

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

From The Book of Invasions

Table of Contents

<u>The Conquest of the Sons of Mil</u>	1
<u>From The Book of Invasions</u>	1
<u>Introduction:</u>	1

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Introduction:

After the death of Mil, as we have said, Emer Donn and Eremon, his two sons, took rule and chief government of Spain between themselves.

There was a father's brother of Mil, Ith son of Bregan, with them; he was expert and accomplished in knowledge and in learning. Once when Ith, of a clear winter's evening was on top of Bregan's Tower, contemplating and looking over the four quarters of the world, it seemed to him that he saw a shadow and a likeness of a land and lofty island far away from him. He went back to his brethren, and told them what he had seen; and said that he was mindful and desirous of going to see the land that had appeared to him. Breg son of Bregan said that it was no land he had seen but clouds of heaven, and he was hindering Ith from going on that expedition. Ith did not consent to stay, however.

Then Ith brought his ship on the sea, and came himself with his son Lugaid son of Ith, and others of his people in it. They sailed toward Ireland, and their adventures on sea are not related, save only that they took harbor in Bentracht of Mag Itha. The neighbors went to the shore to interview them, and each of them told news to the other in the Irish language. Ith asked them the name of the land to which he had come, and who was in authority over it. "Inis Elga," they said; "Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht, and Mac Greine are the names of its kings".

It happened in that day that there were many chieftains and nobles of Ireland in Ailech Neid, making peace between Mac Cuill and his brethren; for they said that he had an excess of the goods of Fiachna son of Delbaeth, who had died previously. When Ith heard that, he went with his son and with two-thirds of his people to Ailech. The kings welcomed him when he reached the assembly, and after he was a while among them, they told him the matter about which they were in opposition and contention between them. And he said to them:

"Do just righteousness. It is fitting for you to maintain a good brotherhood. It is right for you to have a good disposition. Good is the land and the patrimony you inhabit; plenteous her harvest, her honey, her fish, her wheat, and her other grain. Moderate her heat and her cold. All that is sufficient for you is in her." Then he took farewell of them and went to his ship.

The nobles plotted to kill him, in jealousy for Ireland, and for the testimony of praise he gave to their island; and they sent a great number to follow him, so that he was wounded to death in Mag Itha, and from him the plain took its name. He reached his ship wounded and bleeding, by the valor and bravery of his people; and he died with them in his ship on the sea.

Then they reached Spain and showed the body of Ith to his brethren, and they were anguished and sorrowful at his dying thus. Then the sons of Mil and the posterity of Gaedel in general thought it was fitting and proper for them to go and avenge their brother on the Tuatha De Danann. They decided on this at last: they collected their warriors and their men of valor from every place where they were, through the lands and the districts, until they were in one place in Brigantia, numerous and fully assembled. Then the sons of Mil, with their brethren and kinsmen, and

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

their people in general, brought their ships on the sea to go to Ireland to avenge their bad welcome on the Tuatha De Dannann. Three score and five ships was the number of the expedition; forty chiefs the number of their leaders, with Donn son of Mil at their head. These are the names of their chiefs.

Emer Donn, Eremon, Eber Finn, Ir, Amergin, Colptha, Airech Febra, Erannan,

Muimne, Luigne, Laigne, Palap, Er. Orba, Feron, Fergin,

Eber son if Ir, Brega, Cuala, Cooley, Blad, Fuad, Buirthemne, Eblinne, Nar,

Lugaid, Lui, Bile, Buas, Bres, Buaighe, Fulman, mantan,

Caicer, Suirge, En, Un, Etan, Sobairce, Sedga, Goisten.

To commemorate the names of those chiefs and leaders, this was said; Flann Mainistrech composed it:

The chiefs of the voyage over the sea

By which the sons of Mil came,
I have in recollection during my life,
Their names without lie.
Donn Eremon, noble Emer,
Ir, Amergin without partiality,
Colptha, Airech, Febra the keen,
Erannan, Muimne fine and smooth.
Luigne, Laigne, Palap the lucky,
Er. Orba Feron, Fergin,
Eber son if Ir. Brega, I shall say,
Cuala, Cualgne, Blad rough and strong.
Fuad and Muirthemne with fame,
Eblinne, Nar, Buas with battle,
Bres, Buaighe, and Fulman.
Mantan, Caicer, slender Suirge,
En, Un and rigid Etan,
Sobairce, Sedga of spears,
And Goisten the champion.
The conquered noble Ireland
Against the Tuatha De of great magic,
In vengeance for Ith of the steeds—
Thirty, ten, and one chieftain.

As for the sons of Mil, they sailed in a great expedition on the sea to Ireland, and did not pause in the course until they saw at a distance the island from the sea. And when they saw Ireland, their warriors made a contention of rowing and sailing to their utmost in their eagerness and anxiety to reach it; so that Ir son of Mil advanced a wave before every other ship by reason of his strength and valor. So Eber Donn son of Mil, the eldest of them, was jealous and said:

*It is no good deed
Ir before Ith to proceed—*

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

That is before Lugai'd son of Ith, for Lugaid had the name Ith. Then the oar that was in the hand of Ir split, so that Ir fell backwards across the thwart and broke his back there He died on the following night, and they preserved his body so long as they were on the sea, and buried it afterwards in Scellic of Irras Desceirt of Corco Dibne. Sorrowful were Eremon, Eber Finn and Amergin at the death of their brother; and they said, as it were out of one mouth, it was right that Eber Donn should not enjoy the land about which he was envious of his brother, that is of Ir.

The sons of Mil advanced to a landing in Inber Stainge. The Tuatha De Danann did not allow them to come to the land there, for they had not held parley with them. By their druidry they caused it to appear to the sons of Mil that the region was no country or island, territory or land at all, in front of them. They encircled Ireland three times, till at last they took the harbor at Inber Scene; a Thursday as regards the day of the week, on the day before the first of May, the seventeenth day of the moon; the Year of the World 3500.

Then they came at the end of three days thereafter to Sliab Mis. Banba met them in Sliab Mis, with the hosts of druidry and cunning. Amergin asked her name. " Banba," said she, "and it is from my name that Banba is given as a name for this country." And she asked a petition from them, that her name should remain always on the island. That was granted to her.

Then they had converse with Fodla in Eblinne, and the poet Amergin asked her name of her in like manner. "Fodla," said she, "and from me is the land named." And she prayed that her name might remain on it, and it was granted to her as she requested. They held converse with Eriu in Usnech of Mide. She said to them, "Warriors," said she, " welcome to you. It is long since your coming is prophesied. Yours will be the island forever. There is not better island in the world. No race will be more perfect than your race."

"Good is that," said Amergin,

"Not to her do we give thanks for it," said Donn, "but to our gods and to our power."

"It is naught to thee," said Eriu; "thou shalt have no gain of this island nor will thy children. A gift to me, O sons of Mil and the children of Bregan, that my name may be upon this island!"

"It will be its chief name for ever," said Amergin, "namely Eriu."

The Gadels went to Tara. No Drum Cain was its name at that time among the Tuatha De Danann, Liathdruim was its name among the Fir Bolg. There were there kings before them in Laithdruim;

namely, Mac Cuill, Mac Cecht and Mac Greine. The sons of Mil demanded a battle or kingship or judgment from them.

They adjudged to the sons of Mil that they should have possession of the island to the end of nine days, to depart, or to submit, or to prepare for battle. "If my advice were carried out," said Donn son of Mil, "it is a battle it would be." The sons of Mil did not grant the respite they sought to the Tuatha De Danann..

"We give," said the kings, "the judgment of your own poets to you, for if they give a false judgment against us they will die on the spot."

"Give the judgment, Amergin; "said Donn.

"Speak it," said Amergin. "Let the land be left to them till we come again to take it by force."

"Whither shall we go?" said Eber Donn.

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

"Over nine waves," said Amergin; and he said this:

The men you have found are in possession:

Over the nine green-necked waves
Of the sea advance ye:
Unless by your power then be planted,
Quickly let the battle be prepared.
I assign the possession
Of the land ye have found:
If ye love concede this award,
If ye love not concede it not—

"If it were my counsel that were followed," said Donn son of Mil, "battle it would be." Nevertheless the sons of Mil went by the advice and judgment of Amergin from Liathdruim to Inber Scene, the place where they had left their ships, and passed over nine waves. "Let us trust to the powers," said the druids, "that they may never reach Ireland." With that the druids cast druidic winds after them, so great was the storm; so that the storm took them westward in the ocean until they were weary. "A druid's wind is that," said Donn son of Mil. "It is indeed said Amergin, 'unless it be higher than the mast; find out for us if it be so.'" Erannan the youngest son of Mil went up the mast, and said that it was not over them. With that he fell on the planks of the ship from the mast, so that they shattered his limbs.

"A shame to our men of learning is it," said Donn, "not to suppress the druidic wind."

"No shame it shall be," said Amergin, rising up; and he said:

I invoke the land of Ireland.

Much-coursed be the fertile sea,
Fertile be the fruit-s trewn mountain,
Fruit-strewn be the showery wood,
Showery be the river of water-falls,
Of water-falls be the lake of deep pools,
Deep pooled be the hill-top well,
A well of the tribes be the assembly,
An assembly of the kings be Tara,
Tara be the hill of the tribes,
The tribes of the sons of Mil,
Of mil be the ships the barks,
Let the lofty bark be Ireland,
Lofty Ireland Darkly sung,
An incantation of great cunning;
The great cunning of the wives of Bres,
The wives of Bres of Buaigne;
The great lady Ireland,
Eremon hath conquered her,
Ir, Eber have invoked for her.
I invoke the land of Ireland.

Immediately a tranquil calm came to them on the sea. Said Donn, "I will put under the edge of spears and swords

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

the warriors that are in the land now, only let me land." The wind increased on them thereupon, so that it separated from them the ship in which was Donn; and he was drowned at the Dumacha. Twenty-four warriors of valor, twelve women, and four mercenaries, with their folk are the number that were drowned with Donn in that ship. After that Donn was buried in the Dumacha; so that from him "Tech Duin" is called, and there is his own gravemound and the gravemound of everyone who was drowned of the chieftains of his people with him, in that place. Now Dil daughter of Mil, Eremon buried her," for the love he had for her, so that he said in putting a sod on her, "This is a sod on a "dear one" said he. These are the chieftains who were drowned with Donn at that time: Bile son of Brige, Airech Febra, Buss, Bres, and Buagne. Ir was buried in Scellic of Irras, as we have said above, Erannan died in the creek after going to contemplate the wind, and after breaking his bones on the deck. Eight chieftains were their losses among their nobles up to then.

In the night in which the sons of Mil came to Ireland was the burst of Loch Luigdech over the land in West Munster. When Lugaid son of Ith was bathing in the lake and Fial daughter of Mil his wife was bathing in the river that flows out of the lake, Lugaid went to the place where was the woman, he being naked; and when she looked on him thus she died of shame at once, and from her is named the river with its creek. Downcast was Lugaid after the woman's death, so that he said:

Sit we here over the strand,

Stormy the cold;
Chattering in my teeth,—a great tragedy
Is the tragedy that has reached me.
I tell you a woman has died
Whom fame magnifies'
Fial her name, from a warrior's nakedness
Upon the clean gravel.
A great death is the death that has reached me,
Harshly prostrated me;
The nakedness of her husband, she looked upon him
Who rested here.

Six woman of their nobles were their losses on the sea and land from their setting out from Spain till then. These are their names; Buan wife of Bile; Dil wife of Donn; Scene, he woman-satirist, wife of Amergin White-Knee (she died with them on the sea while they were coming to Ireland; so that Amergin said, "The harbor where we land, the name of Scene will be on it". That was true, for from her is named Inber Scene); Fial wife of Lugaid son of Ith; the wife of Ir and the wife of Muirthemne son of Bregan, were the other two.

When the sons of Mil reached the land in the creek we have mentioned, and when they had buried the troop of their nobles who had died of them, Eremon and Eber Finn divided the fleet with their chieftains and servants in two between them. After that Eremon sailed with thirty ships, keeping Ireland on his left hand, and he landed in Inber Colptha. These are the chieftains that were with him: Eber son of Ir, Amergin the poet, Palap, Muimne, Luigne, Iaigne, Brega, Muirthemne, Fuad, Cualgne, Colptha, Goisten, Sedga, Suirge, and Sobairce. The three last were champions. These are the slaves that were with Eremon: Aidne, Ai, Asal, Mide, Cuib, Cera, Ser, Slan, Ligen, Dul, Trega, Line.

On putting his right foot on the shore at Inber Colptha, it was then Amergin spoke this rhapsody:

I am a wind on the sea

I am a wave of the ocean
I am the roar of the sea,

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

I am a powerful ox,
I am a hawk on a cliff,
I am a dewdrop in the sunshine,
I am a boar for valor,
I am a salmon in pools,
I am a lake in a plain,
I am the strength of art,
I am a spear with spoils that wages battle,
I am a man that shapes fire for a head.
Who clears the stone-place of the mountain?
What the place in which the setting of the sun lies?
Who has sought peace without fear seven times?
Who names the waterfalls?
Who brings his cattle from the house of Tethra?
What person, what god
Forms weapons in a fort?
In a fort that nourishes satirists,
Chants a petition, divides the Ogam letters,
Separates a fleet, has sung praises?
A wise satirist.
He sang afterwards to increase fish in the creeks:
Fishful sea-
Fertile land-
Burst of fish-
Fish under wave-
With courses of birds--
Rough Sea-
A white wall--
With hundreds of salmon-
Broad Whale-
A port song-
A burst of fish.

As for Eber Finn son of Mil, he stayed in the south with thirty ships with him, until they came in the hosts of the battles that were fought between them and the Tuatha De Danann. These are the chieftains that were with Eber; Lugaid son of Ith, Er. Orba, Feron, Fegana the four sons of Eber, Cuala, Blad, Ebleo, Nar, En, Un Etan, Caicher, Mantan, Fulman. The six last, -En, Un, etc. Were champions. These are the slaves that were with him; Adar, Aigne, Deist, Dealala, Cliu, Morba, Fea, Liffe, Femen, Feara, Meda, and Obla.

When the sons of Mil reached their landing-place they made no delay until they reached Sliab Mis; and the battle of Sliab Mis was fought between them and the Tuatha De Danann, and the victory was with the sons of Mil. Many of the Tuatha De Danann were killed in that battle. It is there that Fas wife of Un son of Uicce fell, from whom is named Glen Faise. Scota wife of Mil fell in the same valley; from her is named "Scota's Grave", between Sliab Mis and the sea. The sons of Mil went afterwards to Tailtiu, and another battle was fought between them and the Tuatha De Danann there. Vehemently and whole-heartedly was it fought, for they were from morning to evening contending, bonehewing, and mutilating one another; till the three kings and the three queens of Ireland fell there- Mac Cecht by Eremon, Mac Cuill by Eber Finn, Mac Greine by Amergin, Eriu by Suyirge, Banba by Caicer, and Fodla by Etan. Those were the deaths of their chiefs and princes. After that the Tuatha De Danann were routed to the sea and the sons of Mil and their host were a long time following the rout. There fell, however two noble chiefs of the people of the sons of Mil in inflicting the rout, namely, Fuad in Sliab Fuait, and Cualgne in Sliab Cualgne, together with other warriors besides, who fell together on both sides. When the Tuatha

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

De Danann were crushed and expelled in the battles that were fought between them, the sons of Mil took the lordship of Ireland.

After that there arose a contention between the sons of Mil about the kingship, that is between Eremon and Eber, so that Amergin was brought to make peace between them. He said that the inheritance of the eldest, of Donn, should go to the youngest, to Eremon, and his inheritance to Eber after him; Eber did not accept that, but insisted on dividing Ireland. Eremon agreed to do so. Accordingly Ireland was divided in two between them, the northern half to Eremon, from Srub Brain to the Boyne, the southern half to Eber, from the Boyne to Tonn Clidna. There were five chieftains in the division of each of them. With Eremon first, Amergin, Sedga, Goisten, Suirge, and Sobairce. Now in that year these forts were dug by Eremon and his people: Rath Beothaig, above the Nore in Argat Ros; Rath Oinn, in the territory of Cula, by Eremon; the Causeway of Inber Mor, in the territory of Ui Enechglais, by Amergin; the building of Dun Nair, in Sliab Madoirn, by Goisten; the building of Dun Delginne, in the territory of Cuala, by Sedga; the building of his fort by Sobairce in Morbolg of Dal Riada; the building of Dun Edar by Suirge. These are the forts built by Eber and these the chieftains that were with him: Etan, Un, Mantan, Fulman, and Caicer were his five chieftains. Rath Uaman, in Leinster, was dug by Eber; Rath Arda Suird by Etan son of Uicce; the building of Carrig Blaraige by Mantan; the building of Carrig Fethnaide by Un son of Uicce; the building of Dun Ardinne by Caicer; the building of Rath Riogbard, in Muireasc, by Fulman.

So that for the commemoration of certain of the aforesaid matters this was said:

The Expeditions of the sons of Mil over sea

From Spain of clear ships,
They took, it is no deed of falsehood,
The battle-plain of Ireland in one day.
This is the tale that they went on sea,
With multitude of wealth and people,
To a brave show God brought them,
With sixty-five choice vessels.
They landed at the noble creek
Which is called the White Rampart;
It was a cause of sickness, and attempt without failure,
From the sight of the warrior Lugaid.
From thence it is from that out
The creek of Fail of generous bands;
From the day she died in white Banba—
Fial daughter of Mil of Spain.
At the end of three days, brilliant preparation,
The Tuatha De fought
The battle of Sliab Mis, —glory that was not failure,
Against the great sons of Mil.
They won, a saying without reproach,
The battle against fair-headed Banba,
Where died Fas woven in verse,
With the very fair daughter of Pahraoh.
Before the end of a year, it was lasting fame,
Among the chieftains of the heavy hosts,
Into twice six divisions, a pleasant course,
They afterwards divided Ireland.
Over the north side a progress without sorrow,
Eremon was taken as high prince;

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

From Srub Brain, which verses adorn,
Overy every tribe to the Boyne.
These are the five guardians of control
Whom he accepted to accompany him;
Amergin, Sedga also,
Goisten, Sobairce, Suirge.
Eber, son of Mil grace—abounding,
Takes the southern half,
From the eternal Boyne, choice the share,
To the wave of the daughter of Genann.
These are the five, with hundreds of exploits,
The chiefs who were subordinate to him;
Etan, and Un of joyous rule,
Mantan, Fulman, and Caicer.
In this same year
The royal forts were dug,
By the sons of Mil,—honor of pledges,
After the full division of Ireland's island.
Rath Oinn, Rath Beothaig here,
By Eremon in Argat Ros;
In Sliab Mis, after a series of omens,
The building of Dun Nair by Goisten.
Suirge wide—extended, who displayed valor,
Built the high Dun Edar;
And the sounding, glorious achievement,
Of his fort by Sobairce.
By Eber of bright valor, was dug
Rath Uaman in the plain of Leinster;
Rath Arda Suid, it enriched him,
Was dug by Etan son of Uicce.
Rath Carraig Fetha thus,
Was made by Un son of Uicce;
And by Mantan,—glorious deed,
The founding of Carrig Blaraige.
Rath Rigbard in good Muiresc,
Very keen Fulman built it;l
Caicer of battles, a pleasant fulfilment,
Took Dun Inne in the west of Ireland.
These are their deeds of valor,
Of the clear, glorious, great royal host;
It was a great achievement, after battle , without stain;
Theirs was every profit, every expedition.

Of the adventures of the Gaedels from the time when they went from Scythia till they took Ireland and the division of Ireland between them, with their chieftains, the poet Roigne Roscadach son of Ugaine Mor said to Mal son of Ugaine his brother, when Mal questioned him: "Sing thy description in the great knowledge of Ireland, O Roigne," Roigne answered him and said:

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

O noble son of Ugaine,

How does one arrive at knowledge of Ireland,
The conquest of its company?
Before they overflowed Scythia
The reached the host-king of Shinar;
They approached Egypt,
Where Cingeris was extinguished,
So that a great troop was destroyed,
Who died in the Red Sea.
They flowed through a space very faithful,
With Pharaoh fought;
Niul contracts with Scotia,
The conception of our fathers.
They took the name "Gaedels,"
The name "Scots" spreads,
The fair daughter of Pharaoh.
They overspread lands,
Burst into Scythia,
Determined long combat--
The Children of Nel and Noenbal.
Golam was a young lord,
Who slew the son of Neman,
Escaped to Egypt,
Where was Nectanebus.
Pharaoh was welcoming
To Golam; gave
A marriage Nectanebus,
Scotia was at cot's head;
A name was changed from them.
They advanced past Africa,
Good was the man under whom they trembled;
Fenius Farsad, the keen,
Well he spread for us a lasting name.
They approached Spain,
Where was born a numerous progeny,
Donn, Airech, Amergin,
Eber, Ir, Colptha himself,
Eremon, Erannan,
The eight sons of Golam.
Mil's renown came upon them,
The sons of Mil wealthy;
Their scholars resolved,
Divided ships,
The Men returned from the burial of Fial.
They divided Ireland,
In twice six, an inheritance of chieftains.
Seek the truth of every law,
Relate sharply the inquiry ,
O Son!

The Conquest of the Sons of Mil

After Eremon and Eber had divided the chieftains, they had two distinguished artists who had come into their company from the east, namely, a poet and a harper. Cior son of Cis was the poet, Cennfinn the harper. They cast a lot on them to know which of them should be with each of them; so that, through the decision of the lot, the harper went southward to Eber and thence melody of music and harmony followed in the Southern Half of Ireland. The poet went to Eremon, and knowledge of poetry and song followed him in the North ever after. To commemorate this it was said:

The two sons of Mil, famous in dignity,

Took Ireland and Britain;
With them there followed hither
A gentle poet and a harper.
Cior son of Cis, the bright poet,
The name of the harper Cennfin;
With the sons of Mil, of bright fame,
The harper sounded his harp.
The princes, with many battles,
Took the kingdom of Ireland;
They did it with brightness, merry the sound,
Eber and Eremon.
They cast a lot swiftly
About the great men of art;
So that there fell to the lot of the southerner
The harper, just and fair.
Melody of music more beautiful than any company
Is from the southward in the south of Ireland;
It was thus it will be to the fortunate Judgment
With the famous seed of Eber.
There fell to the lot of the northerner
The man of learning with great excellence;
Hence the tribes who brought him boast
Knowledge of poetry and learning.