The author is grateful to Dr Mark Zumbuhl, for his very comprehensive review of *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c.1100–1600: a Cultural Landscape Study*.

There are some issues raised by the reviewer to which I would like to respond in order to augment the discussion of this subject.

First, I would like to turn to a minor matter but one that can be a source of some frustration to authors of academic books. Zumbuhl notes that while the chapter titles of the book are 'colourful', the book's title is, by way of contrast, 'straightforwardly utilitarian'. The book title was dictated entirely by the publisher's pragmatic requirement that it facilitate computer searches for keywords relating to the content of the book.

The reviewer suggests that in chapter 1 and elsewhere in the book there is 'something of a theoretical problem or at least ambiguity', in the interchangeable use of the terms 'assembly site' and 'inauguration site'. While I concede that I may not have been sufficiently explicit on this matter from the outset, nonetheless the term assembly is clearly used in its generic sense – an inauguration site is a place of assembly. At the Leeds International Medieval Congress 2000, I contributed to session papers and discussions on assemblies in the earlier middle ages, the outcome of which was a collection of essays on *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middles Ages* (Studies in the Early Middle Age 7, Turnhout, 2003) edited by P. S. Barnwell and M. Mostert. During the session discussions, consensus on the definition of 'assembly' was sought by the editors from the contributors, and the resulting broad definition was published in P. S. Barnwell's introduction to *Political Assemblies*:

> ...assemblies were occasions when groups, often relatively large groups, convened for a specific purpose. It follows that there were many different kinds of assembly, and that the term could encompass sports gatherings or fairs, liturgical gatherings or synods, and political or administrative gatherings. Such categories are not mutually exclusive (as with the Irish óenach, which could contain elements of all three), and those which were convened for one purpose could, during their course, transform themselves to serve another. (1)

In early medieval Ireland royal assembly took different forms: (a) assembly for royal inauguration ceremonial, (b) an óenach or tribal assembly presided over by a king, and (c) a rígðál or conference of kings in which relations between peoples were discussed. The rígðál and óenach as understood and practised in early medieval Ireland became obsolete with the decline of kingship and the development of lordship in Ireland. In late medieval Ireland types of assemblies of ruling dynasties included (a) gathering for inauguration of a new lord or chief, (b) oireachtas or parliament, and (c) mustering for battle or raiding. Zumbuhl's query as to whether a royal inauguration could be held at a site 'previously only used for assembly or parley' is impossible to answer as the evidence simply is not there to evoke the entire life-history of any of the royal inauguration sites of medieval Ireland. Note too that he uses the term assembly as though he considers that word to relate to a very specific type of gathering – which of course it does not. We have but occasional glimpses of the specific functions accorded to certain places of assembly in the historical record. In *Royal Inauguration* the few sites that are known to have served combined assembly purposes in specific periods or that had alternate functions in different periods are drawn out. For instance, Seantóman is cited both as the inauguration place and oireachtas site of the Úi Raghallaigh chiefs of East...
Bréifne in the sixteenth century (pp. 112–13) but we know nothing of its use before then. Cnoc Buadha is discussed both as a ninth-century rígdáil venue and as the later-recorded inauguration site of the Meic Eochagáin of Cinéal bhFhiachach (p. 44) but we know nothing certain about its use between those recorded events. Magh Adhair receives its first notice as the tribal gathering place or óenach of the Dál Cais in the tenth century (pp. 57–8) but it is unambiguously recorded as the inauguration place of the Uí Bhriain from at least as early as the thirteenth century (p. 59). To conclude this argument then, it may be said that an inauguration site is a place of assembly and that the evidence for some inauguration sites suggests that they served at least one additional assembly function either consecutively or simultaneously. Because royal inauguration and the creation of a new king or chief was deemed a significant event in early medieval and late medieval Ireland, the holding of an inauguration ceremony and the site at which it was held in the landscape is given more frequent (albeit still scanty) notice in native chronicles and documentary records than, say, an óenach in the early period or a parley in the later period. Therefore, the more commonly cited royal assembly in Irish medieval records and texts is the inauguration ceremony.

In commenting on the author's use of place-name evidence, as an aid to identifying inauguration places, Zumbuhl notes the absence of reference to Scottish toponymy in chapter 1 of Royal Inauguration. The reason why the author did not include a treatment of Scottish inauguration site place-names is because, other than Dunadd (a good case has been made for it as a place of inauguration – see A. Lane and E. Campbell, Dunadd: An Early Dalriadic Capital (Oxford, 2000)), Scone and Finlaggan, there are no additional historically recorded places of inauguration on the landscape of Gaelic Scotland and consequently no authoritative corpus of inauguration site place-names from Scotland to compare or to contrast with the Irish group. There are of course many Scottish place-names that imply the use of particular monuments or landscapes for assembly purposes other than inauguration – namely popular courts, judgement seats, mustering grounds for battle, rent and tribute collection centres and clan gathering sites. Evidence that any of these also served the function of inauguration for respective clans is not forthcoming. Some of the Scottish toponyms have a tendency to combine topographical terms or references to particular types of monuments such as cairns, mounds and stones with allusions to specific forms of assembly institutions and occasionally a clan name. In his 'Popular courts in early medieval Scotland: some suggested place-name evidence', Scottish Studies, 25 (1981), 1–24, G. W. S. Barrow identified 54 instances in which the Gaelic word cómhdhail (meaning assembly, meeting, tryst) occurs in place-names, predominantly in the eastern part of Scotland, with very few instances in the Central and West Highlands and none at all in the Isles. He interpreted the cómhdhail as a customary resort for Gaelic court meetings, pre-twelfth-century in origin, generally characterised by cairns, stone-circles or standing stones, and comparable in function to the moot hills of the English hundred. The word cómhdhail is not used in either the recorded nomenclature of medieval assembly or in the place-names of any known inauguration sites in Ireland. Barrow found that the use of the Gaelic place-name eireachd, cognate with the Irish oireachtas (meaning parliament), seems to replace the cómhdhail of the east and lowlands, and he interpreted the eireachd as a larger and more significant assembly than the former. Apart from meeting places distinguished by cómhdhail and eireachd place-names, there are a several low hills, knolls, mounds, cairns, standing stones and stone 'chairs' with a more general distribution on the Scottish landscape that are simply termed moot-hills or more commonly in western Scotland – Tom a Mhòid (knoll/mound/eminence/copse/of court/assembly), a place-name which is not attested in Gaelic Irish assembly parlance. In 1999 I visited some tom sites in Scotland and found that they generally had special significance as meeting places. Some, like Tom a Mhòid, beside Craig Ianaigh in Glenlyon, Perthshire and mentioned in Royal Inauguration (pp. 121–2) are natural eminences, while Tom Mo Cheasáig at Callander in Perthshire is a small, flat-topped artificial mound, to my mind mistakenly classified as a motte, which functioned as a court knoll. Baile an Tuim (gen. of tom) or Ballintomb (the place of the knoll) south of Grantown-on-Spey in Perthshire, frequented by the Grants for their gatherings is, more than its understated place-name suggests, a long sinuous ridge that hosts a dramatic complex of prehistoric monuments, and Tom na Croiseige (see Royal Inauguration, p. 47) at Kiltarlity, Invernesshire is a two-tiered mound from which justice was dispensed. Tom a Mhòid or Raith Kingussie – a natural knoll upon or near which there were formerly a group of standing stones and a medieval church – in Perthshire is noted as early as 1380 as a court site and gathering place of Clan Chattan. W. J. Watson's The Celtic Placenames of Scotland (Edinburgh and London, 1926) is an indispensable guide to tom sites (see especially pp. 422–3 and
The function primarily accorded to these tom sites is as venues for popular courts and/or judgement seats. The judgement seat as it presents itself in the Mid-Argyll region of Scotland, such as Dun Donuill in North Knapdale, Kilmodan and Clach a’ Breitheamh in South Knapdale are more closely associated with the Irish tradition of breitheamhna (brehon lawyers) holding open-air courts. Sites associated with clan gatherings and mustering for battle are also known in Scotland such as Carn na Coinnimh in Kincardineshire identified by A. Watson and E. Allan, *Place Names of Upper Deeside* (Aberdeen, 1990) as an assembly ground of Clan Farquharson.

To conclude debate on this particular point, Zumbuhl comes closer to the truth when he notes that 'there are also differences between the Irish and Scottish onomastic packages for Gaelic assembly sites and this is an area for future research'. In the examples I have given above it is clear that as in Gaelic Ireland, open-air assembly was practised in both eastern and western Scotland; that in many instances assemblies were held at ancient monuments or in antique landscapes which is a trait shared with Irish assembly practices; but that there is some considerable divergence in respect of the place-name combinations used for assembly places in Ireland and Scotland. The overwhelming problem with analysing any patterns in the toponymy of royal inauguration sites in Scotland and comparing them with Irish inauguration site place-names is the absence of evidence for inauguration venues other than Dunadd, Scone and Finlaggan. Ultimately the search for inauguration sites in Scotland requires the assumption that, in western Scotland at least, Gaelic inauguration customs, comparable to those used by the MacDonnell Lords of the Isles, were practised. The quite late development of some clans, such as the MacPhersons and the Campbells, casts considerable doubt about their having practised inauguration ritual at all, whatever about formal election. The current perception of the spread of feudalism and its consolidation in the lowlands and eastern half of Scotland, as early as the thirteenth century, argues for the appointment of earls, barons and sheriffs in these areas, to the exclusion of traditional Gaelic elections. One approach to this problem might be to identify those areas largely unaffected by Crown administration, such as the West Highlands and Isles incorporating clans such as the MacSweeneys (before 1262), the MacDougalls, MacLeods, Macleans, MacKenzies, and possibly the Mackintoshes, MacRorys, the MacDuffs of Fife, the Lamonts, Clan Fraser and Clan Grant. There may also be a case yet to be made for the adoption of some traditional Gaelic inauguration places as feudal courts and sites for the investment of new officials in the lowlands and eastern Scotland.

Zumbuhl is of the opinion that the discussion in chapter 3 of the rite of the single shoe is somewhat misplaced, straying somewhat 'from the author's intention to focus on the stage rather than the plot' of royal inauguration. In defence of the discussion of the rite of the single shoe in chapter 3, the author included it after the account of footprint stones in order to offset claims that the same symbolic meaning pertains to both the shoe and the footprint and to clarify that there is no evidence that the rite of the single shoe was carried out in tandem with the placing of the foot in a footprint stone (p. 128).

In relation to chapter 6, Zumbuhl notes that the coverage of the political geography of landholding and its relationship to the location of inauguration sites 'is somewhat limited'. There is good reason for this and that is the appreciable lack of evidence for the minutiae of landholding patterns and named landholders in Gaelic lordships in the period before the onset of Tudor administrative records and maps of the sixteenth century, and plantation inquisitions and maps of the seventeenth century. However, Zumbuhl is quite correct in his statement that this is an underdeveloped field of research. *Royal Inauguration* indicates how this field of study can actually be applied to understanding the location of royal monuments and landscapes. Zumbuhl also suggests that my discussions of the spatial relationship between the principal residences of Gaelic ruling families and their inauguration sites and/or other types of assembly places used by them 'convey a static image of lordship'. This deduction is misleading and clearly contradicted by the many examples of the peripatetic nature of royal residences enunciated in pp. 205–9.
To finish with a more minor matter, but one that nonetheless is important for any future attempts to identify the site, Zumbuhl correctly observes that I omitted the clause 'in Cashel' after 'Lis na nUrlann' in following Byrne's translation of the Lecan text. However, a more specific reference to the location of Lis na nUrlann 'by the lawn of Cashel' is to be found in the text of the 'The Story of the Finding of Cashel', which I cite on p. 179 of *Royal Inauguration*.

My sincere thanks to Dr Mark Zumbuhl for eliciting further clarification on particular issues presented in *Royal Inauguration*, for prompting wider debate on specific themes in the book and for highlighting areas of enquiry that need to be pursued by future scholars researching and writing on meeting-culture and open-air venues used for all kinds of assembly purposes.

**Notes**


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