varies considerably: *ól* 'drink',⁴⁴ *ói* 'sheep', *óal* 'cheek', *ul* 'beard', or, as David Sproule suggested, *áue* 'descendant',⁴⁵ may be other possible contenders. We should also bear in mind the phenomenon of 'change of form or spelling of names through popular etymology', pointed to by Rolf Baumgarten as a subject worthy of more scholarly attention.⁴⁶

There is a detail in the later version of *Cóir Anmann*, in an entry mentioned in passing above (n. 16), which is worth considering here:

Tri haithisi Oilella sin gein bhoí a mbiú. Is aire adubhrad Ailill
fris .i. ail oll .i. is oll in ail fil forsin fer. Ailill Ólom a ainm iar sin
la cách. Mass mac Moga Nuadat a ainm gó sin.

'Those were Ailill's three blemishes for the rest of his life. For that reason he was called Ailill, i.e. great blemish, i.e. great is the man's blemish. Everyone called him Ailill Ólom after that. Until then his name had been Mass son of Mug Nuadat.'⁴⁷

⁴²Dillon, 'The Death of Mac Con', 340.

⁴³Lenited *-s-* disappeared in intervocalic medial position (*GOI* 84 (§131)), and it could hardly mark the end of the first element of a compound here, as only faint traces of final lenited *-s* can be discerned even in the earliest Irish (*GOI l.c.* and 150–3 (§§240–3)).

⁴⁴For a discussion of this element in the name *Ólchobar*, see Calvert Watkins, 'Varia. II', *Ériu* 19 (1962), 114–18, at 115–16.

⁴⁵David Sproule, 'Politics and pure narrative in the stories about Corc of Cashel', *Ériu* 36 (1985), 11–28, at 13 n. 13.

⁴⁶Baumgarten, 'Old Irish personal names', 213.

⁴⁷Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann*, ii, 13, 89 (§42).

In her edition, Sharon Arbuthnot suggests that the name *Mass* is the word meaning ‘fine, handsome’, and that ‘the purpose of mentioning the name at this point is probably to contrast Ailill Ólom’s former state with that after his encounter with Áine.’⁴⁸ Keating was also of the opinion that Ailill had another name formerly, but according to him, that name was not *Mass*, but Óengus:

Aonghus fá hainm ar dtús d’Oilill Ólom agus is uime tugadh Oilill Ólom air, feis do rinne sé ré hÁine inghin Eoghabhail agus ar mbeith ’n-a codladh i bhfochair Oilíolla dhi do chreim sí a chluais ó n-a cheann i ndíoghail a héignithe agus a hathar do mharbhadh dhó. Gonadh tríd sin ghairthear Oilill Ólom .i. cluaslom dhe.

‘Oilill Olom’s first name was Aonghus, and he was called Oilill Olom because he had intercourse with Áine daughter of Eoghabhal, and as she slept with Oilill she bit his ear off his head in retribution for his rape of her and for his having slain her father. Hence he was called Oilill Olom, that is ear-cropped.’⁴⁹

I have not been able to find other instances of these names applied to Ailill, and of course great caution must be exercised when relating the evidence of these sources to a period which is so much earlier than either of them; it is interesting nevertheless to see that there may have been some kind of tradition that Ailill Áulomm was not always so called. The acquisition of new names was not unusual.⁵⁰ Could the *Mass* of *Cóir Anmann* have derived from a metanalysis of something like *Masaulom*, whereby the boundary between the elements was judged to come after, rather than before, the *s*? It would not otherwise seem to have been a common name, to judge by the single instance recorded by O’Brien (from the genealogies of the Osraige), where, however, manuscript copies seem to differ as to whether *Mas* is to be taken as an element of a name, or as a personal name in itself:

Rawlinson B. 502:

Cōic meic Droīdo meic Buain: Daig, Māl, Fothud, Conchobor Mas, Crimthann.

Book of Leinster:

Cōic meic Dróida meic Buain: Daig, Māl, Fothaid Conchend, Mas-crimthand.

⁴⁸Ibid. 161.

⁴⁹David Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen (ed. and trans.), *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating D.D.*, 4 vols, ITS 4, 8, 9, 15 (London, 1901–14), ii, 280–1.

⁵⁰Russell, ‘Patterns of hypocorism’, 240, observes that ‘there is plenty of evidence for individuals having different names at different stages of their lives, names which can in no way be claimed to be formally related’, and that ‘[t]he idea that a different name from the one given at birth could be acquired during one’s lifetime is familiar ... In a number of cases it would seem that the later a name was acquired the more perspicuous it is likely to be. In Irish terms that often means the more prone it is to be etymologised’ (ibid. 241).

Book of Lecan:

Cōic meic Drodai meic Buain: Daig, Māl, Fothad coincheann 7
Mas 7 Crimthann.⁵¹

The apparent confusion between the manuscript copies of the genealogy may reflect uncertainty about a naming element that had fallen out of use or was unfamiliar.⁵² Another possibility is that *Mas(s)* is a variant of the more common name-element *mess* ‘fosterling’, which is sometimes found with non-palatal initial *M-*; the population name Dál Messe-Corb, for example, is also found as Dál Mos-Corb.⁵³ Such a variant could presumably only arise if *Mess* was understood as being in composition with the name following it, a later development, according to *DIL*.⁵⁴ This element may have been what Margaret Dobbs had in mind when she rendered the title of our story ‘Scela Mos Auluim’.⁵⁵

In his study of the early political history of Munster, Liam Ó Buachalla made some interesting observations about the naming practices of Munster peoples from the fifth to the early seventh century. He distinguished between two groups: Group A, comprising ‘leading Goidelic septs’, including the Éoganachta, and Group B, comprising ‘leading vassal septs’, including the Ciarraige and Múscraige, but also the Osraige, who were regarded as a free people.⁵⁶ One of Ó Buachalla’s observations was that there tends to be great diversity among the surviving personal names in Group B, with very many names occurring only once in our records; in Group A, on the other hand, he noted the marked popularity of certain names, which account for a significant number of members of this group during this period. Many of these popular Group A names are also prominent in mythical or legendary contexts, unlike the vast majority of those from Group B.⁵⁷ Ó Buachalla points to a resemblance between Group B naming patterns and those of ‘the ruling families of Wales in the early centuries’, and argues that naming traditions among Group B peoples are an inheritance from ‘the period before the Irish peoples of Brittonic origin had separated from the parent stock in Britain’.⁵⁸

⁵¹O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 103 (128 b 53).

⁵²The genealogies of the saints, however, record two bearers of what may be a diminutive form of the name, *Massán*: see Pádraig Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), 139 (§706.13), 145 (§707.403), 156 (§709.26), 158 (§710.48).

⁵³O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 191 (147 b 27): *Mos-Corb ut quidam putant* (Book of Leinster); R.A.S. Macalister (ed.), *Lebor Gabála Éirenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, 5 vols, ITS 34, 35, 39, 41, 44 (London, 1938–56), v, 101–2 (§467): *O Eber autem Dal Mes* (v.l. *Mos*) *Corp*; Stokes, *Tripartite Life*, i, xxxiii–xxxiv: [*L*] *Joech amnas robái do Dáil MossCorp Laigen*.

⁵⁴*DIL* s.v. 3 *mes(s)*.

⁵⁵See n. 28 above.

⁵⁶Liam Ó Buachalla, ‘Contributions towards the political history of Munster, 450–800 A.D. (Early Munster personal name-systems)’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 61 (1956), 89–102, at 89–90.

⁵⁷*Ibid.* 91–3, 95.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* 95–8.

Whatever about what these names can tell us about the prehistoric origins of these peoples, many Group B names, as identified by Ó Buachalla, do seem distinctive, or even exotic, when compared to the more common and familiar Group A names – from this remove at least. This makes one wonder whether, for example, the element *Mo-/Me-/Ma-* as found at the beginning of some names, and especially names from Ó Buachalla's Group B peoples, is in fact not the possessive adjective at all, although, like the latter, it appears to be unstressed, to go by the variation in the vowel and syncope in forms like *Corcomruad* < *Corcu M'druad* < *Me-druí*. M. A. O'Brien included in his list of hypocoristic names beginning with the possessives *Mo-/Do-* three – *Mo Femis*, *Me Druí* and *Mo Šaulom* – which differ from the others in his list in that the second elements are not hypocoristic formations, as Baumgarten pointed out.⁵⁹ All three of these names may be found among the pedigrees of peoples in Ó Buachalla's Group B, those of prehistoric Munster before the emergence of the Éoganachta, and often display variation in spelling: *Me Druí*, for example, is often spelt *Ma Druí*, although I am not aware of any attestation of the name in the nominative with the normal spelling of the possessive *Mo*; it is however sometimes found in the genitive, as in *Corca Mo Druad* (*uel sim*).⁶⁰ Baumgarten also alludes to variant spellings of another of the three names, *Mo Šaulom*, including without lenition (*Ma-Saulomm*) and without the lenited *s* altogether (*M'Aulom*).⁶¹ Here, then, is a name which should give us pause for thought.

Mo Šaulom/Ma-Saulomm/M'Aulom was not a common name by any means, to judge by surviving records; the only instance of it that I have found is in the pedigrees of the Ciarraige Luachra. I give below occurrences of the name (in bold) from O'Brien's edition of the genealogies:

... m. Cuilind m. **Ma-Saulim** m. Mese-*Chon* m. Saula m. Moga-Airtt
qui dicitur Ciar ...⁶²

... m. Mochon m. **M'Óluim** m. Messe-*chon* m. Moga-Airt ...⁶³

... m. Mochon m. **M'Aulaim** m. Meso-*chon* m. Saulo m. Moga-Airt ...⁶⁴

... m. Mochon m. **Saulim** m. Messe-*chon* m. Saulo m. Moga-Airtt ...⁶⁵

⁵⁹Baumgarten, 'Old Irish personal names', 220. See n. 34 above.

⁶⁰E.g. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 157, 35; *AU* 705.2; Charles Plummer (ed. and trans.), *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1922), i, 90 (§192); J. Fraser, P. Grosjean and J. G. O'Keefe (eds), *Irish Texts I* (London, 1931), 19 (§7), 21 (§13); T. Ó Donnchadha, *An Leabhar Muimhneach maraon le Suim Aguisíni* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1940), 116.

⁶¹Baumgarten, 'Old Irish personal names', 220 n. 17.

⁶²O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 287 (158, 45), from Rawlinson B. 502. Variant readings are *Mesa-Uluim* (Book of Lecan) and *Neasa Ulaim* (Book of Ballymote).

⁶³Ibid. 391 (327 c 61), from the Book of Leinster.

⁶⁴Ibid. 427 (336 f 1), from the Book of Leinster.

⁶⁵Ibid. 254 (154 d 35), from Rawlinson B. 502. The Book of Lecan reads *Mesauluim*.

This same character appears in the saints' genealogies also, again with variation in the form of his name:

Mochuta Lis Moir m. Finaill ... ~ 5 ~ ... m. Mencon m. **Aulaim** m.
 Meschon m. Sula m. Moga Airt ...⁶⁶
 Ciar m. Ambrit m. Imchada m. Mochon m. **Saulim** m. Eschon m.
 Saulo m. Moga Airt ...⁶⁷
 Cammine m. Colmain ... ~ 4 ~ ... m. Mochon m. **Saulim** m.
 Eschon m. Saulo m. Moga Airt ...⁶⁸
 Epscop Lugach i Cúil Bennchair m. Lugdach ... ~ 10 ~ ... m. Mochon
 m. **Saulim** m. Meschon m. Etechta m. Saulo m. Moga Airt ...⁶⁹

I mentioned above that apart from the quatrains cited from *Cath Maige Mucrama* and *Aided Meic Con*, I have found only one other possible instance of the use of *Mo(s)aulum* alone, uncollocated with *Ailill*, but which has been understood as referring to Ailill Áulomm. I would like to briefly address this instance now. As the first pedigree of the set just cited claims, St Carthach (Mochuta) was a descendant of Aulam mac Meschon. The story of the expulsion of Mochuta from Rahan includes a quatrain containing a form like *Mo(s)aulum*:

Mochutta <i>cona</i> chlamhraidh	‘Mochuda and his leper band
D’innarbadh a Rathain roglain;	Expelled from fair Rahan;
Forbais doibh ar clannaib Cuinn	An encampment by them against Conn’s clans
Tarraid do siol Muolum.	Came to the seed of Muolom. ⁷⁰

In the light of Mochuta’s pedigree, it is perhaps more likely that this *Muolum* refers to this Ciarraige ancestor than to Ailill Áulomm, as Plummer had thought.⁷¹ This may present further evidence with regard to the place-name *Ager Eolum*, found in the Latin Life of Mochuta, which was identified with Gortaleen in p. Kilgarrylander, bar. Trughanacmy, Co. Kerry by Plummer.⁷² Although Donnchadh Ó Corráin questions the basis of the identification with Gortaleen, he has argued for a connection between the area around Trughanacmy and Corcu Auluim, a population group with associations with Ciarraige Luachra, and has suggested that the element *Eolum* in

⁶⁶Ó Riain, *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 21–2 (§126).

⁶⁷Ibid. 23 (§134).

⁶⁸Ibid. 47 (§290.2). Variant readings are *Saluluim* (Book of Ballymote) and *Masaulim* (Leabhar Breac).

⁶⁹Ibid. 48 (§295). Variant readings are *Masaulaim* (Leabhar Breac) and *Ulain* (TCD MS H.2.17 (1319)).

⁷⁰Plummer, *Bethada Náem nÉirenn*, i, 302; ii, 293 (= *Indarba Mo-Chuta a Raithin*). This quatrain and another accompanying it are concerned with the ‘three crooked counsels’ of Leth Cuinn, one of which was Mochuta’s banishment. Plummer’s translation may perhaps be amended, therefore: the copy in the Book of Fermoy shows a length mark on the second syllable of *forbais*, and might be better translated ‘great foolishness’.

⁷¹Ibid. ii, 359.

⁷²Charles Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1910), ii, 327.

Ager Eolum recalls their name.⁷³ It was perhaps Mochuta's Ciarraige ancestor, who appears variously in the pedigrees cited above as *Saulim*, *Ma-Saulim*, *Aula(i)m*, *M'Aula(i)m*, whose name is preserved in the population name *Corcu Auluim*, although elsewhere their descent is traced to Corb Áulomm, son of Fergus mac Róig.⁷⁴

Similar variation is found in Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh's genealogies of Ciarraige:

Conchabar m. Seaáin ... ~ 33 ~ ... m. Mochuine m. **Auluim**
(**no Oluim**) m. Mesí Con m. Saula m. Mogha Airt ...⁷⁵
Caimin mac Colman ... ~ 4 ~... mc Mocon mc **Mosauluim** mc
Measchon m. Measamuin mc Mogha Airt ..⁷⁶
Mo-*Chuda* ... ~ 6 ~ ... m. Mencon m. **Auluim** m. Measchon m.
Saula m. Mogha Airt ...⁷⁷
Easbog Lugdach i cCúil Bheannchuir m. Lugdhoch ... ~ 10 ~ ...
mc Mochon mc **Mosaulaimh** m. Mesicon mc Echachda mec
Mosaulaimh m. Mogha Airt .i. Ciar.⁷⁸

We might also note the brief entry on Dál Máthrach, presented by Mac Fhir Bhisigh as one of the *forsloinnti* 'alien families' of Ireland, and elsewhere in genealogical tradition as a branch of Clann Ébir:

Dál Mathrach .i. Mathrí mac **Muhaulaim** Gabam.⁷⁹

Here, the father of the eponymous ancestor Mathrí is named as *Muhaulam Gabam/Gabann*. Ailill Áulomm was also reputed to have had a son called Mathrach, who, we are told, died at the Battle of Mag Mucrama, along with most of his brothers, and left no heirs.⁸⁰ 'The Expulsion of the Déssi' in the Laud genealogical tract, however, seems to identify the eponym of Dál Máthrach with Ailill Áulomm's son:

Coica do trí maccaib Mathrach maic Ailella Auluim, ingen
Fírgair a mathair, diata Dal Mathrach.⁸¹

⁷³Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Onomata', *Ériu* 30 (1979), 165–80, at 176–8.

⁷⁴O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 321 (161 b 30); cf. Ó Corráin, 'Onomata', 176–7. There is likely to have been conflation in the genealogical record between Corb Áulomm, eponym of Corcu Auluim, and Áulomm son of Fergus mac Rossa, eponym of Dál nÁuluim (see above nn. 25–6).

⁷⁵Ó Muraíle, *Leabhar Mór na nGenelach*, ii, 494 (§572.1).

⁷⁶Ibid. ii, 746 (§727.21).

⁷⁷Ibid. ii, 750 (§729.2).

⁷⁸Ibid. ii, 760 (§733.12).

⁷⁹Ibid. iii, 62 (§782.8). Mac Fhir Bhisigh's *Cuimre* has *Mathrí mac Muhaulaim Gabann* (ibid. iii, 356 (§1024.1)), while the genealogical compilation titled *De Forslointib hÉrend* has *Mathrí mac Mu hAulaim Gabair* (Margaret E. Dobbs (ed.), 'Miscellany from H. 2. 7. (T. C. D.)', *ZCP* 21 (1940), 307–18, at 313).

⁸⁰O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, 192–3 (147 b 40, 43–4, 53).

⁸¹Meyer, 'The Expulsion', 139.141–2; my translation. The version in Rawlinson B. 502 omits some text here due to a scribal slip; see Kuno Meyer, 'The Expulsion of the Dessi', *Y Cymmrodor* 14 (1901), 101–35, at 128 and n. 10.

‘Fifty (men) of the three sons of Máthri, son of Ailill Áulomm – Fer Gair’s daughter was their mother – from whom are the Dál Máthrach.’

It will be noticed that much of the genealogical material presented here is closely associated with Ciarraige Luachra, one of the main peoples of Ó Buachalla’s Group B; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, in his discussion of the Corcu Aulim, pointed out that although references to that group are rare, where they occur, they similarly point to a connection with Ciarraige Luachra.⁸² The latter were quite assertive in regard to their rather uneasy relationship with their immediate overlords, Éoganacht Locha Léin, and their perhaps more aspirant one with the kings of Cashel, if we go by, for example, the evidence of the tract known as *The West Munster Synod*, which may date to the eighth or ninth century and which is also found as part of the Laud genealogical tract.⁸³ This tract describes the rebellion of Ciarraige Luachra and other Munster groups against Éoganacht Locha Léin, the kings of west Munster, and asserts the primacy of the king of Cashel as the only king that these groups would recognise as their overlord. Francis John Byrne describes the text as ‘a political manifesto’, whose ‘real background’ lies not in the fictional sixth-century synod it purports to describe, but in a battle between Ciarraige Luachra and Éoganacht Locha Léin in 803.⁸⁴

Might the political context behind the compilation of *The West Munster Synod* have something to tell us about the possibly contemporaneous *Scéla Mošauluim*? Was a political point being made through the literary imposition of a Ciarraige name – in defiance of all other surviving testimony, it seems – on a proto-Éoganacht ancestor? Did the author intend, by doing so, to claim a privileged position for Ciarraige within Munster polity? Or does Ailill’s arguably Ciarraige alias suggest another compelling possibility, one that equally, though on a different basis, asserts a special relationship between Ciarraige and the Munster kings: that is, that Ailill had been fostered, or indeed had been born, among the Ciarraige? However, nicknames acquired through fosterage recall the name of the people with whom, or the place in which, the fosterage took place, and surviving examples generally take an adjectival form in *-ach*.⁸⁵ This fact, and the preponderance of Ailill’s more usual nickname

⁸²Ó Corráin, ‘Onomata’, 176–8.

⁸³Text in Meyer, ‘The Laud genealogies’, 315–17; the text is partly translated and partly paraphrased in Byrne, *Irish Kings*, 216–18. Liam Ó Buachalla puts the compilation of the text no later than the ninth century (‘Contributions towards the political history of Munster, 450–800 A. D. (contd.)’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 57 (1952), 67–86, at 78, 80). Thomas Charles-Edwards tends towards the late eighth century (*Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), 522, 549; idem, *The Chronicle of Ireland*, 2 vols (Liverpool, 2006), i, 264 n. 5), while Dáibhí Ó Cróinín concludes that it was ‘probably written in its present form during the ninth century, but containing details relating to the earlier period’ (‘Ireland, 400–800’, in D. Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), 182–234, at 224).

⁸⁴*Early Irish Kings*, 219–20. Cf. Ó Buachalla, ‘Contributions towards the political history ... (contd.)’, 80; Charles-Edwards, *Chronicle of Ireland*, i, 264 n. 5.

⁸⁵John O’Donovan, *The Topographical Poems of John O’Dubhagain and Giolla na Naomh O’Huidhrin* (Dublin, 1862), 17–18.

Ólomm (regardless of the authenticity or otherwise of its explanation), makes it difficult to propose that *Mošaulum* was the original form of such a nickname, but its discrepancy is surely not without either reason or intent. O’Rahilly’s observation about the prefixing of common names to uncommon ones (see n. 22 above) strikes me as most suggestive here, although there is more evidence for *Mošaulum* as a human than as a mythical name. We may never be able to fully get to the bottom of this question, but there would seem to be cause to suspect that this unusual form of the epithet is a clue to the origins of Ailill Áulomm, fortuitously surviving within an otherwise largely homogeneous historical construct.⁸⁶

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