THE CONCEPTION OF CONALL CERNACH

The story of Conall Cernach’s conception and birth has not survived as an independent tale, but a brief account has been preserved as part of the Cóir Anmann or “Fitness of Names”, a late Middle Irish collection of explanations of the names and epithets of characters from Irish literature and traditional history.

I have followed Stokes’ edition of the text, although I have repunctuated it in places, and removed a gloss, which is incorporated into the text in the manuscript, to a footnote, and given the story a title.

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Source:
Whitley Stokes (ed. & trans.), “Cóir Anmann (Fitness of Names)”, Irische Texte ser. 3 vol. 2, 1897, pp. 392-395.

Reference:


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*Amargein larghiúnnach .i. Amarghein Dubh, nam iarn duibe dicitar. Íar .i. dubh giunnach .i. folt .i. folt dubh bai fair is de bá hAmarghein larghiúnnach eissium.

†Amargein larghiúnnach .i. Amarghein Dubh, nam iarn duibe dicitar. Íar .i. dubh giunnach .i. folt .i. folt dubh bai fair is de bá hAmarghein larghiúnnach eissium.

‡The next entry in the Cóir Anmann is about Conall’s father: “Amergein largíúnnach: Amergein the Dark, for iarn means “darkness”, iar means “dark” and giunnach means “hair”, i.e. the dark hair that was on him: it’s from that he was Amergein largíúnnach.”

†(gloss incorporated into the text) i.e. that his sister would bear a child who would kill more than half of the Connachta.

‡Lenited f (j) in Irish is silent.
4. Conall Cernach didiu, i.e. cearn robói assa lethchinn bá meitithir fría cobhráidh sceith, iarna bhúalad a nAlbain im dhílsi mná. Is dé bá Cernach on mhudh sin.

5. Conall Cernach post i.e. Conall Cern Niadh i.e. trénfer, nam cern fear ocus niadh tren dicitur. Vel ab eo quod est cerno i.e. video, ar bá cuma dochith ní il-ló ocus ind aidhchi trésin súil ngleoir boí ina chinn. Nó Conall Cernach i.e. Conall buádhach, nam cern buáidh dicitur, ar bá mór in bhúaidh dó seach chach.

4. Conall Cernach then: there was a swelling (cern) on the side of his head which was as big as the boss of a shield, after he was struck in Scotland over the loyalty of a woman. It’s in that manner he was Cernach.

5. Conall Cernach, after Conall Cern Niadh i.e strong man, for cern means “man” and niadh means “strong”. Or it is from (Latin) cerno, “I see”, for it was the same seeing something by day and by night through the bright eye which was in his head. Or Conall Cernach i.e. Conall the Victorious, for cern means “victory”, for great was the victory above everyone.