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CHURCH AND POLITY
IN PRE-NORMAN IRELAND
THE CASE OF GLENDALOUGH

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Church and Polity in Pre-Norman Ireland: the Case of Glendalough

by

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[Ailbhe Séamus Mac Shamhráin]

Supervisor: Dr. Katharine Simms

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

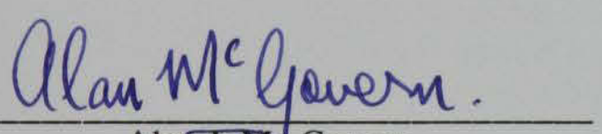
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Alan J. Mc Govern
[Ailbhe S. Mac Shamhráin]

Dedication

To the Memory of my Maternal Grandmother

Irene Adelaide Keely † 1984

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Abstract xi

Acknowledgements xii

Abbreviations xiv

Introduction xv

0.1 Abbatial Office, Economic Resources and Dynastic Interest
0.2 The "Monastic Paruchia"
0.3 Focus on Glendalough
0.4 The Polity of Leinster
0.5 Approach and Structure

CHAPTER

1 The Sources: A Critical Approach

1.1 Documentary Sources 1

1.1.1 The Annals
1.1.2 Lives of the Saints
1.1.3 Poems and Stories
1.1.4 The Genealogies
1.1.5 Genealogies of the Saints
1.1.6 The Martyrologies
1.1.7 Lists and Rolls
1.1.8 Charters

1.2 Interpretation of Documentary Sources 38

1.2.1 The Historical Record and the Stratification of Sources
1.2.2 Problems of Interpretation
1.2.3 Problems in Interpreting the Proto-historical Period
1.2.4 Structured Approaches to Interpretation

1.3 Non-Documentary Evidence 56

1.3.1 Landscape Archaeology
1.3.2 Excavation and the Recovery of Artifacts
1.3.3 Placenames
1.3.4 Dedications and Folk Memory
1.3.5 Reconciliation of Documentary and Non-Documentary Evidence

2 The Political Background c. 500-1014

2.1 The Political Heritage of the Early Glendalough Community 67

2.1.1 Leinster Kingship and Dynastic Politics to the Seventh Century
2.1.2 The Probable Extent of Laigin Overlordship at the Beginning of the Historical Period
2.1.3 A Revised Timescale for the Contraction of Laigin Overlordship
2.1.4 Leinster Contact with North-East Ulster and with Britain
2.1.5 Implications of a Protracted Leinster Overlordship

2.2 The Political Order of Leinster Seventh to Tenth Centuries 105

2.2.1 The Conflict of Uí Mail and Uí Dunlainge Seventh to Eighth Centuries
2.2.2 The Ascendancy of Uí Dúnlainge Eighth to Ninth Centuries
2.2.3 Uí Dúnlainge Under Pressure Ninth to Tenth Century

3 The Political Background c. 900- c.1240

3.1 The Kingship of Uí Muiredaig to 1042 120

3.1.1 Emergence and Struggle for Survival to mid 10th C.
3.1.2 The Assertion of Uí Muiredaig to 1014
3.1.3 Uí Muiredaig Ascendancy 1014 - c.1042

3.2 Uí Muiredaig and their Political Masters 142

3.2.1 Uí Chennselaig, Ua Briain and Ua Conchubhair Overlordship to c. 1130
3.2.2 The Ascendancy of Diarmait Mac Murchada 1132-1171
3.2.3 Relations with the Normans 1171 to c. 1240

4 The Community and Abbacy at Glendalough up to the Tenth Century

4.1 The Composition of the Early Community 162

4.1.1 The Testimony of the Seventh Century Annals
4.1.2 The Testimony of Hagiography and Genealogy
4.1.3 Early Glendalough: Interpreting the Composite Picture

4.2 Dynastic Intervention at Glendalough Eighth to Tenth Century 183

4.2.1 The Dominance of Uí Máil
4.2.2 The Dominance of Uí Dúnlainge

4.3 Glendalough Under External Pressures 197

4.3.1 Political Intervention from West Leinster
4.3.2 An *Óentad* with Clonmacnois: the Evidence of Hagiography

5 The Later Community at Glendalough Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries

5.1 Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough to c. 1072 205

5.1.1 Uí Muiredaig in Ascendancy to 1042
5.1.2 Political Reversal: Context for the Loss of Uí Muiredaig Supremacy at Glendalough 1042 to c. 1072

5.2 The Ua Tuathail Abbacy in the Twelfth Century .. 217

5.2.1 Origins: Compensation in a Time of Ua Lorcain Ascendancy?
5.2.2 Uí Chennselaig Patronage in the mid Twelfth Century
5.2.3 Decline of the Ua Tuathail Abbacy: Pressure from the Norman Overlordship
5.2.4 The Extinction of the Abbacy

6 The Paruchia of Glenn dá Locha; Origin, Expansion and Consolidation c. 600 to 1170

6.1 The "Monastic Paruchia" and its Reconstruction 239

6.1.1 The Character of the *Paruchia*
6.1.2 Reconstructing the *Paruchia*

6.2 The Paruchia of Glendalough 248

6.2.1 The *Familia Coemgeni* of the Irish Litany
6.2.2 The Evidence of the Martyrologies
6.2.3 The *Familia Coemgeni* of the Genealogies
6.2.4 The Evidence of the *Vitae Sanctorum*
6.2.5 The Testimony of the Charters
6.2.6 Dedications and Traditions

6.3 The Paruchia of Glendalough: The Combined Evidence 293

6.3.1 The Distribution of Sites Associated with Glendalough
6.3.2 Paruchial Relationship: Change and Continuity

7 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 The Aim of the Study Re-stated 306

7.2 Implications for Methodology 308

7.3 The Relevance of the Political Background 311

7.4 Political Impact on Ecclesiastical Affairs 316

7.5 The *Paruchia* 321

7.6 Conclusion 324

Appendices 330

Bibliography 343

TABLE OF FIGURES AND MAPS

PAGE

Fig. 1A : The Probable Transmission of *Vita S. Coemgeni* according to Sharpe 11

Fig. 1B : The Stratification of the Sources 39

Fig. 2A : The Early Generations of Uí Máil 75

Fig. 2B : Dál Messin Corb and Dál Niad Corb 76

Fig. 2C : Map Showing Laigin Segments outside the boundaries of Medieval Leinster 87

Fig. 2D : Map of Uí Néill/ Laigin Battles in the Fifth to Sixth Centuries 89

Fig. 2E : Map of Uí Néill/ Laigin Battles in the Sixth to Seventh Centuries 92

Fig. 3A : Map Showing Uí Muiredaig and Neighbouring Dynasties with Ecclesiastical Sites 122

Fig. 3B : The Early Generations of Uí Muiredaig 124

Fig. 3C : The Sons of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail 134

Fig. 3D : The Regnal Succession of Uí Muiredaig in the Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries 147

Fig. 3E : Map Showing Anglo-Norman Settlement in Central and East Leinster c. 1200 A.D. 159

Fig. 4A : Seventh Century Annals relating to Glendalough 163

Fig. 4B : The Early Community of Glendalough according to the Sources 173

Fig. 4C : The Saints of Uí Máil 189

Fig. 5A : Uí Muiredaig Connections with Glendalough in the Eleventh Century 214

Fig. 5B : Uí Muiredaig Connections with Glendalough in the Twelfth to Thirteenth Century 223

Fig. 6A : The *Familia Coemgeni* of the Irish Litany 250

Fig. 6B : Map Charting the *Familia Coemgeni* of the Irish Litany 256

Fig. 6C : Map Charting the *Familia Coemgeni* of the Genealogies 262

Fig. 6D : Map Showing Dál Messin Corb and other Laigin Segments in Mide 265

Fig. 6E : Saints Featured in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* 270

Fig. 6F : Map Showing Possessions of the Abbacy of Glendalough in the Twelfth Century 276

Fig. 6G : Map Showing Possessions of the Bishopric of Glendalough in the Twelfth Century 281

Fig. 6H : Map Showing Placenames Commemorating Saints of Dál Messin Corb 288

Fig. 6J : Map Showing Church Dedications, Wells and Field Antiquities associated with St. Cóemgen of Glendalough 291

Fig. 8A : The Genealogical Tradition of Dál Messin Corb 332

Abstract

In view of the on-going re-assessment of church and polity in early medieval Ireland, which has further illuminated the character of dynastic intervention at ecclesiastical settlements and has raised the question of a territorial dimension for the so-called "monastic paruchia", it was deemed appropriate to focus upon the well-documented centre of Glendalough. This study confronts the methodological challenge posed by a wide and diverse range of sources through adoption of heuristic method and a system of stratification. From here, it proceeds to examine in turn the ambition of the pre-Norman Laigin dynasties in relation to ecclesiastical settlements, the impact of their intervention at Glendalough and the development over time of the *Familia Coemgeni*. Working mainly from genealogical and toponymical data, the polity of the Laigin in the early historical period is reassessed. The indications are that a Laigin presence in Munster and in the midlands was quite pervasive, making a case for an extensive overlordship which survived long enough to find clear reflection in sources that were apparently first compiled in the late eighth century. The political background, therefore, to the so-called "monastic age" of the sixth-seventh centuries was, in all probability, quite different from the familiar picture of the Classical Period. This, presumably, had considerable import for paruchial expansion and for the establishment by foundations such as Glendalough of a network of dynastic contacts.

It is argued here that the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge probably achieved effective authority at the expense of Uí Máil only in the course of the eighth century. Despite a powerful challenge by Osraige in the tenth century, the Uí Muiredaig lineage of Uí Dúnlainge made a strong bid for Leinster overkingship in the course of which it sought to dominate a number of ecclesiastical centres in the north of the province. Ultimately defeated in the post-Clontarf power struggles, Uí Muiredaig owed its later prominence at regional level to the political expediencies of such overlords as Ua Briain and Mac Murchada. Having survived the initial impact of the Anglo-Norman intervention in 1171, the apparent unwillingness of the lineage to yield control of its patrimony resulted in dispossession. This trend of political development is mirrored in the fortunes of Glendalough throughout the entire period. From the eighth century onwards, there are indications of a dynastic interest at the site, changes in which reflect the shifts in regional political supremacy. However, from the eleventh century, the record is sufficiently detailed to show that direct control of the abbacy by Uí Muiredaig was almost certainly pursued in conjunction with its bid for overkingship. It is further argued that a later Uí Muiredaig abbacy was perhaps compensatory, while the retention of dynastic interests at Glendalough into the post-Norman period may have served the purpose of shielding remnants of the former royal line.

Reconstruction of the early Glendalough *paruchia*, insofar as it can be traced from a range of hagiographical sources, reveals a distribution that closely parallels the political ambitions of the north Leinster dynasties. As one might expect, the charters, which post-date the twelfth century diocesan reform, seem to reflect the Uí Muiredaig overkingdom. The pattern of paruchial expansion for Glendalough, it would appear, was not random. More to the point, many of the dependent foundations that lie outside the boundaries of the historical province of Leinster occur in clusters. At least in some instances, it can be shown that these relate to areas in which Laigin segments apparently survived into the historical period. The issue of a territorial, or a least a dynastic, dimension to the *paruchia* comes into sharper focus. The traditional view of the "monastic paruchia" is once again called into question.

Acknowledgements

Formally taking shape as a dissertation from December 1989 onwards, this project may be said to have commenced some time earlier as an inquiry into the particular association of early Dál Messin Corb saints and later Uí Muiredaig abbots with Glendalough. The outcome of that particular phase was a prosopography of the *Civitas Coemgeni.* To pursue the inquiry from there, seeking to place the Glendalough abbacy in its (changing) political context, assess its paruchial extent and, most importantly, explore the implications for church-polity relationships, was a foreboding task. It was made possible only because of the generous help and support I received from so many people. I would like to record my thanks here to all those who guided and facilitated my work in so many ways.

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Over the last four-and-a-half years, my research was greatly facilitated by the library staff at Trinity College, University College Dublin, the National Library, the Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Society of Antiquaries. I

would particularly like to record my thanks to the staff at the Manuscripts Room and to Mr. Paul Ferguson, Maps Librarian at Trinity College, to Dr. Raymond Refaussé Librarian and Archivist at the Representative Church Body Library and to Fr. J. Fennessy O.F.M., Librarian at the Franciscan House of Studies, Killiney.

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Finally, of the family members who are no longer with us, a special thought must be reserved for my maternal grandmother. Although it is doubtful that Nanny ever shared my particular interest in matters early Irish or historical, she chose in the last year of her life to buy me a copy of the *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* and of the *Book of Leinster* volume VI. Even a cursory glance through the footnotes of this dissertation will reveal the extent to which these collections, in particular, became my tools of research. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that they formed the starting point of the inquiry which brought about my return to postgraduate studies in history. On this account, I'm sure that it will readily be understood by all why this work is dedicated to her memory.

Abbreviations

A. Clon.	: The Annals of Clonmacnois.
A.F.M.	: The Annals of the Four Masters.
A.I.	: The Annals of Inisfallen.
A.L.C.	: The Annals of Loch Cé.
A. Rosc.	: The Annals of Roscrea.
A. Tig.	: The Annals of Tigernach.
A.U.	: The Annals of Ulster.
BB	: The Book of Ballymote.
B.N.E.	: Bethada Nóem nÉrenn.
Bk. Leinster	: The Book of Leinster.
Calendar	: Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register.
C.S.	: Chronicon Scotorum.
G.R.S.H.	: Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae.
C.G.S.H.	: Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae.
Corpus	: Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae.
Cott.	: The Cottonian Annals.
F.G.	: Féilire Uí Ghormáin.
F.O.	: Féilire Óengusso.
Frag.	: The Fragmentary Annals of Ireland.
Jnl. Co. Kildare Arch. Soc.	: *Journal of the Co. Kildare Archaeological Society.*
Jnl. Cork Hist. Arch. Soc.	: *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society.*
Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq, Irl.	: *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.*
LL	: Lebor Laigen (The Book of Leinster).
Lec.	: The Book of Lecan.
M.Don.	: Martyrology of Donegal.
Proc. Roy. Ir. Academy	: *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.*
Rawl. B.502	: Rawlinson B. 502, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
V.S.H.	: Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae.
V.S.H. Salman.	: Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice Salmanticensis.

0 : Introduction

O.1 : Abbatial Office, Economic Resources and Dynastic Interest

Historical understanding of the relationship between the ruling dynasties and the early Irish Church has undergone extensive revision in the course of the last few decades. Of those presently active in this field of inquiry, Ó Corráin, Sharpe and Doherty have contributed in no small way to what is now the prevailing interpretation of dynastic influence at ecclesiastical settlements.[1] It is now generally accepted that a great many of the larger foundations were dominated by political interests which often dictated the abbatial succession and influenced ecclesiastical policies towards dynastic ends. The traditionalist school of thought in relation to early Irish ecclesiastical history had been slow to accept the notion of a secular political force in church affairs.

The view of the late Fr. John Ryan, which remained influential for many years (although it was not unchallenged even in his own day) had sought to minimise the role of dynastic interests at ecclesiastical sites. Drawing mainly upon the testimony of certain hagiographical tracts and on canonical legislation contained in the *Synodus Hibernensis*, Ryan maintained that abbatial succession was essentially a matter for ecclesiastical communities themselves with incumbent abbots nominating their successors or appointments being made following consultation with community members and with the founder's kin.[2] This legalistic and in some respects rather uncritical view played down the evidence of the annals, took little account of secular law tracts and did not even attempt to

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[1] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Early Irish Churches: Some Aspects of Organisation", in D. Ó Corráin (ed), *Irish Antiquities: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor M. J. O'Kelly* (Cork: Tower Books, 1981), esp. p. 327-8; Richard Sharpe, "Some Problems Concerning the Organisation of the Church in Early Medieval Ireland", *Peritia* 3 (1984), esp. 231; Charles Doherty, "Some Aspects of Hagiography as a Source for Irish Economic History", *Peritia* 1 (1982), passim.

[2] John Ryan, *Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1931), p. 265-6; Idem, "The Monastic Institute", in P. Corish (ed.), *A History of Irish Catholicism*, I, (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972), p. 53.

address the issue of marked contradictions in the genealogies of the saints, which purported to record the kindred of the monastic founders. There were historical circumstances which made Ryan's interpretation appear reasonable; at sites such as Iona and Drumcliff where Cenél Conaill dynastic monopolies had long been recognised, it could validly be maintained that successive abbots did belong to the founder's kin and so held their position by legal right. In certain other instances, Ryan's conviction regarding the cordial nature of church relationship with civil power led him to seek a non-deliberate basis for dynastic intervention. He argued, therefore, that abbatial monopolies may have arisen from the numerical dominance of a dynasty within its own geographical sphere or from a shortage of suitable candidates for abbatial office.[3] The pattern of abbatial succession at the prominent ecclesiastical centre of Clonmacnois seemed to offer further support for Ryan's view; that particular foundation's early succession record included only clerics from minor lineages. The Southern Uí Néill overkings, although associated with Clonmacnois and with many of their dynasty buried there, appear to have exercised no monopoly on the administration of the site.[4]

While it was conceded that Ryan's arguments held a certain validity, it was becoming increasingly clear that his interpretation did not present the full picture. Kenney had pointed to secular law tracts some of which, notably *Corus Béscna*, provided for the line of the donor to supply the abbot, if that of the founder failed to do so.[5] Moreover, the reality of dynastic monopolies at ecclesiastical sites was increasingly acknowledged. Ó Briain indicated examples of politically-motivated dominance by ruling dynasties at major foundations, including that of Uí Dúnlainge at Kildare and Glendalough; a generation later,

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[3] J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism:*, p. 266-7, 306.

[4] Idem, "The Abbatial Succession at Clonmacnois", in J. Ryan (ed.), *Féilsgríbhinn Eoin Mhic Néill* (Dublin: Three Candles, 1940), p. 490-507.

[5] James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (Columbia: University Press, 1929), p. 292.

Ó Fiaich and Hughes drew attention to hereditary abbatial succession at Armagh and at a number of less prominent locations.[6] Studies from this era, however, including Lucas's mould-breaking reassessment of military aggression against ecclesiastical sites, which showed how the presence of political interests could render certain sites "legitimate targets", generally still presented a legalistic picture in which the family of the land-donor inherited the right of succession when the line of the patron failed.[7]

It was Binchy who first observed that the secular law tracts on the prerogatives of the founder's kin and donor's kin find no parallel in the early canons. [8] Questions could now be asked as to why there should be an apparent discrepancy in this regard; on-going progress in reconstruction of the dynastic background and in accessing and interpreting the genealogical corpus had already begun to provide at least some of the answers. Due to the work of Mac Niocaill, Byrne, Ó Corráin and others, developments in the political sphere were becoming more clearly understood. Trends could be observed in relation to dynasties which would have been likely to gain from intervention; also, discrepancies in genealogies could more readily be noted, drawing attention to changes in the alleged lineages of certain saints apparently in the interest of dynastic claims. It thus emerged that political intervention at ecclesiastical sites was not only more widespread than had previously been realised, but that some dynasties sought to justify their position by appeal to a supposed legal precedent. By the end of the 1970s, a number of studies had already appeared or were in progress, exploring how the interests of church and ruling lineage tended to

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[6] Felim Ó Briain, "The Hagiography of Leinster", in J. Ryan (ed.), *Féilsgríbhinn Eoin Mhic Néill* (Dublin: Three Candles, 1940), p. 454, 460-1; Tomás Ó Fiaich, "The Church of Armagh Under Lay Control", *Senchas Ardmacha*, 5 No. 1 (1969), 83ff; Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 76-7, 161-4.

[7] A.T. Lucas, "The Plundering and Burning of Churches in Ireland", in E. Rynne (ed.), *North Munster Studies: Essays in Commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (Limerick: Thomond Archaeological Society, 1967), p. 177.

[8] D.A. Binchy, "Review of *The Church in Early Irish Society*", *Studia Hibernica*, 7 (1967), 217.

converge. In the process various questions have been addressed, including the efforts made by various dynasties to displace ecclesiastical lineages and the commencement of both historical record and of hagiography in dynastic interests (see below, Ch. 3, Ch. 4). A number of problems, however, remained to be addressed. Not least was the important question of what might have motivated particular dynasties in their pursuit of ecclesiastical ambition.

The question of socio-economic motivation for the pursuit of dynastic interests at ecclesiastical sites has formed the theme of several studies. It is generally accepted that important foundations such as Glendalough or indeed Kildare were not "monasteries" in the literal sense of the word. That is to say, they were not merely communities of clergy living under the rule of an abbot in accordance with a monastic rule. They were ecclesiastical settlements in which clergy (including celibate monks or nuns and married clergy), other religious and laity formed an extended community under the spiritual and/or temporal rule of an abbot, whose own religious orders might lie at any point between the minor and the episcopal. Ryan, indeed, had acknowledged the composite character of this extended community, as reflected in the sources. He accepted that foundations of size had both a transient lay element of guests or of distressed persons and a resident population of tenants, but he does not appear to have recognised that visitors, whether pilgrims or travellers, added to the income of the settlement which already included rents from tenants and dues for religious services.[9]

The picture that emerges from the Old Irish canons and hagiography alike, that of an extended community occupying a sizeable and relatively complex settlement, seems to be confirmed by the evidence of field survey. Along with sites of well-documented important foundations, many unrecorded isolated single-chamber churches can be shown to have been surrounded by enclosures of five hundred feet in diameter, which are too large for burial grounds and

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[9] J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism*, p. 316, 320.

instead suggest settlements. It might also be noted that the distribution pattern of ecclesiastical sites corresponds well with that of ringforts, the most common variety of Early Christian/Medieval settlement. The foundation of Dísert Diarmata (Castledermot, Co. Kildare), which would play a major role in the *familia* of Glendalough, is situated amidst a concentration of five ringforts.[10]

It seems, therefore, that there was a marked tendency for ecclesiastical settlements to become demographic foci; they not only furnished hostels for guests, but became havens for the sick, the orphaned and the fugitive alike.[11] But ecclesiastical centres were also privileged; they were endowed foundations and it is quite possible, indeed, that as such they carried a responsibility for public service.[12] In some instances, rulers may have considered that, in return for endowment, ecclesiastical settlements owed *coindmed*, or free billeting for troops. It is in any case not implausible that more unscrupulous dynasts should have sought to exact *coindmed*, whether or not there was any entitlement. Moreover, as Kenney recognised many years ago, the opportunity to seize control of lands and resources (including rents and dues) doubtless seemed attractive. This picture of ecclesiastical settlements as wealthy corporations with revenue potential offering a valuable prize for ambitious dynasties, leading on occasions to military appropriation and so-called "monastic battles", would be further developed by Ó Briain and Lucas.[13]

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[10] E.R. Norman and J.K. St.Joseph, *The Early Development of Irish Society: the Evidence of Aerial Photography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 97-8, 110-12; D. Leo Swan, "Monastic Proto-towns in Early Medieval Ireland: The Evidence of Aerial Photography, Plan Analysis and Survey", in H.B. Clarke and Anngret Simms (ed.), *Comparative History Of Urban Origin in Non-Roman Europe* (Oxford: BAR, 1985), p. 97, on size range of enclosures; Vincent Hurley, "The Early Church in the South West of Ireland: Settlement and Organisation", in S.M. Pearce (ed.), *The Early Church in Western Britain and in Ireland* (Oxford: BAR, 1982), p. 307, 310, on distribution patterns. Below, Ch. 1.

[11] C. Doherty, "Aspects of Hagiography" 302-4; Lisa Bitel, *Isle of the Saints: Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 12, 178-9.

[12] Katharine Simms, "Guesting and Feasting in Gaelic Ireland", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 108 (1978), 69-70.

[13] J. F. Kenney, *Sources* , p. 747-8; F. Ó Briain, "Hagiography of Leinster", p. 456, 460; A.T. Lucas, "Plundering and Burning of Churches", 182.

Historiography of more recent date generally presents ecclesiastical foundations as foci of population, holders of (often extensive) tenanted estates and the recipients of substantial revenues. The most comprehensive account, however, of how many foundations developed into commercial centres is provided by Doherty.[14] The latter argues that the ceremonial function is of primary importance, preceding a commercial function in the development of proto-urban complexes. Laity would settle in the first instance because of the religious significance of the site, whether as tenants (to be near a place of religious service), pilgrims or asylum-seekers. The expanding community of laity and religious would give rise to an agricultural concentration, which would exercise its own gravitational pull.[15] Ecclesiastical foundations presumably had a role as redistributive centres from an early date, collecting dues and dispensing alms, but by the eighth century growing populations were already stimulating exchange and trade and there are indications that the commercial aspect of the *oenach* (or *margad)* was already emerging. By the eleventh century, the development of the "monastic town" was well underway complete with market places, craftshops and civic officials; some such centres had effectively become royal capitals.[16]

It seems perfectly understandable that, in a society where dispersed settlement was still the norm, richly endowed settlements which formed foci of population and were evolving along commercial lines should have seemed

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[14] C. Doherty, "Aspects of Hagiography", esp. 301-2; Idem, "The Monastic Town in Medieval Ireland", in H.B. Clarke and Anngret Simms (ed.), *Comparative History Of Urban Origin in Non-Roman Europe* (Oxford: BAR, 1985), p. 59, 66, 68, draws attention to canonical legislation, annal notices and Cogitosus's *Vita Brigitae*.

[15] C. Doherty, "Monastic Town", p. 46, 50, 55.

[16] Idem, "Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland,* 110 (1980), 71, 80-1, 83-4; Idem, "Monastic Town", 65-6, 68; K. Hughes & A. Hamlin, *Celtic Monasticism: The Modern Traveller to the Early Irish Church* (London: SPCK, 1977), p. 48-9, comment on the range of crafts referred to in hagiography; B. Nic Aonghusa, "The Monastic Hierarchy in 12th Century Ireland", *Ríocht na Midhe,* 8 no. 3 (1990-91), 16-17, considers the role of various officials at ecclesiastical centres.

attractive to ambitious rulers. Even at a relatively early stage of development, they clearly had a value in terms of revenue, agricultural yield, billeting provision for troops and as centres for potential military recruitment. In time, as their urban functions increased, the commercial, industrial and administrative dimensions of major ecclesiastical settlements constituted important assets for dynastic interest.

It has been recognised, however, that other considerations may have prompted ruling lineages to assert their presence at ecclesiastical centres. Kelleher has argued that the early Irish church represented a revolutionary force which threatened to upset the social order. Hence, from the seventh century the "toparchs of the Old Order" moved to annex the church in an effort to restore the "right order of things".[17] Indeed Hughes has quite plausibly suggested that royal interventions at ecclesiastical settlements need not in all cases represent dynastic appropriations. It is possible, at least in some instances, that protection may have been sought by the ecclesiastical community, whether from less welcome dynastic attentions or from Viking aggression.[18]

The presence of an extended and composite community and of a developing economy at the larger ecclesiastical settlements is thus well established and widely acknowledged. Moreover these very factors, although perhaps not the only considerations, are generally viewed as motivators behind the assertion of dynastic interests at such settlements. However, while the political associations of certain centres (notably Armagh, Kildare and Ferns) have been accorded attention,[19] the precise circumstances in which royal lineages achieved domination and managed to maintain their presence at particular sites

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[17] John V. Kelleher, "Early Irish History and Pseudo-History", *Studia Hibernica*, 3 (1963), 118-9.

[18] K. Hughes, *Church* , p. 213; Kim R. Mc Cone, "Clones and her Neighbours in the Early Period", *Clogher Record*, 2, No.3, (1984), 311-13.

[19] See for example T. Ó Fiaich, "Church of Armagh", passim; Charles Doherty, "The Historical Value of the Medieval Lives of St Maedóc of Ferns", unpublished M.A. dissertation, National University of Ireland, 1971, passim; Kim R. Mc Cone, "Brigit in the Seventh Century: A Saint with Three Lives?", *Peritia*, 1 (1982), esp. 109-112.

has received less notice than may be deserved. The extent to which the assertion of dynastic interests involved direct royal intervention, monopoly of the abbacy or infiltration of other ecclesiastical offices might also merit further exploration.[20]

O.2 : The "Monastic Paruchia"

The relationship between church and polity in early medieval Ireland, however, cannot be discussed solely in terms of dynastic presence at individual ecclesiastical sites. Up to very recently, the Irish church was widely represented as "monastic' in character, with neither episcopal jurisdiction nor a territorially based diocesan system. Recent investigations, including those of Sharpe and Etchingham, have prompted serious reconsideration both of the role of bishop and of the assumed absence of a territorial dimension in early Irish ecclesiastical administration.[21] These reassessments have strongly challenged the traditionalist view, central to which was the notion of a "monastic paruchia" a system of church government which, if it has been correctly apprehended, would seem to have left little scope for dynastic influence other than at local level. The meaning of "monastic paruchia" will be discussed in detail later (below, Ch. 6). For the present, suffice it to say that the term has gained currency as a means of describing the networks of lesser ecclesiastical sites that were dependent upon, or were subject to, major foundations such as Glendalough.

The "monastic paruchia" was endowed with certain characteristics by historians. It was generally pictured as being comprised of the churches of a common founder.[22] Certainly hagiographical sources were inclined to associate

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[20] T. Ó Fiaich, "Church of Armagh", 78, observes that the office of *oeconimus* at Armagh was dominated by the local line of Uí Nialláin. It is possible that at other locations control of offices, aside from that of abbot, may have served dynastic interests.

[21] R. Sharpe, "Organisation of the Church", passim; Colmán Etchingham, "The Implications of Paruchia", *Ériu*, 44 (1993), passim; see below, 6.1.1.

[22] J.F. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 293; K. Hughes, *Church*, p. 63.

foundations because they shared the same patron or because a relationship between the founders was claimed in the genealogies. Alternatively, the link may be represented as purely transactional, with an episode in the *Vitae Sanctorum* claiming that a lesser ecclesiastical settlement made formal submission to the foundation of a great patron. More to the point, while Kenney and Ó Briain observed that the "federations" featured in the hagiography of monastic foundations did not represent territorial divisions per se, Hughes portrayed the "monastic paruchia" as "far flung" and "widely scattered", a view that gained relatively wide currency in recent decades.[23] The implication would thus appear to be that this "monastic paruchia" was devoid both of geographical coherence and of political significance.

The character of these "paruchiae", as perceived by historians, has been much modified in the course of the last decade. The picture emerging in recent years is one which focuses less on federations of churches established by a common founder, and rather more on expansionist ambitions. As Dr. Simms points out, the annalistic record of dual office holders (generally regarded as instances of the ecclesiastical abuse of pluralism) frequently indicates dominance by more powerful foundations of lesser sites.[24] It need not be assumed, however, that paruchial expansion always involved some form of ecclesiastical imperialism; there are, it would appear, instances of autonomous alliance.[25] Moreover, it has been suggested that there were "non-aligned" ecclesiastical settlements; the *saer* church (which is contrasted in law with the *daer* church) may have been

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[23] J.F. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 293; F. Ó Briain, "Hagiography of Leinster", p. 457, n. 16; K. Hughes, *Church* , p. 53; Idem, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London: Sources of History, 1972), p. 71.

[24] Katharine Simms, "The Origins of the Diocese of Clogher", *Clogher Record*, 10, No.2 (1980), 180-1, points to annal references to dual office-holding as an indication of dominance of lesser ecclesiastical sites by more powerful centres.

[25] K.Mc Cone, "Clones and her Neighbours", 308, 314. See below, Ch.6.

free both from obligation to render royal tribute and from federative attachment.[26]

The probability is, therefore, that a major ecclesiastical centre such as Glendalough, aside from establishing new satellite foundations, should have acquired dependencies either through direct exercise of power or through joint agreement. In either case, political ambitions may have been realised. If it can be established that Glendalough was subject to dynastic influence, it would seem equally reasonable that at least some of the other foundations which it absorbed had their own political attachments. It may be possible in some instances to find evidence of a more powerful dynastic interest supplanting a lesser one, or arriving at a *modus vivendi* with another. Appeal to the annalistic record may help to place some instances of paruchial expansion in an historical context, where the dynastic associations of a particular mother-house have already been established.

Of more direct relevance to the central issue of politico-ecclesiastical relationship, however, is the geographical dimension of the so-called "monastic paruchia". In recent years, the Hughes model has come in for increasing criticism; Firey, drawing comparisons with the situation in Britain, has argued in general terms that the scattered "monastic" federation proposed for Ireland may not, in fact, be entirely valid.[27] Certainly, the geographical range of abbatial properties in Wales, as charted by Davies for an admittedly later period, seems more restricted.[28] A question arises here, however, as to whether like is being compared with like; Davies is concerned with monastic possessions in the context of territorially defined bishoprics. The situation in pre-twelfth century Ireland would seem to have been less clear-cut. Indications that early Irish ecclesiastical administration may heretofore have been somewhat oversimplified have been

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[26] D.A.Binchy, "Patrick and his Biographers: Ancient and Modern", *Studia Hibernica*, 2 (1962), 64; R. Sharpe, "Organisation of the Church", 257-8.

[27] Abigail Firey, "Cross-Examining the Witness: Recent Research in Celtic Monastic History", *Monastic Studies*, 14 (1983), 36, 38.

[28] Wendy Davies, "Property Rights and Property Claims in Welsh Vitae of the 11th Century", in E. Patalagean (ed.), *Hagiographie, Cultures et Sociétés IV-XII Siecles* (Paris, 1981), esp. p. 517.

noted by Simms and by Etchingham; it appears that certain early hagiographical sources, including the Book of Armagh, use the term *paruchia* in a territorial sense as, indeed, does the canonical legislation.[29] These, it may be argued, reflect an earlier "episcopal" era. However, the problems do not end there; the work of Sharpe and of Etchingham has produced reflections of episcopal authority in the course of the so-called "monastic age", along with indications in hagiographical texts of "district authority" on the part of "monastic" foundations. These are topics that will later be discussed at some length (below, Ch. 6). They raise questions as to whether one should expect a "territorial dimension" in the so-called "monastic paruchia", or seek to establish, as Sharpe suggests, a distinction between *paruchia* and *familia*.[30]

It seems clear, in any event, that future studies cannot take for granted the characteristics of the "monastic paruchia" as presented in the Hughes' model. On this account, it is perhaps unfortunate that there have been relatively few attempts in recent years to focus on specific case-studies, with a view to examining either their dynastic connections or the extent and distribution "on the ground" of their traceable dependencies.[31] Clearly, not many ecclesiastical settlements are sufficiently well documented to facilitate such a study; the data needed to reconstruct the presumed network of alliances is rarely available. Even where documentary sources exist, as at certain major centres, it is evident that there are limitations. It has been observed that the annals do not generally record minor sites, that the lives of the saints present difficulties of interpretation

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[29] K. Simms, "Diocese of Clogher", 182; C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 143.

[30] R. Sharpe, "Organisation of the Church", 245-6; C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 150-1.

[31] There are several unpublished studies which focus on specific ecclesiastical centres and their *paruchiae*, including C. Doherty, "St Máedóc of Ferns", passim; Timothy P. O'Connor, "The Monastery of Cork: Bairre and his Paruchia", unpublished M.A. dissertation, University College Cork, 1977; Paul Byrne, "The Monastery of Clonard", unpublished M.A. dissertation, University College Dublin, 1980. See below Ch. 6.

regarding paruchial claims, and that our understanding of cult development patterns is limited.[32]

In addition to these difficulties, the writer considers that there is an insufficient grasp of the political background against which ecclesiastical centres grew in size and status and extended their influence over other settlements. Quite apart from the political influence on abbatial succession observed above, there may be a connection between dynastic ambition and paruchial expansion. If access to revenues and land-resources held importance for ambitious royal lineages, the extent of a foundation's *paruchia* may have been a consideration for dynasties in seeking to assert authority over particular ecclesiastical settlements. Moreover, the development of relationships between certain ecclesiastical centres may have been facilitated by dynastic links. To date, there have simply not been enough critical studies of early Irish polity at local level.

O.3 : Focus on Glendalough

In considering the politics of ecclesiastical settlements, and the interaction between such centres and local dynastic interests (at times reflected in abbatial succession, acquisition of properties and extension of administrative authority), the selection of Glendalough as a case study may be justified for several reasons. Firstly, it is a particularly well documented centre. References to community members, to occurrences at the settlement and to activities involving its administrative body are found in a wide range of sources, including annals, hagiography, literature, genealogies and charters.

Apart from the volume and diversity of material relating to Glendalough, however, a prior examination of the community record, especially in regard to

[32] A. Firey, "Cross-Examining the Witness", 36-7, 40, 42-3, isolates these difficulties in regard to reconstructing *paruchiae* and criticises some current approaches without, it must be said, suggesting viable alternatives.

abbatial succession, indicates that various dynastic interests were represented at the site.[33] There is no express reference to members of the founder's line among the later community, but clerics of Uí Máil and Uí Dúnlainge lineages figure prominently. Both of these dynasties claimed close association with the founder-patron St Cóemgen and purported to have earned special privileges, thus accounting for the dominant position which they later attained. Uí Máil claimed a role in establishing the settlement in the lower valley, while Uí Dúnlainge viewed themselves as protegés of Cóemgen and ultimately as benefactors of the community.[34] Members of Uí Enechglaiss and Uí Bairrche lineages were also represented amongst the community and, on occasion, they held abbatial office. Access to the abbacy was apparently restricted, for all practical purposes, to these lineages. Besides, succession to the office of abbot did not always run smoothly and in some instances was settled by violence.

In the light of the above-outlined theories advanced by Doherty and others concerning socio-economic motivation for dynastic intervention at ecclesiastical settlements, the commercial and industrial potential of Glendalough is worthy of some consideration. Despite the difficulty of tracing settlement remains due to redeployment of land, the settlement in the lower valley, dating from perhaps as early as the eighth century, is clearly substantial and was apparently surrounded by a *caiseal* some four hundred metres in diameter.[35] Presumably, this site accommodated quite a substantial lay population, although we have no clear indication of its size.[36] One of three Irish Lives of Cóemgen refers to an *óenach*, or commercial fair at the settlement, and the market cross was

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[33] Ailbhe S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica Glindelachensis: The Monastic Church of Glendalough and its Community Sixth to Thirteenth Centuries", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 119 (1989), 79-97.

[34] These conflicting traditions will be discussed below, Ch. 4 and Ch. 5.

[35] E.R. Norman and J.K. St. Joseph, *Irish Society*, p. 117, 120, attribute difficulty of tracing settlement to burials and flood erosion; D.L. Swan, "Monastic Proto-towns", p. 95-6.

[36] A.F.M. s.a. 1043 record that sixty inhabitants of the settlement were slain in a raid.

apparently situated in a flat open space beside the river.[37] Evidence for industrial activity is limited and quite late, but there is reference to a water-mill at the site in the twelfth century; this operation and the iron-working evidenced by archaeology may well have been practiced at an earlier period.[38]

Industry and commerce apart, however, Glendalough was clearly a centre of learning and had an active scriptorium. In addition to the annal record of *scribae* and *fir légind*, fragments of texts survive which testify that mathematics and philosophy were studied in a school that would appear to have attracted visiting distinguished scholars from overseas.[39] Surviving manuscript evidence for the scriptorium may be scant, but there are indications that a *liber confraternitatis* and perhaps the original version of the Life of Cóemgen was written there, while the Leinster genealogies in both of the pre-Norman compilations may have been extended at the Glendalough scriptorium.[40]

Doubtless, the ruling dynasties of north Leinster were very much aware of the economic, military and administrative advantages that could accrue from securing a dominant position at ecclesiastical settlements such as Glendalough. However, as indicated by Kenney and most recently re-assessed by Etchingham, precedents of law and ecclesiastical procedures were established,[41] obliging

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[37] *Bethada Noem nErenn*, ed. Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), I, p. 144-5; II, 140-1 ; C. Doherty, "Exchange and Trade", 83.

[38] A.Tig., s.a. 1178; excavations by Dr. T. Barry and later by Conleth Manning in Tld. Brockagh produced charcoal pits and iron slag of 13th-14th C. date; Manning suggests that bullaun stones featured among earlier finds may have been used in metal production, see "Excavations at Glendalough", *Jnl. Co. Kildare Arch. Soc.*, 16 No. 4 (1983-4), 344, 346.

[39] Francis John Byrne, Introduction to Timothy O'Neill, *The Irish Hand* (Port Laoise: Dolmen Press, 1984), p. xxii; Idem, "The Trembling Sod: Ireland in 1169", in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *The New History of Ireland*, vol II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 21, 40.

[40] G. Lennox Barrow, *Glendalough and St. Kevin* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1972), p. 21; Francis John Byrne, "Derrynavlan: The Historical Context", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 110 (1980), 123; J. F. Kenney, *Sources* , p. 392, 404, 422 and see below, Ch. 1 and Ch. 5.

[41] J. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 292; C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 155-6, discuss the succession rights of the line of the founder or donor, *fine érlama* and *fine griain;* see also below Ch. 5.

rulers in some situations to take account of the wishes of the community. The extent to which dominant political interests alternately sought to placate or to overrule community preferences at Glendalough may be traced in the annals. The sources also reflect how rival ambitions on the part of of local dynasties, which enjoyed simultaneous access to the site, at times resulted in armed conflict.

It seems clear that, from quite an early date, Glendalough possessed an extensive *paruchia*. The corpus of sources from which this network of dependencies and contacts can be reconstructed is as voluminous and as diverse in character as that which documents the community and its affairs. While it is not uncommon for the founding-patron of a major ecclesiastical settlement to be the subject of a *life*, which may indicate a dependent relationship between certain other foundations and the mother-house, Cóemgen is accorded no less than five *lives*.[42] The above-mentioned *liber confraternitatis*, part of which may survive in the Irish Litany, along with the genealogies and various hagiographical sources which claim relationships between Cóemgen and numerous other saints, may provide further indications to the *paruchia*. In addition, the survival of charters from the early post-Norman period, which confirm the abbatial and episcopal properties to the then holders of those offices, testify to the long survival of much of the network of dependencies.[43]

It appears reasonable that, along with the economic resources of the ecclesiastical centre outlined above, the extent of the *paruchia* may have been a factor in attracting dynastic interest at Glendalough. Indeed as remarked above, there may even be a link between paruchial ambition and dynastic ambition.
In the case of Glendalough, an extensive record can facilitate examination of the mechanics of abbatial succession and the extent of paruchial expansion in the

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[42] Along with the three Irish Lives referred to above, there are two surviving Latin Lives and another fragment. See below, Ch. 1.

[43] Of particular interest here are the Dublin Diocesan Registers including *Crede Mihi* and Archbishop Alen's Register; see below Ch. 1 and Ch. 6.

context of political developments within the region. To address this task, indeed, is the main objective of the present dissertation

O. 4 : The Polity of Leinster

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that a detailed analysis of the political history of north Leinster is a prerequisite for the task undertaken. It might be considered that the province of Leinster has, in some respects, fared better in twentieth century historiography than many other regions of Ireland. Quite apart from general histories, at least ten papers and a monograph directly relate to the political history of pre-Norman Leinster, while numerous articles include incidental discussions of specific issues.[44] It may be noted that several studies are concerned with the early kingship of the Laigin and the conflict with the Southern Uí Néill, while even more attention has been accorded to the better documented eleventh and twelfth centuries. The intervening centuries have received relatively little focus. Moreover, while the principal lines of the Uí Dúnlainge and Uí Chennselaig dynasties have been the subject of much discussion, "lesser" lineages and cadet branches, several of which were closely involved with the affairs of Glendalough, have been to some extent overlooked.

The pioneering research of the late Fr. Paul Walsh revealed the falsity of the Leinster kinglists, which credit the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty with the over-kingship from the opening of the historical period. Such dynastic propaganda was perhaps intended to suppress an historical reality in which other lineages, including Dál Messin Corb and Uí Máil, played a more prominent role.[45] Significantly, these quondam ruling dynasties played an important role in the

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[44] Included here are works of Walsh, Ryan, Ó Corráin, Martin, Smyth, Nicholls, Flanagan and Byrne. Their respective views are discussed in more detail below, Ch. 3.

[45] Paul Walsh, "Leinster States and Kings in Christian Times", *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 53 (June 1939), 48, 55-7.

early affairs of Glendalough. Indeed the founder and patron of the settlement, St. Cóemgen, was held to have descended from a Dál Messin Corb line.

The more recent work of Professor Smyth has shown that Dál Messin Corb, who were consigned to the periphery in the documentary period proper, shared the overkingship of the Laigin with other lineages during the fifth and sixth centuries. Moreover, Smyth argues that the geographical area of their suzerainty extended into the midlands, beyond the bounds of what constituted the provincial kingdom of Leinster from the Classical Period (i.e. the eighth century) onwards.[46] If this is so, a more detailed examination of early Laigin polity is essential for the present inquiry. An outline reconstruction of sixth century dynastic politics, insofar as that may be attainable, could provide the background against which the early community of Glendalough developed. More specifically, the dynastic composition of early Laigin overkingship, its geo-political extent and the connections it formed may provide the context in which Glendalough and other ecclesiastical centres established their links.

For the pre-Viking and Viking eras, there are several very competent analyses of the Uí Dúnlainge overkingship, its relationship with the Southern Uí Néill dynasties and its domination of the ecclesiastical centre of Kildare.[47] Discussion of local developments, however, and of the Scandinavian kingdom of Dublin and its impact on the polity of east Leinster has been limited. Smyth discusses early Uí Dúnlainge expansion within Co. Kildare during the seventh and eighth centuries, and makes assumptions regarding the Norse impact on the Wicklow region which, if tenable, would have important consequences for

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[46] Alfred P. Smyth, "The Huí Néill and the Leinstermen in the Annals of Ulster 431 to 516 A.D.", *Etudes Celtiques*, 14 No. 1 (1974), esp. 130, 131, 132-3, 139; Idem, "Huí Fáilgi Relations with Huí Néill in the Century after the Loss of the Plain of Mide", *Etudes Celtiques*, 14 No. 2 (1975), 515; Idem, *Celtic Leinster: Towards an Historical Geography of Early Irish Civilisation A.D. 500 to 1600* (Dublin :Irish Academic Press, 1982), esp. p. 16-19.

[47] See for instance Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *Ireland Before the Vikings* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972), p. 121, 123, 125, 130, 140; Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings* (London: Batsford, 1973), p. 150-63.

dynastic politics at Glendalough and for its paruchial claims.[48] Similarly, studies of eleventh and twelfth century Leinster have focused mainly on the Síl nOnchon lineage of Uí Chennselaig and especially on the careers of Diarmait mac Máil na mbó and Diarmait Mac Murchada.[49] In short, there is little published discussion on the local politics of north and east Leinster from the eighth century through to the twelfth. One must be prepared, therefore, to forage through a wide range of primary material, including annals, literature and charters to obtain some grasp of the political background against which the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough and its *paruchia* grew and developed. Only when this is achieved can dynastic relationships with this ecclesiastical centre, as reflected in the abbatial succession, be viewed in context.

O.5 : Approach and Structure

The present inquiry, therefore, is concerned with the relationship between ecclesiastical politics and dynastic interests, and aims to address several apparent lacunae in the current understanding thereof. It is anticipated that, through focus on the well-documented example of Glendalough, the circumstances and considerations behind dynastic dominance of ecclesiastical settlements should be clarified. In the process, our understanding of relationships between ecclesiastical centres and of paruchial expansion may be further developed.

As already emphasised in the course of this discussion, the range of sources used in reconstructing both dynastic and ecclesiastical affairs in relation

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[48] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 54-6, 66-7; Kenneth W. Nicholls, "The Land of the Leinstermen", *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 544-5, disputes some of Smyth's arguments and discusses Fortuatha Laigen, within which patrimony Glendalough was situated; see below Ch. 2.

[49] Donnchadh Ó Corráin does discuss the crises within the 11th C. kingship of Uí Muiredaig, although the focus is on Uí Chennselaig, see "The Career of Diarmait mac Máele na mbó, Part 1", *Jnl Old Wexford Soc.*, 3 (1971), 27-35; Idem, "Career of Diarmait mac Máele na mbó, Part 2", *Jnl Old Wexford Soc.*, 4 (1973), 17-24; Idem, *Ireland Before the Normans* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1972), chapter 4; see also Francis X. Martin, *No Hero in the House*, O'Donnell Lecture (Dublin: N.U.I., 1975); F.J. Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 1-42.

to the present inquiry is extensive. Not only do the documents cover a wide chronological span, but they are prepared by varied interest-groups with different purposes in mind. Some were compiled for the purpose of preserving data, whether historical occurrences or administrative records, others belong to genres of literature but are of value to modern historical inquiry because of incidental information (or indeed attitudes) contained within them. Furthermore, especially in discussion of economic factors or in seeking to identify ecclesiastical sites, it may be expedient to admit evidence from other disciplines, including archaeology, field survey and toponymics. In view of the fact that appeal to so many different kinds of evidence is envisaged, problems of interpretation are likely to be exacerbated by methodological difficulties. It is proposed, therefore, to preface the inquiry with a detailed discussion (Chapter 1) of the sources used and current approaches to them, leading to a consideration of the difficulties anticipated and possible solutions.

The next step is to examine the political history of northern, and especially north-eastern, Leinster from Early Christian times to the Anglo-Norman conquest of the province. For obvious reasons this will be a limited undertaking, bound by the requirements of the present inquiry. Rather than seek to chart the affairs of the region over six centuries, which would be an unduly lengthy and perhaps superfluous exercise, this section will confine itself to two main tasks. The first of these will involve a reconstruction of the polity of northern Leinster at the opening of the historical period. Of particular concern here will be the extent of the Leinster marchlands in Mide and north Munster, and the political role played by Uí Máil and other dynasties that were prominent in the early history of Glendalough (Chapter 2). In the post-Viking period, the focus will increasingly narrow to the Uí Muiredaig lineage which, from its patrimonial kingdom in south Co. Kildare, strove to dominate Glendalough with varied success into the early thirteenth century (Chapter 3).

The core of the present study involves an assessment of the Glendalough community, its composition and abbatial succession, as reflected in the record from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries (Chapters 4 and 5). In this connection, it is important to establish that certain limitations will be applied. For instance, it is not proposed to examine the above-mentioned canonical legislation or the secular law tracts in which procedures and precedents in relation to abbatial succession are set forth.[50] Rather, in the light of the political background previously discussed, the circumstances in which particular individuals succeeded to the abbacy will be explored and probable dynastic intentions critically examined. In this way, it is anticipated that the various priorities which may have motivated dynastic involvement at Glendalough, as at other sites, will be brought to light.

It should perhaps be pointed out that the abbatial function (or as the occasion warrants, that of other ecclesiastical offices) is considered here only in terms of headship of an ecclesiastical *civitas*. Because the abbot of a major ecclesiastical settlement such as Glendalough possessed a key executive role, it was important for dynastic interests, in seeking to access the temporalities, to appropriate the abbacy or dictate succession to that office. The focus of the study is limited, therefore, to the politics of abbatial succession. It is not envisaged that there should be any detailed analysis of the administrative structure of ecclesiastical settlements or consideration of the specific responsibilities of offices within that structure.[51] Moreover, just as the study is concerned almost exclusively with the political role of the abbot, the emphasis throughout is very much on the secular function of the ecclesiastical settlement. It is important to stress, however, that these foundations fulfilled a vital pastoral

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[50] Colmán Etchingham, "Aspects of Early Irish Ecclesiastical Organisation", unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Dublin 1992, explores this topic. Below, Ch. 4.

[51] B. Nic Aonghusa, "Monastic Hierarchy", esp. 11-12, discusses the responsibilities and probable order of seniority among monastic officials.

and spiritual need.[52] Glendalough, no less than any centre had its anchorites, its confessors and its pastors. Fasting and prayer took place, the sacraments were administered and the faithful instructed, the poor, the sick and the abandoned were attended to. Discussion of all these matters lies outside the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, it is well to recall that in spite of dynastic interference, conflicting ambitions and the upheavals that were on occasion caused, Glendalough remained a church centre which ministered to a Christian community.

The sixth chapter aims to consider the *paruchia* of Cóemgen, insofar as surviving sources permit its reconstruction. The extent of the time-span involved may present a difficulty here; a picture of the ecclesiastical network at one point in its development need not be valid throughout the entire period of the inquiry. Pending exploration of the degree of continuity that may exist in regard to Glendalough dependencies, knowledge of the political background may still bring to light dynastic interests or lineage connections lying behind the acquisition of certain properties or the geographical distribution of the *paruchia* as an entity. Finally, by way of conclusion, the findings of the inquiry in regard to sources and methodology, the politics of northern Leinster, the community and abbacy at Glendalough and the make-up of its paruchia will be summarised and the implications for future study in that field considered (Chapter 7).

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[52] L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, esp. Ch. 6 for a recent account of the spiritual and pastoral duties of the ecclesiastical centres.

Chapter 1: The Sources: A Critical Approach

1.1 Documentary Sources

1.1.1 The Annals

Of the wide range of documentary sources used in the present study, the annals alone were kept for the express purpose of preserving an historical record. It has long been recognised that this record is composite in character. It is also acknowledged, however, that the sifting out of component strata within the surviving compilations, either on linguistic grounds or because of content indicators, is a feasible exercise.[1]

Bannerman, followed by Smyth, Hughes and others, has convincingly demonstrated that the earliest contemporary record preserved in the annals is an Iona chronicle.[2] This register of ecclesiastical and secular obits, dynastic conflicts and cosmic phenomena probably dates from the seventh century; prior to this, notes or *aides-memoires* may well have been kept (probably, as Ó Cróinín has convincingly argued, appended to paschal tables), thus facilitating a degree of backward-projection in the record.[3] It is unfortunate that the precise channels through which this account was transmitted and the subsequent diffusion of chronicle-keeping throughout Ireland is considerably less clear. A discernible shift in the record c.740 seems to indicate an East Ulster record by this date

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[1] Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *The Medieval Irish Annals* (Dublin: Dublin Historical Society, 1975), p. 17-18.

[2] J. Bannerman, "Notes on the Scottish Entries in the Irish Annals", *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 11 no. 2 (1968), 160-1; Alfred P. Smyth, "The Earliest Irish Annals: Their First Contemporary Entries and the Earliest Centres of Recording", *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, 72C (1972), 33-7; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 117-19; G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 19-20; also Michael Richter, *Medieval Ireland: The Enduring Tradition* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988), p. 83-4.

[3] Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.22 f. advances this argument with particular regard to the Iona Chronicle; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 118 and F.J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xvi suggest in general terms that informal notes may have formed the basis for chronicles; Dáibhí O Cróinín, "Early Irish Annals from Easter Tables: A Case Re-stated", *Peritia*, 2 (1983), esp. 77-9, 80-3, counters the arguments of those who had sought to play down the role of easter tables in the compilation of annals, pointing to four documented examples of such data transfer.

located perhaps in Bangor, although this is not universally agreed.[4] After much intermediate transmission, the Iona and Ulster chronicles were ultimately incorporated into the Annals of Ulster; here they are best preserved, featuring as strata embedded in a compilation of quite disparate make-up.

There is little evidence, however, for a contemporary chronicle in the Midlands-Leinster region before the later eighth century. It is true that notices of various Leinster ecclesiastical settlements (including Kildare, Clonard and Glendalough), along with references to ruling dynasties of the Laigin, may be seen to occur in the record with increasing frequency from the late seventh century onwards. Many of these notices have an authentic appearance in terms of language (recorded in Latin but preserving Old Irish forms of proper names) and content.

The same observation might well be made in relation to a stratum of entries of mainly Leinster interest best preserved in the Annals of Inisfallen. Several particularly interesting secular notices, for the most part dated to the late sixth century and relating to the Laigin (or perhaps more specifically to the Uí Fáilge), are unique to this compilation.[5] There is also a group of ecclesiastical obits, assigned to the seventh century. Collectively, these clerics represent a group of foundations that were apparently identified with Glendalough interests, perhaps at the time of the Uí Máil ascendancy (below, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, & 4.2.1) in the late seventh and early eighth century.[6] Like the Iona and Ulster strata, discussed above, these notices bear the hallmark of antiquity; the language is Latin and name forms are Old Irish. At the same time, the record is in no way substantial

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[4] K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 121-3; cf A.P. Smyth, "Earliest Irish Annals", 33-4, 37; G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 19-20.

[5] A.I. s.a. 593, 595, 598; David Dumville & Kathryn Grabowski, *Chronicles and Annals of Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1984), p. 17, 21, 30. See below Ch.2.

[6] A.I. s.a. 603, 613, 672, 677. The obits in question are those of Sillán, Baetán Aba, Dícuill mac Colmáin and Librén mac Colmáin, see below, 4.1.3, 6.3.2; D. Dumville & K Grabowski, *Chronicles and Annals*, p. 21-2.

enough to justify a case for a contemporary Leinster-Munster chronicle at this early date. Moreover, the fact that other seventh century Leinster ecclesiastical obits are shared with the Clonmacnois compilations would suggest that the entire series may have been selectively taken from an exemplar which underlies both A.I. and the Clonmacnois group. In that event, the stratum possibly dates from the late eighth century, by which stage these compilations show divergence; it is unlikely to be much earlier.[7] Independent of any argument regarding a local chronicle, it is distinctly possible that notes may have been preserved concerning the activities of the Laigin in the marchlands of Munster prior to the eighth century. Allowing that extensive connections had been established with Glendalough and with the southern half of Ireland generally, Bangor is not an unlikely location for the collation of such notes. If, as Byrne suggests, the Bangor community made note of the 552 decimation of Corco Ochae because of the connection with Mo Lua, it is equally possible that some of the sixth/seventh century Laigin notices may been entered at that same centre because of connections with the Castledermot area and with Glendalough.[8]

While certain major events or the deaths of prominent ecclesiastics may have been written down long before any formal record was kept, it need not follow that the chronology of these notices, relating to the seventh century or earlier, is especially reliable. It seems clear, for instance, that the obits of most sixth and early seventh century ecclesiastical founders are computations. The obituary of Cóemgen of Glendalough, for instance, is noted twice in the record. While variation of dating by one year in the main compilations (by four years in A. Clon) almost certainly results from slippage in the course of redaction, the

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[7] A.Tig, A.I. s.a. 632, 634, 640 note obits of Maeldub (rather than Fintan Maeldub?), Mo Bae moccu Allae and Dagán of Inber Daeile; D. Dumville & K Grabowski, *Chronicles and Annals*, p. 62; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 108-9, 138, observe divergence of A.I. from Clon. group post 717 and again post 790, while the Clon. record becomes increasingly Connacht/Midland orientated from c.740 and again c.770 x 790.

[8] F. J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xvi; compare A.P. Smyth, "Earliest Irish Annals", 37-41, who argues that certain Leinster/south of Ireland notices may be of Iona origin; see Ch 4.

duplication is most likely due to an uncertainty in computation.[9] It is also important to note that the corpus of political entries for the period prior to c.550 includes a substantial stratum, best represented in the original hand of the Annals of Ulster MS T.C.D. H.1.8, which purportedly documents the Laigin conflict with the Southern Uí Néill. This particular stratum, which shows clear signs of post-hoc construction (it is both composite in terms of language and reflective of the Boruma tradition) may have been composed or revised in Uí Néill territory as late as the ninth century.[10] The extent to which these entries may reflect a "genuine tradition" continues to be the subject of much debate and has important consequences for the present study. If accepted as reliable, this account may provide valuable indications to the polity of Leinster around the time that the Glendalough community was initially established. In a later section of this chapter, the tradition preserved in these annals and the question of its reliability will receive further attention, and will be discussed in the light of interpretational difficulties (below, 1.2.3).

An approach to the problem of isolating strata within the annals which may reflect contemporary local recording has been proposed by Smyth. The criteria which he established in regard to identifying a local chronicle appear to have found general acceptance; Hughes independently arrives at similar conclusions regarding continuity, local concentration and detail, while Mac Niocaill follows a similar line but sounds a caution on the tendency to multiply "components" which may not in fact represent independent chronicles but reflect personal connections between ecclesiastical establishments.[11] Continuity

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[9] See A.U. s.a. 617, 621; C.S. s.a. 618, 622; A.F.M. s.a. 617; A. Clon. s.a. 614; A. Tig. [618], [622]; A. Rosc. f.107; Cott. f.201. It was formerly considered that such obits of founder-patrons represented contemporary records; L. Ó Buachalla, "Construction of the Irish Annals 429-466", *Jnl Cork Hist Arch Soc*, 63 (1958), 103.

[10] T. Ó Máille, *The Language of the Annals of Ulster* (Manchester: University Press, 1910), esp. p. 9; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 144; see J. V. Kelleher, "Pseudo History", 122.

[11] A. P. Smyth, "The Earliest Irish Annals", esp. 26-31; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 116-8; G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 18.

of record and precision of detail are of course essential, especially when combined with local distribution, but one should also expect notice of events of purely local importance, along with mention of lesser monastic officials and dynasts and "topographical detail", that is reference to small local ecclesiastical settlements or lordships. On this basis Smyth makes a strong case for a Clonard-based chronicle, dating from perhaps the late eighth century, which documented both the ecclesiastical and political affairs of North Leinster and Mide-Brega.[12] A version of this Clonard record, which clearly included material from Kildare, was incorporated into the main text of A.U, where it is most accurately preserved.[13]

As Smyth in fact noted, the geographical coverage of this chronicle is for the most part restricted to northern Leinster, according little attention to the affairs of the east and south. Glendalough, an ecclesiastical centre of some significance already by the eighth century, is not well documented in this account.[14] However, the seventeenth century compilation known as the Annals of the Four Masters has transmitted a stratum of Leinster material of ninth to eleventh century date which, on internal evidence, can be shown to have originated in the Barrow Valley region, perhaps centred at Glenn Uissen.[15] The political and ecclesiastical interests represented here, for the ninth and tenth centuries, reflect those of the Osraige ruling line and their Loígis and Uí Bairrche allies. During this time, the Osraige kings were actively engaged in extending their power eastwards across Leinster (see below, 2.2.3). However, a certain shift in focus, in both political and geographical terms, may be observed in the

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[12] A. P. Smyth, "Earliest Irish Annals", 23ff; followed by G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 22; also M. Richter, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 84.

[13] See A. P. Smyth, "Earliest Irish Annals", 34, table 3; G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 24, fig. 2.

[14] A.U. s.a. 617, 659, 677, 686, 711, 768, 774, 789, 798, 799; A. P. Smyth, "Earliest Irish Annals", 20, 29, comments on the small number of entries; Glendalough headed a *paruchia* of considerable extent by the 8th century and had apparently attracted the attentions of the Uí Máil dynasty (below, 4.2.1).

[15] Alan James Mc Govern [Ailbhe Séamus Mac Shamhráin], "The Leinster Strata in the Irish Annals", unpublished M.A. dissertation, University College Dublin, 1977, p. 34-5.

eleventh century record. Attention is now centred more on the lineage of Uí Muiredaig which, having allied itself with the Uí Bairrche dynasty, would seem to have established links between Glenn Uissen and Dísert Diarmata in the Uí Muiredaig patrimony.[16] This stratum of entries in A.F.M. takes notice of Kildare and, more significantly from the point of view of this study, Glendalough, from the late ninth century onwards. Obits and, as the tenth century progresses, other happenings are recorded with relative consistency. From the entry at 883 (=886) to that for 1056, this stratum preserves twenty-eight notices relating to Kildare and fifteen to Glendalough which are either unique to A.F.M. or paralleled only in the Clonmacnois compilation. The eleventh century entries accord particular attention to the Uí Muiredaig lineage, which at this period were clearly involved in the affairs of Glendalough (below, Ch. 3 and Ch. 5).

It is noteworthy on this account, as Professor Mac Niocaill observes, that A.Tig. should include an eleventh century element which, by reflecting a geographical standpoint, should suggest Central Leinster composition.[17] The Clonmacnois annals also document Leinster affairs in the twelfth century, from what appears to be an outside perspective. One can only echo the regret of Richter that from the 1120s to the 1160s there should be such a lacuna in the major annals.[18] Taken as a whole, however, the annalistic record incorporates not only post-hoc reflections of early Leinster polity (below, 1.3.4), but contemporary coverage of the province with notice of Glendalough from the late eighth to the twelfth century. This includes an apparently complete list of abbots, with a more detailed record especially for the eleventh century. In addition, Uí Muiredaig and other north and east Leinster lineages, whose fortunes became associated with

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[16] Ibid., p. 57, 59-61.

[17] G. Mac Niocaill, *Medieval Annals*, p. 27.

[18] Michael Richter, "The Interpretation of Medieval Irish History", *Irish Historical Studies*, 24 (1984-5), 297.

the ecclesiastical settlements of the area, including Glendalough, are well documented throughout that time.

1.1.2 Lives of the Saints

It has become common practice to assert that the main purpose of hagiographical writing is not biography, but rather what might be viewed as enlarging the reputation of the subject.[19] A certain emphasis on "rights" and "privileges" might therefore be expected. The hagiography of Glendalough, however, which for the most part consists of the lives of Cóemgen, is less explicit in this regard than is sometimes the case. While it is expressly stated that certain properties were surrendered to Cóemgen, which presumably indicates an assertion of rights, there is no emphasis on privilege comparable to that in the Irish Life of Maedóc of Ferns, where entitlement to dues is constantly reiterated.[20]

Certainly, little in the way of biographical data has been preserved in relation to Cóemgen, either in the Latin *vitae*, preserved in the 14th-15th century codices lodged at Brussels, Oxford and Dublin, or in the Irish *bethada*, which survive in 17th-18th century manuscripts in Brussels and Dublin.[21] It is maintained that he was descended from the dynasty of Dál Messin Corb, which may be true (see below, 1.2.3), and that he founded a church at Cluain Duach before proceeding on to Glenn dá Locha.[22] Otherwise there is the mandatory

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[19] J. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 298-9; Máire Herbert, "Beathaí na Naomh", in *Ár nDúchas Creidimh*, Léachtaí Cholm Cille 8, ed. P. Ó Fiannachta (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1977), p. 5.

[20] *Vita S. Coemgeni* §§1, 19, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols, ed Charles Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), I, p.234, 249; see the conflated *Betha Maedóic*, *B.N.E.*, I, p. 202, 204-5, 247, 253, 255, 257-60, 265-6, 267-70, 280.

[21] Codex [olim] Salmanticensis, 'S' (now Brussels Bibl. Royale 7672-4), Codex Insulensis, 'R' (Oxford, Bodleian, Rawl. B. 485, Rawl. B. 505) and Codex Kilkenniensis, 'M-T' (Dublin, Marsh's Library, V.3.4; T.C.D., E.3.11). The Irish manuscripts are 'Br' (Brussels, Bibl. Royale 2324) and 'D' (T.C.D., No. 1346; R.I.A., 24.M.28).

[22] *Vita S. Coemgeni* §§ 1, 12, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 234, 240; see A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica Glindelachensis", 79-80.

catalogue of miracles, while the churchmen and the kings with whom he is brought into contact most likely represent the ecclesiastical and political relationships that had developed by the time the lives were written (a point which will be elaborated below).

The late twelfth century *Vita* of the Glendalough Abbot and later Archbishop of Dublin, St. Lorcán Ua Tuathail, is a very different product. It was composed shortly after Lorcán's death by a canon of Eu, in Normandy, who apparently had contact with Dublin, to initiate the cause of its subject's canonisation. Some biographical data is presented, including Lorcán's family background, his time as hostage, education and subsequent career, with a curious insight into the internal politics of Glendalough c.1162 when Lorcán was elevated to the See of Dublin.[23]

An outside perspective on the Glendalough situation is provided by the lives of other saints which feature Cóemgen among the dramatis personae; these include the *vitae* of Abbán, Eógan, Ciarán, Berach and Monenna.[24] There are, besides, *vitae* which contain no reference to Cóemgen, but which include other figures from the *familia Coemgeni;* a case in point is the *Betha Adamnáin,* where the cast of characters includes Dubgualai, abbot of Glendalough.[25] Some valuable topographical detail relating to the local polity surrounding Glendalough is preserved in *Bethu Pátraic*, or the Tripartite Life of Patrick.[26]

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[23] *Vita S. Laurencii Archiepiscopi Dublinensis*, ed Charles Plummer, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 33 (1914), 121-186; Maurice F. Roche, "The Latin Lives of St Laurence O'Toole", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University College Dublin, 1981, esp. p. 69-72, where the author indicates contact between Eu and Henry of London, Lorcán's successor in the Archbishopric of Dublin; See below, 3.2.2, 5.2.2.

[24] *Vita S. Abbani* , § 2, *Vita S. Berachi* , §§ 6, 9, 11,*Vita S. Ciarani* , § 32, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 4, 77-9, 215; *Vita S. Abbani*, § 1, *Vita S. Eogani* , § 3, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice Salmanticensis*, ed. W.W. Heist (Brussels, 1968), p. 256, 401; *Betha Berach*, §§ 24, 29-45, *B.N.E.*, I, p. 27, 28-32; *Life of St Monenna by Conchobranus*, ed. Ulster Soc. Med. Latin Studies, *Senchas Ardmacha*, 9 no.2 (1979-80), §§ 10-12, p. 266-8.

[25] *Betha Adamnáin*, ed. Máire Herbert & Pádraig Ó Riain (London: Irish Texts Soc., 1988), p. 52-3. See below, 2.1.5, 4.2.1.

[26] *Bethu Pátraic*, ed. Kathleen Mulchrone (Dublin & London: Royal Irish Academy, 1939), esp. ll 2178-2218, p. 111-2.

Also worthy of note is the curious claim in the *Vita S. Moling* that the patron of Tech Moling succeeded to the abbacy of Glendalough.[27]

With the clear exception of such examples as the *Vita S. Laurencii* which, as noted above, belong to a specific class of vitae, it is generally agreed that the main corpus of saint's lives was written at a much later period than that of its subjects. Kenney once expressed the view that the bulk of the corpus, including the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, could be dated to the tenth century.[28] Coincidentally, this is the time to which Ó Riain and Herbert would date the *Betha Adamnáin* and Jackson would date *Bethu Pátraic*, mainly on linguistic grounds.[29] However, while it is quite possible to focus on the transition from Old Irish to Middle Irish verbal forms, the same facility is not available for the dating of Latin texts. In his recent reassessment of the hagiographical codices, Dr. Richard Sharpe is critical of the tenth century date originally proposed by Kenney, maintaining that it rests solely on a conviction that the rather secular tone of certain *vitae* reflects a debasement of religious values which followed the Viking incursions.[30]

Sharpe favours a considerably earlier date for the corpus of Latin Lives as a whole. He observes the inclusion in the Codex Insulensis (Oxford MSS) of a version of the *Vita Prima S. Brigitae* which, it has been suggested, dates to the eighth century. This raises the possibility, he remarks, of an (almost) equally early composition date for the other lives in the collection.[31] Indeed a distinctive

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[27] *Vita S. Moling* §6, *V.S.H.*, II, p. 192; see below, ch. 2, ch. 4.

[28] J. F. Kenney, *Sources* , p. 404.

[29] *Betha Adamnáin*, ed. M. Herbert and P. Ó Riain, p. 4, 7-8; M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p.155-8; Kenneth H. Jackson, "The Date of the Tripartite Life", *Zeitschrift fur Celtische Philologie*, 41 (1986), 7-8, 15.

[30] Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 21, 82; this "secularising" influence of the Vikings on Irish hagiography was followed by Felim Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography: Historiography and Method", in S. O'Brien, ed. *Measgra i gCuimhne Mhichíl Uí Chléirigh* (Dublin: Assissi Press, 1944), esp. p. 130.

[31] R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 15.

group of nine Saints' Lives known as O' Donoghue [Ua Donnchada] Group (common to all three major compilations but best preserved in the Codex Salmanticensis), referred to by Sharpe as ϕ, is dated by him mainly on the basis of Old Irish name forms to the late eighth century.[32] Moreover, he maintains that the active use of Latin as a literary medium was in decline by the ninth century, with Irish having come to dominate, and that a revival of Latin did not take place until the eleventh or twelfth century. This forms the basis of his argument that "it seems unlikely that any Latin *vitae* were composed in Ireland at least between 850 and 1050, and perhaps over a longer period".[33] If this is so, it seems reasonable that the earliest version of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* (although not included in the so-called O'Donoghue Group) should have been composed at least by the early ninth century. This would place the initial composition of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* within Sharpe's "Phase I" of hagiographical composition; Phase II from the early ninth century is characterised by the production of vernacular Lives.[34]

The abridged version of *Vita S. Coemgeni* in the Codex Salmanticensis (S) and its identical counterpart in the Oxford compilation (R) seem late; both may well be derived, as Sharpe suggests, from a hypothetical common original, which he denotes as θ. The date of this proposed compilation is uncertain, but it is not very likely to be early and probably post-dates the fuller version of Cóemgen's Life in the Codex Kilkenniensis (Dublin MSS), which was collected c.1200 (see Fig. 1A). This version of the Life is apparently pre-dated by a fragment preserved in two Bavarian manuscripts.[35] The transmission of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* prior

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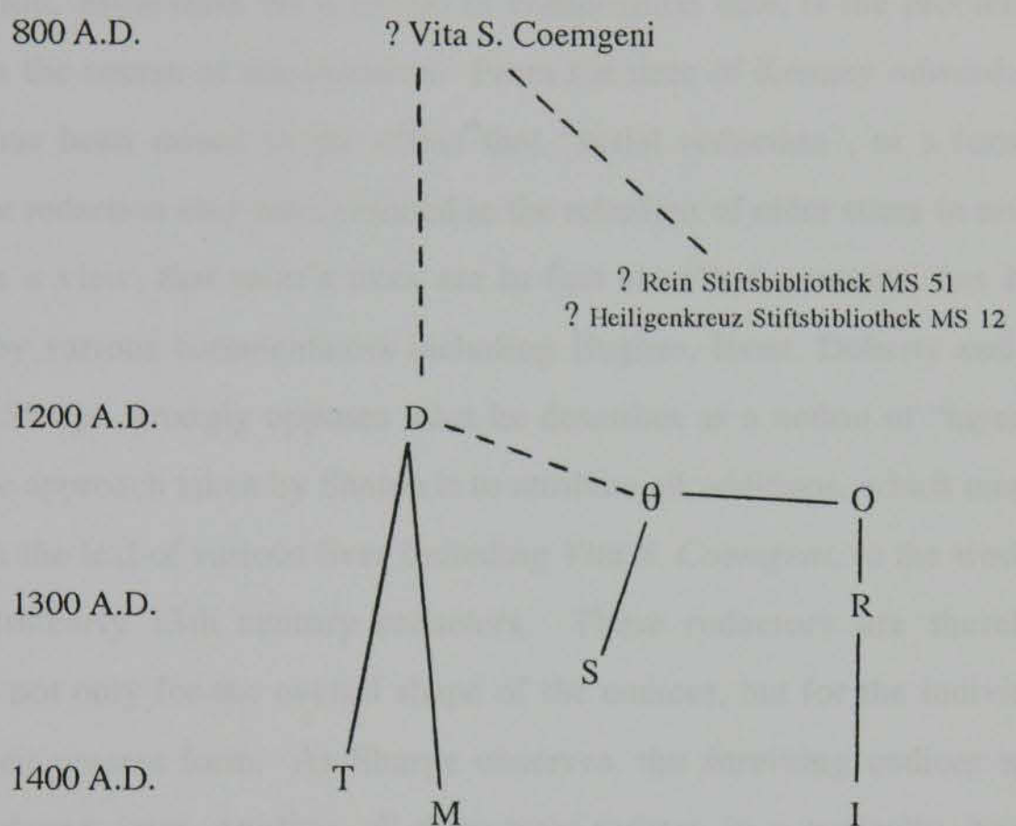
[32] Ibid., p. 320-4, 329, 384, discusses O'Donoghue Group.

[33] Ibid., p. 19 and esp. 22.

[34] Ibid., p. 34, outlines his phases of composition.

[35] Paul Grosjean, "Relations Mutuelles des Vies Latines de S. Cáemgen de Glenn dá Locha", Analecta Bollandiana, 63 (1945), 122-9; R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 27, n.101.

Fig. 1A : The Probable Transmission of *Vita S. Coemgeni* according to Sharpe (Based on fig. 3, p. 295, and including data from p. 27, 392 *Irish Saints' Lives).*



Key:

θ = common original of S and O
S = Codex Salmanticensis; O = Oxford Group; R = Rawlinson
I = Codex Insulensis; D = common original of Dublin Group
M = Marsh's Library; T = Trinity College Dublin

to this is uncertain; however, the likelihood of an initial composition date of c.800, as outlined above, would seem to find support from internal evidence (see below, 4.2.1, 4.2.2).

An equally important consideration in assessing the value of any *vita* or group of *vitae*, aside from the question of composition date, is the problem of redaction in the course of transmission. From the time of Kenney onwards, an argument has been raised to the effect that "serial redaction", or a form of intermediate redaction may have resulted in the retention of older strata in certain *vitae*. Such a view, that saint's lives are in fact stratified products, has been expressed by various commentators including Hughes, Heist, Doherty and Mc Cone, but Sharpe strongly opposes what he describes as a notion of "layered" *vitae*.[36] The approach taken by Sharpe is to attribute all additions, which may be discerned in the text of various lives including *Vita S. Coemgeni*, to the work of the late 12th/early 13th century redactors. These redactors are therefore responsible not only for the overall shape of the codices, but for the individual *vitae* in their present form. As Sharpe observes, the surviving codices were clearly produced *inter Anglos;* all three were written in a typically Anglo-Norman Gothic textura, with Irish names frequently mis-spelt (particularly in S) and various medieval name-forms introduced.[37] The Codex Kilkenniensis (M-T MSS) however, bears the distinct imprint of what Sharpe considers to be the revision-work of an end-redactor, as certain characteristic idiosyncracies are repeated throughout the compilation. There is a marked tendency to use the

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[36] J. F. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 294; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 220; W.W. Heist, "Over the Writer's Shoulder: St. Abbán", *Celtica*, 11 (1976), 76; C. Doherty, "Aspects of Hagiography ", 300-01, 322; Idem, "The Irish Hagiographer: Resources, Aims, Results", in *The Writer as Witness:Literature as Historical Evidence*, Historical Studies XVI, ed. Tom Dunne (Cork: University Press, 1987), p. 13; Kim R. Mc Cone, "An Introduction to Early Irish Saints Lives", *Maynooth Review*, 11 (1984), 40; cf R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 87, 324.

[37] R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 35, 108, 238-9; Ibid., p. 331-2, on medieval name-forms involving k and y and substitution of Continental names such as Odo for Áed (note Kyminus for Cóemgen in *Vita S. Berachi*, § 6, 9, 11; Ibid., § 16, where dynasts are named Odo Princeps Theffeorum and Odo Niger Rex Breffnensis;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 77-9, 81).

superlative form of adjectives, and to introduce digressions of antiquarian interest with genealogical and topological asides (typically involving the term *plaga),* as if the compiler was presenting the peoples and places of Ireland to a foreign audience.[38] Sharpe also considers that the redactor may be responsible for the introduction of episodes of Uí Chennselaig interest into various saints' lives in the codex. His suggestion that the Dublin recension may have been compiled by or for Ailbhe [Albinus] Ua Maelmuaid, Bishop of Ferns, arising perhaps out of the latter's contest with William Earl Marshall in 1218 for control of Mag Arnaide, has a certain appeal. Bishop Ailbhe's concerns, Sharpe argues, may have prompted the particular interest shown in *Vita S. Abbani* and could also lie behind the introduction of Uí Chennselaig episodes, including the "aside" on Brandub in *Vita S. Coemgeni;* however, as that *Vita* invariably presents Uí Chennselaig in a negative light, it seems more reasonable to view the episodes concerned as part of the original composition or (in accordance with the suggestion below 5.1.1) as part of an eleventh century reworking.[39]

The *Vita S. Coemgeni* certainly includes several examples of the kind of formulaic expressions illustrated by Sharpe. Cóemgen himself is described on various occasions in the superlative, no less than five population groups or places are located using the *plaga* formula (including Dál Messin Corb, Sliab Fuait, Tech Munnu, Cluain Moccu Nóis and the church of Garbán) while Latin paraphrase is used for Cóemgen's personal name and for two Irish toponyms.[40] The suggestion of Sharpe regarding a composition date of c.800 for the general corpus of vitae, and his argument in favour of a comprehensive redaction in the

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[38] R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 219, 223, 365-6.

[39] Ibid., p. 349-54, 359-60; Clare Stancliffe, "Review of *Medieval Irish Saints Lives", Jnl. Theological Studies,* new series 44 (1993), 379, considers that Sharpe overstates the role of the thirteenth century redactor.

[40] *Vita S. Coemgeni* §§ 1, 4, 6, 8, 15, 43, 44, 47, for superlatives 'beatissimus', 'pulcerrimus' and 'sanctissimus'; §§ 1, 17, 21, 28, 29, for *plaga* formula; §§ 1, 16, 29,for Latin paraphrases; *V.S.H.,* I, p. 234-56.

13th C. are quite persuasive. However, the grounds for his rejection of "serial redaction" seem rather less firm. The establishment of a case for intermediate redaction is crucial to assessing the value of the *vitae* as an historical source for any period between the time of composition (perhaps the early ninth century) and that of end-redaction. If, as seems generally agreed, the saints' lives are to be accepted as reflections of the author's time and interests,[41] it is vital that those interests be identified. Moreover, the identification of revised strata in a given *vita* prompts reconsideration of the suggestion made by Kenney, which Sharpe indeed rejects, that not only were the lives local products, but that revision was carried out locally.[42] The task of isolating such strata becomes less formidable when one accepts the act of revision as part of the process of hagiographical writing which, as noted by Doherty, is likely to reflect a point of change.[43] It is perhaps in this connection that one might recall the advice of Fr. Ó Briain, that the annals have a role as a controlling source in the evaluation of hagiography.[44]

The episode in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* in which the patron of Glendalough is brought into contact with Ciarán of Clonmacnois almost certainly reflects a tenth century development, which is represented in the annals.[45] While the identification of three other episodes (involving Columba, Comgall and Cainnech (§ 28), Garbán (§ 30) and Berchán (§31)) with dateable events is somewhat less certain, they do seem to fit an eleventh century context.[46] Similarly, the claims

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[41] J. F. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 300-01; M. Herbert, "Beathaí na Naomh", p. 5; M. Herbert & P. Ó Riain ed, *Betha Adamnáin*, p. 1; K. R. Mc Cone, "Early Irish Saints' Lives", 56; Idem, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1990), p. 244-5.

[42] J. F. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 392, 422; cf R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 363, 364, where he remarks: "the method of comparing the various recensions of a life in search of historical clues to changed conditions is not applicable where the secondary recensions were not the product of local revision".

[43] C. Doherty, "The Irish Hagiographer", p. 11.

[44] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 127.

[45] *Vita S. Coemgeni* § 28, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 248-9. This episode is discussed in detail below, see 4.3.2.

[46] *Vita Coemgeni*, § 27, 29-30, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 248, 249-50; see below, 3.1.3 and 5.1.1 for discussion of these episodes.

advanced in the *Vita S. Moling* concerning that patron's succession at Glendalough and Ferns may reflect an actual tenth century situation which is also traceable in the annals. The dynastic interests which lay behind the cult of Moling, especially in the political circumstances of the tenth century, may provide a better explanation for the episode than an attempt by the thirteenth century redactor to glorify Uí Chennselaig, as Sharpe suggests.[47]

In both of the vitae concerned, these apparent instances of intermediate redaction form continuous sequences in what could otherwise be late eighth or early ninth century accounts.[48] These episodes clearly reflect ecclesiastical arrangements or dynastic interests that can be associated with a certain locality and time. There is evidence, therefore, to suggest that the Latin Lives most likely were produced in one of the principal foundations of the patron concerned. Moreover, they were apparently revised over a period of time between the late eighth century and the tenth or, perhaps in the case of the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, the eleventh. The import of this for the historical interpretation of the *vitae* will be discussed below (1.2.3).

1. 1. 3 Poems and Stories

One of the primary purposes of hagiographical accounts, therefore, is to reflect the ecclesiastical and political relationships of the foundation involved. However, while incidental references to early rulers may represent ecclesiastico-dynastic interests, it is generally not intended to present a comprehensive picture

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[47] R. Sharpe, *Irish Saints Lives* , p. 359-60, seems to miss the historical significance of the claim; Tech Moling is associated with Síl Cormaic, a demoted segment of Uí Chennselaig which allied itself with the Osraige dynasty in the 10th C. The claims on Ferns and on Glendalough need to be viewed in this political context; See below 4.3.1.

[48] *Vita S. Coemgeni* §§ 27-30;*Vita S. Moling* §§ 6-7,*V.S.H.*, I, p. 248-50; II, p. 192-3.

of the polity. Any such picture is best obtained from the so-called "secular literature". A considerable corpus of archaic poetry of probable Leinster origin has survived, much of it embedded in the genealogical collections. Of particular interest are the regnal poems, such as that on Mess Delmann of the Domnainn who was credited in later tradition with the building of the hillfort of Dún Ailinne.[49] Another case in point is the poem *Nidu dír Dermait*, which lists Bressal Bélach, Muiredach Sníthe, Móenach, Mac Caírthinn and Nad Buidb among the alleged successors to the kingship of Tara.[50] On the basis that certain poems appeared to preserve early Latin borrowings, Carney had been inclined to suggest fifth to sixth century composition although present day opinion would favour a later date.[51] Some of the dynasts mentioned might in fact have lived in the fifth century, but it may be more reasonable, as Professor Ó Corráin suggests, to view the regnal poems collectively as reflections of a sixth century situation.[52] Thus, the Leinster polity presented in these poems may relate to the time when Glendalough was founded (i.e. the late sixth century), or may reflect the situation that prevailed some decades earlier still; that which formed the political heritage of the earliest ecclesiastical community.

An important Leinster poem with a political message of slightly later date is *Timna Cathaír Máir*, which Dillon dated on linguistic grounds to the eighth century.[53] Aside from language, the political primacy ascribed to the dynasty of

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[49] Rawl. B. 502, 118a 32; Michael A. O'Brien, ed., *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1962), p. 20; LL 311b 33; *The Book of Leinster*, VI, ed. Anne O'Sullivan (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), p. 1329; F. J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 134.

[50] J. V. Kelleher, "Pseudo History", 124; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 137.

[51] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 135; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies", in Tore Nyberg et al. (ed), *History and Heroic Tale:A Symposium* (Odense: University Press, 1985), p. 56-7, 58-9, 63.

[52] Note the Ogham stone near Duleek commemorating Mac Caírthinn of Uí Enechglaiss and the notice in A.I. s.a. 447; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Mag Femin, Femen and Some Early Annals", *Eriú*, 22 (1971), 97; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 137; D. Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 63; but see below Ch. 2.

[53] Myles Dillon ed., *Lebor na Cert* (London: Irish Texts Society, 1962), p. 148.

Uí Dúnlainge would accord with an eighth century (or later) date. Nonetheless, Smyth has drawn attention to apparent changes within the text, which may reflect an earlier formulation of the poem. The pre-eminence accorded to Rus Fáilge and the role of champion of Tuath Laigen bestowed on Dáire Barrach testifies to the political reality of the seventh century as reflected in other sources.[54] Ever since Dillon noted clear parallels between the *Timna* and the blessing of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the significance of this apparent modelling has been discussed. Professor Byrne has argued that the adaption from Genesis was no mere literary flight of fancy, but that the Irish poet consciously adopted a formula which suited his purpose.[55] Nonetheless, this view of the *Timna* as literary creation rather than oral tradition need not reduce its value as a picture of Leinster polity on the eve of the Viking onslaught.

The political situation of the post-Viking period is reflected in the Middle Irish *Lebor na Cert*, which Dillon tentatively assigned to the eleventh (perhaps, in fact, early twelfth) century; the work as it survives is, in any case, a compilation with some components out of line with the main text.[56] The perspective of *Lebor na Cert* is ultimately pro Dál Cais. Smyth's face-value interpretation of the verse which associates the king of the Foreigners with Liamain, taking it to mean occupation of the royal site adjacent to Newcastle Lyons, Co. Dublin, fits uncomfortably with the representation of Dublin as tributary to Leinster. In the writer's view, the text harks back to a Norse overlordship of Uí Dúnchada, a tenth

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[54] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi Relations with the Huí Néill", 517, 519-20; ibid., 522, where the author further argues that the *Timna* was originally composed within the political environment of an Uí Fáilge/Uí Bairrche/Uí Enechglaiss alliance which is also reflected in the poem *Clanna Failgi Ruis an Rig*, LL 49a; see below, Ch. 2.

[55] M. Dillon ed., *Lebor na Cert*, p. 149; Francis John Byrne, "Senchas: The Nature of Gaelic Historical Tradition", in *Historical Studies*, IX, ed. John G. Barry (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1974), p. 155-6; see also D. Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 54; K.R. Mc Cone, *Pagan Past*, p. 18-19; David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longman Group, 1982), p. 82, on assimilation of the Bible into other (e.g. Maori) traditions.

[56] M. Dillon, ed., *Lebor na Cert*, introduction, p. ix, xii; A.P. Smyth, "Review of *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources*", *Studia Hibernica*, 13 (1973), 169, expresses the view that certain parts of the compilation (e.g. the 'Airgialla Poem') are older.

century situation which was superceded from 1052 when the Uí Chennselaig dynasty asserted its power over Dublin.[57] Significantly, the men of Dublin are obliged to accompany the king of Caiseal (i.e. the king of Dál Cais) to war, while this same overlord bestowed a stipend on the king of Osraige and laid claim to the lordship of Laigen Desgabair 'ó Eóraid co nDún Dreasa'.[58] This probably relates to the post-1072 supremacy of the Ua Briain kings over Leinster (below, 3.2.1). A contrasting picture is provided by the 'Tara Poem' appended to *Lebor na Cert.* Here, the dynasty of Uí Chennselaig is expressly claimed as the ruling lineage of the Laigin; not only Dublin, but also Osraige is viewed as subject to Leinster and, perhaps even more significantly, the *gessa* of the king of Laigen forbid him to show disrespect for Cóemgen of Glendalough.[59] The situation presented here most likely postdates the Ua Briain supremacy, representing the twelfth century Uí Chennselaig recovery. Aside from the extension of lordship over the Hiberno-Norse and Osraige, the dynastic interests of Uí Muiredaig at Glendalough had by that stage come to overlap with those of Uí Chennselaig. The inclusion of the 'Tara Poem' by way of a Laigin riposte to the Ua Briain propaganda message would indeed suit the transmission-pattern of *Lebor na Cert* , in so far as it is known. The source of the text, as is claimed in the foreword, is the *Leabur Glindi Dá Lacha,* [60] the probable identity of which will be discussed later (below, 1.1.4).

Another Middle Irish poem which could perhaps be an important source in its own right for the political background of this period is *Clanna Bresail Bricc Builid.* According to Professor Ó Cuív, the text betrays linguistic features

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[57] M. Dillon, ed., *Lebor na Cert,* introd., p. xiv; ll 1610-12, 1632-5, cf ll 1737-8, 1763-4; p. 108-9, 110-11, 118-9; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster,* p. 44; below, Ch. 2.

[58] M. Dillon, ed., *Lebor na Cert,* ll 213-5, 401-03, 434-7, 528-9, 580-4, 627-34; p. 16-7, 28-31, 32-3, 38-9, 40-1, and esp. 44-5 n.2.

[59] Ibid., ll 1982-5, 1994-7, 2008-09, 2011; p. 132-3, 134-5.

[60] Ibid., introduction, p. xx; Ibid., l.3, p. 2-3.

consistent with the second half of the eleventh century. When this is taken in conjunction with the genealogies, which stress a fictitious Osraige-Laigin link, it seems to reflect the historical Osraige-Uí Chennselaig alliance which brought Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó to prominence.[61] Finally, a poetic source of somewhat later date which may merit brief consideration is the collection known as the topographical poems. This compilation is the work of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century professional poet-historians Ó Dubhagáin and Ó hUidhrín. It charts out the topography of pre-Norman Ireland which is seen, as Carney notes, through the eyes of the learned class of a later period.[62] It appears likely, as Byrne observes, that Ó Dubhagáin drew upon the placename lore of the earlier Rawlinson B. 502 compilation.[63] Various family lines are identified with early Leinster dynasties and, in some instances, their hereditary seats are named. However, there are several glaring anachronisms, not to mention the occasional mistaken identification (see below, Ch. 2).

The surviving corpus of 'secular' literature includes an extensive collection of stories, including king-tales, adventures and 'tribal' tales, which appear to have historical relevance in so far as they feature persons or events known to history. Material of this kind is often popularly classified as myth. However, Finley points out that the function of myth, which is timeless and universal in its concern, is to explain the beliefs of a society.[64] Byrne clarifies this same point and distinguishes between legend and pseudo-history; he associates the former with historical memory and the latter with political propaganda.[65] It is

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[61] Brian Ó Cuív, "A Middle Irish Poem on Leinster Dynasties", *Etudes Celtiques*, 18 (1981), esp. 144-5; cf. F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 163, where a ninth century date is suggested.

[62] James Carney ed., *Topographical Poems* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1943), p. vii.

[63] F. J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xxiv.

[64] Moses I. Finley, "Myth, Memory and History", in M.I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), p. 13.

[65] F.J. Byrne, "Senchas", p. 155-6; see also Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Legend as Critic", in

typical of legend to confuse the roles of real persons and to telescope perspective. Origin tales could be included in this category. Because of their concern with cause, Ó Corráin would include origin tales in his class of aetiological accounts which, he argues, generally relate to nodal points in the historical record.[66] A tendency has been observed for historical consciousness to operate on two registers, the "time of origin" and recent times. Vansina has observed that, for modern non-literate societies, the limit of time-reckoning between origins and the present tends to leave what he calls a "floating gap" (which shifts forward with passing generations) of about two centuries; it seems reasonable, therefore, that Early Irish Origin tales such as that of the Laigin, written down probably in the ninth century, may represent the political situation of their own day fused with that of, perhaps, the seventh century.[67]

Middle Irish 'historical' tales were probably written just as much for entertainment as for any other reason, and are full of anachronisms. This, however, need not necessarily mean that all such tales are entirely devoid of historical value. Smyth has drawn attention to the fact that *Fingal Rónáin,* the central character of which he would identify with seventh century Uí Máil ruler Rónán Crach, not only preserves accurate topographical details but seems to reflect an authentic picture of seventh century dynastic relationships.[68] There is reference, for instance, to Uí Máil connections with Dál nAraide and with northern Britain, which are confirmed by other sources and which are reflected in

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The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence, Historical Studies XVI, ed. Tom Dunne (Cork: University Press, 1987), p. 23-4.

[66] D. Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 83.

[67] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History,* second edition (London & Nairobi: James Currey, 1985), p. 21-2, 24; Michael A. O'Brien, "Irish Origin Legends", in Myles Dillon ed. *Early Irish Society* (Dublin & Cork: Mercier Press, 1954), p. 39-40, discusses Laigin origin tale *Orccain Dinn Ríg* in Rawl. B. 502, this features separate kingships of Brega and Laigen, a situation which prevailed from 7th century.

[68] *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories,* ed. David Greene (Dublin: Dublin institute for Advanced Studies, 1955), p. 3 ff; Alfred P. Smyth, "Kings, Saints and Sagas: the Coming of Christianity and the Dawn of History", in *Wicklow: History and Society,* ed. K. Hannigan and W. Nolan, forthcoming.

the ecclesiastical interests of Glendalough (see below, 2.1.4, 4.1.3). Similarly, for all its flights of fancy, the saga-like *Cath Almaine* is historically correct for the eighth century in featuring the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty in the kingship of Leinster. In effect, this latter story commemorates the end of the heroic age, which faded in the eighth century as the activity of historical recording gathered pace.

The literary genre sometimes classed as "pseudo history" is constructed on a chronological framework and is primarily concerned with political propaganda. The Middle Irish epic *Bóruma Laigen* purports to account for the perennial Uí Néill-Laigin conflict by tracing the efforts of the kings of Tara to exact a tribute from Leinster. Ultimately, however, it supports a Laigin rejection of Uí Néill claims to suzerainty. As it stands, the *Bóruma* is a heterogeneous compilation, combining elements of king-tale, hagiography and topographical lore. Doherty may well be correct in his argument that an eleventh century redactor introduced the saints (particularly Moling) and in his suggestion that a version was compiled at Tech Moling in the interest of Diarmait mac Máil na mBó.[69] However, given the enemity between Diarmait and the Uí Muiredaig lineage and his actions against their ecclesiastical interests, it is difficult to account for the roles accorded to Glendalough and its allied churches, including Dísert Diarmata (below, 4.1.2, 6.1.2). It may be that the final form of the epic was cast in the time of Diarmait Mac Murchada, when Uí Muiredaig had regained something of their former position.

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[69] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 144; C. Doherty, "The Irish Hagiographer", p. 18.

1. 1. 4 The Genealogies

The earliest surviving recensions of the pre-Norman Irish genealogies, those in the mid-to-late twelfth century compilations Rawlinson B. 502 and the Book of Leinster, display a marked Laigin perspective as clear evidence of their transmission through channels of appropriate dynastic interest.[70] It has been suggested that the Rawlinson B compilation may have originated at Glenn Uissen (Killeshin), traditionally an Uí Bairrche centre.[71] Certainly, that dynasty receives considerable attention in the Rawlinson genealogies. The pedigree of the king of Uí Bairrche takes second place in the sequence of royal pedigrees, placed immediately after that of Uí Chennselaig.[72] Moreover, as Ó Corráin has noted, Uí Bairrche is one of the best documented minor dynasties, with some two hundred members individually named in the genealogical corpus.[73] The widely-accepted equation made by Ó Riain between Rawlinson B. 502 and the *Leabur Glindi Dá Lacha* (Book of Glendalough), based largely on identification within the former compilation of various features ascribed to the latter by Ó Cléirigh, would accord well with a Glenn Uissen origin for Rawlinson B. 502 , especially when one considers the connection of the ecclesiastical family of Ua Mancháin with both locations.[74]

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[70] Carney's Dating of Rawl. B. 502 to c.1130 seems acceptable; see P. Ó Riain, "Book of Glendalough or Rawlinson B. 502", *Eigse*, 18 (1981), 162; William O'Sullivan, "Notes on Scripts and Make-up of the Book of Leinster", *Celtica*, 7 (1966), 26-7.

[71] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), p. 10, 42-3, where the editor considers the Rawlinson B.502 ascription of *Sex Aetates* to Dublittir Ua hUathgaile, fer légind of Glenn Uissen as "probably genuine"; see also F. J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xv-xvi.

[72] Rawl B. 502, 117a 31; *Corpus*, p. 10.

[73] D. Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 55-6.

[74] P. Ó Riain, "Book of Glendalough", 171-4, contests Carney's opposing argument; see also D. Ó Cróinín, *Sex Aetates Mundi*, p. 35; F. J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xv-xvi; T. O'Neill, *The Irish Hand*, p.28; W. O'Sullivan, "Medieval Meath Manuscripts", *Ríocht na Mídhe*, 7 no.4 (1985-6), 17; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84, 85, 90, 93, 96, notes Ua Mancháin clerics and their Uí Bairrche connections; see below, Ch. 5.

Some interesting comparisons may be drawn with the production of the Book of Leinster. This compilation was commenced, probably in the 1150s, under the direction of the abbot Áed mac Crimthainn at Tír Dá Glas.[75] This location may well explain the attention devoted to the ramifications of the old Leinster dynasties of Dál Cairpri and Dál Cormaic Loisc within the genealogical section. Work on the compilation was continued within the realm of Diarmait Mac Murchada, where the well-known lament for the latter's banishment was inserted in 1166. There are certain intimations of contact with Glendalough, or at least with that sphere. The same fabricated tradition of Laigin origin as occurs in Rawlinson B. 502 may be found in the Osraige genealogy, which was added by the hand which O'Sullivan identifies as 'T'.[76] There is a marked emphasis on Cóemgen's lineage of Dál Messin Corb in both the secular and, as noted below (1.1.5), the ecclesiastical genealogies. It might also be observed that the pedigree of the Uí Muiredaig kings is elevated in status and brought further up to date.[77]

Kelleher's view that the twelfth century compilation of genealogies owed much to antiquarian motives, prompted perhaps by an awareness of impending socio-cultural change, may be open to question .[78] Nonetheless, the compilations transmit an extensive corpus of genealogical data which, it is generally agreed, took shape in the latter part of the eighth century and was revised at intervals.[79] There is also a degree of consensus that the record provided by the corpus may

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[75] W. O'Sullivan, "Make-up of the Book of Leinster", esp. 7, 23, 26; see also T. O'Neill, *The Irish Hand*, p.30; Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, "Review of the Book of Leinster Volume VI", *Studia Hibernica*, 24 (1984-88), 191-2.

[76] LL 337 h 1, 339 a 1 to 341 a 55; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1484, 1493-1502; W. O'Sullivan, "Make-up of the Book of Leinster", 10, 24, 27, remarks on additions to genealogies by hand 'T' in period 1186-9 and again at a later date.

[77] LL 312 c 38 - 313 b 8, 337 d 1-39; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1336-9, 1480; see also esp LL 350 a 43-82, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554; see below, 5.2.2.

[78] John V. Kelleher, "The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies", *Irish Historical Studies*, 16 (1968), 139; followed by U. Mac Gearailt, "Review of Book of Leinster Volume VI", 192-3.

[79] J.V. Kelleher, "Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies", 143; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 161-2; F.J. Byrne, "Seanchas", p. 139.

be relied upon for up to two centuries prior to that time. At one time O'Brien suggested that the corpus furnished an accurate account of dynastic genealogies as far back as the fifth century although later, on consultation with Binchy, he brought this date forward to c.600; Dumville has opted for an intermediate position, regarding the plague of the 540s as the ultimate barrier.[80] The genealogies may therefore be dependable back as far as c.550 x 600, which would mark the commencement of the historical period proper. It is worth recalling, in this connection, that accurate transmission of genealogical tradition for three generations and more has been observed in non-literate societies.[81] However, genealogy has a special dynamic of its own by virtue of the fact that the line of descent is extended with each new generation. For this reason, it is considered by Vansina to be a "cumulative account"; it is subject to regular revision, controlled by demands for "relevance" which, all too often, amount to subjective selection.[82]

The Irish corpus of genealogies, however, presents a further complication. As argued by Professor Mc Cone, the genealogies are an ecclesiastical product, and there is no evidence to demonstrate an oral tradition later put into writing.[83] Certainly, they can scarcely be said to represent any popular tradition, concerned as they are with royal and aristocratic lineages. Indeed the corpus essentially consists of professional records which, as Ó Corráin points out, do not really represent the "genealogical awareness" of the society with which they are

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[80] M. A. O'Brien, "Irish Origin Legends", p. 39; Idem, "Old Irish Personal Names: Rhys Lecture Notes 1957", ed. R. Baumgarten, *Celtica*, 10 (1973), 217, n.5; David Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", in P.H. Sawyer and I. Wood, ed. *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds: Leeds University Press, 1981), p. 92.

[81] D. Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p. 16; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 182; M.I. Finley, "Myth Memory and History", p. 27.

[82] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 24; M.I. Finley, "Memory and History",p. 27; D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 87; D. Ó Corráin, "Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 83-4, argues that three layers of pedigree (present /remembered past, age of heroes /dynastic founders, and "middle ground" of ambiguity) are subject to telescoping.

[83] K. R. Mc Cone, *Pagan Past*, p. 234.

concerned.[84] It remains possible, nonetheless, that the data could derive ultimately from family traditions. In this way, a "group account" of the kind indicated by Vansina may still underlie the genealogies that were first written down in the eighth century.[85] In that event, the only problem for the historian would be the kind of "telescoping" that can arise from the transmission of cumulative data.

However, as Dumville notes, royal genealogies were concerned not merely with preserving a record of ancestry, but with providing a legal title to rule. This ability to prove dynastic legitimacy could be crucial in winning Church support and may have had particular relevance in traumatic times.[86] In addition, genealogies could have a key function as a political weapon; they readily lend themselves to the promotion of an ideology. In Ireland, it was not uncommon for dynastic interests to dictate their own genealogical interpretation of the past with a view, perhaps, to influencing the future.[87] It may be noted that the genealogical proximity of certain lineages to the dynastic centre commonly represented a statement of political relationships at the time of composition. Thus, shifts in the polity could well prompt revision of a dynasty's genealogical network (already noted in regard to the Osraige), with such manipulation being facilitated by the fact that the contents of the corpus were not public knowledge.[88]

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[84] D. Ó Corráin, "Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 69.

[85] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 18-9.

[86] D. Dumville, "Kingship,Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 73, 76, 81, relates to sub-Roman Britain, but see Ch. 3 for discussion of early post-Norman situation in Leinster.

[87] Ibid., p. 72, 83; see also Nicholas P. Brooks, *History and Myth, Forgery and Truth* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1986), p. [4], [7], discusses the notion of myth as the "end of history", a construct which a party wishes to leave to posterity, and considers the genealogies of royal dynasties as adoptions of such "myth".

[88] K. R. Mc Cone, *Pagan Past*, p. 240; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 103-4, F.J. Byrne, "Senchas", p. 145; D. Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative", in D.E. Evans et al. ed., *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies* (Oxford: by the Congress, 1986), p. 150-1, all discuss manipulation of genealogies.

As the principal concern of the genealogies is with regnal succession, the focus for the most part is on male dynasts. A short but significant tract, however, the oldest surviving version of which is found in the Book of Leinster, lists the wives and daughters of early Uí Dúnlainge rulers.[89] The suggestion once made by Dobbs, that the list was probably begun *ante* 737 by someone connected with the Uí Máil lady Conchenn, appears unnecessary.[90] The internal evidence of the tract, which works systematically backwards through the Uí Dúnlainge lineage from the time of Dúnlaing mac Muiredaig, makes it seem more likely that the list was a late eighth century product, composed when that *parvenu* dynasty still valued its contacts with Uí Máil and its allies (see below, 2.2.2).

A much lengthier and more diverse collection of data on female dynasts is contained in the tract known as the *Banshenchas*. Although the pre-eleventh century sections of the tract were clearly assembled from earlier sources, the oldest version of the *Banshenchas* as an entity is the metrical version composed c. 1147 in an Uí Bríúin Bréifne milieu.[91] Of more relevance to the present study, however, is the prose version as transmitted through the Book of Uí Maine. This recension includes sixty-four unique entries with a strong Leinster regional bias, which on internal evidence would appear to have been compiled c.1170-1176. Dr. Ní Bhrolcháin notes that there is much Uí Dúnlainge material and a considerable body of data relating to Mac Murchada and to his allied lineages (including the Ua Tuathail line of Uí Muiredaig). She observes an emphasis on Kildare, but considers that there is insufficient evidence to identify a more specific area of compilation.[92] It may be significant, however, that the Uí Muiredaig lines

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[89] LL 316a 45: *Corpus*, p. 340; Margaret C. Dobbs, "Women of the Uí Dúnlainge", *Irish Genealogist*, 1 no.7 (1940), 196-206.

[90] M. C. Dobbs, "Women of the Uí Dúnlainge", 206.

[91] Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, "An Banshenchas", in *Na Mná sa Litríocht*, Léachtaí Cholm Cille 12, ed. P. Ó Fiannachta (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1982), p. 8; eadem, "The Manuscript Tradition of the Banshenchas", *Ériú*, 33 (1982), 110.

[92] Ibid., 123-4.

(including Ua Tuathail and Ua Lorcáin) are accorded considerable focus, with the Lecan and Uí Maine recensions favouring Ua Lorcáin and Ua Tuathail respectively.[93] Given the central position of the Uí Muiredaig lineage within the West Leinster and later Uí Chennselaig alliances of the 11th-12th centuries, it might be suggested that the *Banshenchas* came to include an element of Glendalough data.

Certainly the *Banshenchas* adds an important dimension to any attempted reconstruction of pre-Norman polity. The catalogue of pedigrees within the genealogical corpus, discussed above, can elucidate succession to the various kingships, bearing in mind Kelleher's caveat on the relative coherence of certain groups of genealogies.[94] The record of dynastic marriages in the *Banshenchas*, however, is a key indicator to political alliances. Valuable as the pedigrees and marriage links are, the ramifications of the dynasties are of still greater interest. The record (particularly extensive for the Laigin) of cadet branches and discard segments provides a guideline, as Dumville has observed, for demographic study.[95] The implications of this for the present study will be discussed in Chapter 2.

1.1.5 Genealogies of the Saints

The pedigrees of the saints, collected separately within the genealogical corpus, are considered to date from the ninth or perhaps from the tenth century.[96]

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[93] Lec. (21 Uí Muiredaig references) focuses on Ua Lorcáin, in accord with 11thC anti-Uí Chennselaig position of Ua Maelsechlainn of Mide. Uí Maine (14 Uí Muiredaig references) is more reflective of the 12thC Ua Tuathail/Uí Chennselaig alliance; see below, Ch. 3.

[94] J.V. Kelleher, "Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies", 147-8, points to poor coherence in Laigin genealogies, with a disparity of death dates in strata of equivalent generations.

[95] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 72.

[96] J.V. Kelleher, "Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies", 143; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The Early Irish Church: Some Aspects of Organisation", in D. Ó Corráin (ed), *Irish Antiquity: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor M. J. O'Kelly* (Cork: University Press, 1981), p.330 Pádraig Ó Riain, "Irish Saints

Many of these pedigrees betray an artificial character. Some are clearly fictional compositions while others bear signs of having been tampered with. There are instances of conflicting alternative pedigrees, and cases where a named ancestor appears out of place, or where the parentage cited in the *Vita* does not accord with the genealogy; Daig (or Dagán) and Molibbo, both of whom feature in the Glendalough *familia*, represent cases in point.[97] In addition, unspecified links with the dynasty of Dál Messin Corb, and by implication with Cóemgen of Glendalough, are claimed for an entire group of Leinster saints (below, 6.2.3).

Several decades ago, Fr. Ó Briain cautioned that the motives for such interference could be of varied nature, and he urged the need to examine individual cases.[98] The suggestion put forward by Kelleher that pedigrees were composed, or were subsequently altered, to conceal the plebeian origins of certain ecclesiastical founders may not be entirely invalid.[99] Nonetheless, it appears likely that other considerations were involved. Especially in view of the confusion generated by the employment of hypochoristic forms, it seems probable that genealogies may have played a role in the legitimisation of localised saints' cults, as proposed by Ó Riain.[100]

All the same, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, at least in some instances, saints' genealogies were adapted to serve dynastic interests, whether in

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Genealogies", *Nomina*, 7 (1983), 24; Idem (ed), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988), p. xvii-xviii.

[97] Pádraig Ó Riain, "The Composition of the Irish Section of the Calendar of the Saints", *Dinnseanchas*, 6 (1975), 84-5; cf Paul Byrne, "The Ancestry of St Finnian of Clonard", *Ríocht na Mídhe*, 7 no. 3 (1984), esp. 29-30.

[98] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 127.

[99] J.V. Kelleher, "Pseudo History", 119; P. Byrne, "St Finnian", 35.

[100] Note Beirech of Cluain Coirpthe and the like-named Berchán son or grandson of Nemann, LL 347d 19; LL 351c 59. An alleged relationship between Beirech and Cóemgen, featured in their respective lives, is discussed below, 6.2.4; Pádraig Ó Riain, "Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography", *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 147, 152-3; Idem, "Cainnech alias Colum Cille: Patron of Ossory", in P. De Brún, S. Ó Coileáin & P. Ó Riain (ed), *Folia Gadelica: Essays Presented to R.A. Breatnach* (Cork: University Press, 1983), esp. p. 25-6, takes this argument to extreme lengths, arguing that Cainnech and Colum Cille, Abbán and Ailbhe represented localisations of each other's cults.

relation to clerical discard segments or ruling lines. By establishing a genealogical link with the founding patron, a certain family line could seek to defend their occupation of the abbacy. As with the royal pedigrees discussed above, record of the saint's alleged ancestry could provide a 'legal title' to office. Indeed Ó Riain has remarked that one might expect a correlation between the lineage ascribed to the founder and that of the "local clerical family enjoying his succession".[101] In the case of Glendalough, however, there is no evidence that Cóemgen's alleged line of Dál Messin Corb ever held the abbacy. Such indications as there are suggest rather that the dominant interests adopted the Dál Messin Corb genealogical network as a'flag of convenience'.

This apparent manipulation of saints' genealogies emphasises the value of this source as a testimony to politico-ecclesiastical links, rather than as a record of the biological ancestry of the saint.[102] In general, the collection may be seen to reflect both dynastic interest at ecclesiastical centres and inter-monastic relationships. The extensive network of Dál Messin Corb saints is clearly contrived and, as once noted by Ó Briain,[103] seems to represent the ecclesiastical contacts of Glendalough (below, Ch. 6).

1.1.6 The Martyrologies

The relationship of the Irish *féilire* to the class of *martyrologium* rather than to that of *kalendarium* is important in view of the essentially historical purpose of the former. The original purpose of the Martyrology of Tallaght may well have been kalendaric providing, as Hennig suggests, a supplement to the

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[101] Idem, "Irish Saints' Genealogies", 25; P. Byrne, "St. Finnian", 35, on Uí Felmeda.

[102] P. Grosjean had considered the saint's pedigree to be a "co-ordinée hagiographique" helping to establish the bona fide of a saint; see P. Ó Riain, "Irish Saints' Genealogies", 24.

[103] F. Ó Briain, "Hagiography of Leinster", 461-3.

Missa Apostolorum.[104] In that event, the original liturgical function had been abandoned by the time the Irish entries were added and the *féilirí* recast in their present form. The question of when the earliest martyrologies were written and how they were compiled remains problematic. The Middle Irish *Féilire hUí Gormáin* (F.G.) and the martyrological section of *Missale Drummondiense* (M.Drumm) are clearly twelfth century productions, while the Martyrology of Donegal (M. Don.) is a seventeenth century compilation by Míchél Ó Cléirigh.[105] The difficulty relates to the Old Irish Martyrology of Tallaght (M.T.) and the metrical *Féilire Oengusso* (F.O.).

That which is generally accepted as the prototype of Irish martyrologies, M.T., was almost certainly written in Tallaght. Notes at 10 August and again at 6 September, as Ó Riain observes, record the arrival of clerics; moreover, Hennig points to a curious agreement between M.T. and the Stowe Missal whereby both commence the church year at the unorthodox point of 25 December.[106] The second martyrology, F.O., is ascribed to Óengus mac Óengabann in the preface to the text, which is of considerably later date.[107] Assuming that the latter was in fact the author, F.O. would be associated with Dísert Óengusso, a hermitage in Loígis and ultimately with Tallaght, which seems to accord with internal evidence.

Both productions are therefore from north Leinster. M.T. is demonstrably earlier than F.O. The twelfth century martyrologist Maelmuire Ua Gormáin

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[104] John Hennig, "The Function of the Martyrology of Tallaght", *Medieval Studies* (Toronto), 26 (1964), 315-28; Idem, "Studies in the Latin Texts of the Martyrology of Tallaght, of Féilire Óengusso and of Féilire hUí Gormáin", *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, 69C (1970), 45-112; both reprinted in John Hennig †, *Medieval Ireland: Saints and Martyrologies*, ed. Michael Richter (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989), esp. p. 317, 325-6, 328; 47.

[105] Máirtín Mac Conmara, "Leabhair Liotúirgeacha 1150-1500", in M. Mac Conmara (ed), *An Léann Eaglasta in Eirinn 1200-1900* (Dublin: An Clóchomhar, 1988), p. 27-8; Pádraig Ó Riain, "Some Bogus Irish Saints", *Ainm: Bulletin of the Ulster Placename Society*, 3 (1988), 2, points out that M.Don. was compiled c.1630 mainly from F.G., while the Drummond Martyrology was probably compiled at the Augustinian house at Glendalough post 1162, drawing mainly on F.O.

[106] Pádraig Ó Riain, "The Tallaght Martyrologies Redated", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 20 (1990), 21, n.1; J. Hennig, "Function of Martyrology of Tallaght", p. 323.

[107] P. Ó Riain, 'Tallaght Martyrologies Redated", 21, n.3.

remarked that Oengus based his work on M.T.; in fact he appears to have used his source selectively, creating a metrical abstract which on occasions supplements the exemplar.[108] Stokes had originally dated F.O. to the tenth century on the basis of grammatical forms but, in deference to Strachan, he backtracked to c.800, which date had been widely accepted until Ó Riain's recent reassessment, which places the compilation some three decades later.[109] The historical interest of F.O. is considerably augmented by a substantial body of glosses, several of which refer to alleged members of Cóemgen's community or to saints whose foundations were associated with Glendalough (below, 6.2.2). These notes are generally dated to the eleventh century; in any case, they existed by the twelfth century, when F.O. was used as a source for the Turin and Drummond martyrologies.[110]

Any consideration of the historical value of the martyrologies (quite apart from the glosses) must take account of the extensive creation of homonymous saints and of duplicated commemoration-days. It appears likely that many doublets in the martyrologies were created through collation of data from different sources in the course of composition. Nonetheless, much duplication no doubt arises, as argued by Ó Riain, from the diffusion of certain saint's cults. The latter points out that local alter-egos of ecclesiastical patrons, occasionally disguised under hypochoristic forms of their name, may be commemorated on different dates; moreover, as a cult spread, the *natalis, translatio* or octave of a saint's feast may be separately recorded.[111] This factor has significant

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[108] J. Hennig, "Studies in the Latin Texts", p. 70-1; Idem, "Function of M.T.", p. 323; M. Mac Conmara, "Leabhair Liotúirgeacha", p. 27.

[109] P. Ó Riain, "Tallaght Martyrologies Redated", 24; ibid., 26-35, 38; cf. K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 205; Idem, "Sanctity and Secularity in the Early Irish Church", repr. in K. Hughes †, *Church and Society in Ireland 400-1200*, ed. D. Dumville (London: Variorum Reprints, 1987), p. 25.

[110] J. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 481; see M. Herbert, "Beathaí na Naomh", p. 17; Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "Doire na bhFlann alias Doire Eidhneach", *Studia Hibernica*, 20 (1980), 115; P. Ó Riain, "Tallaght Martyrologies Redated", 22-3.

[111] P. Ó Riain, "Irish Section of Calendar of Saints", 78; Idem, "Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography", 157; Idem, "Bogus Irish Saints", 1.

implications for the present study, which will be discussed later (see below, 4.1.2, 6.2.2, 6.2.4).

With regard to the general historical usefulness of the martyrologies, estimates of the value of the F.O. glosses have varied considerably. They have on the one hand been viewed as an untrustworthy mass of legend and folklore, and on the other as pertinent and correct amplified comments.[112] The tendency to downgrade the glosses would appear to stem from an expectation that they should convey accurate biographical information in regard to ecclesiastical patrons. They should, therefore, indicate genealogical relationships that are elsewhere substantiated, or personal association with a certain site on the part of a saint. Observation suggests, however, that the glosses are more likely to convey relationships between ecclesiastical centres that flourished at some time between the compilation of the martyrology and the eleventh century, when the notes were written (see below, 6.2.2). Commenting on the association of saints in the martyrologies, Ó Riain indicates that several factors of affiliation may be observed. In some cases, commemoration of saints on the same day can be the result of geographical factors or of actual genealogical connection. Alternatively, when ecclesiastics are associated together in the martyrologies, it may reflect the existence of a confraternity.[113] On that account, one may note that several saints associated with Glendalough are commemorated on the same day.

1.1.7 Lists and Rolls

Under this heading, it is proposed to include a range of documents of quite disparate origin. Regnal lists feature as an important category, while the

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[112] N. Ó Muraíle, "Doire na bhFlann alias Doire Eidhneach", 115; compare J. Hennig, "Studies in Latin Texts", p. 72.

[113] P. Ó Riain, "Irish Section of Calendar of Saints", 80-2, 90.

catalogue of homonymous saints, the Litany of Irish Saints and other miscellaneous lists are also discussed. There is an important difference between the king-lists and the various other rolls considered here. In common with the regnal pedigrees, the lists of rulers were intended to support the legitimacy of the reigning king and his lineage at the time of composition. Thus it was important to assert that the incumbent ruler was not only descended from an ancient line of suitably distinguished dynasts, but that several members of his immediate forbears had preceded him in the kingship. Whatever the likelihood that king-lists were originally preserved in oral form, list keeping as an activity is essentially the habit of a literate people; in Ireland the work was carried out in a monastic setting, motivated perhaps by politico-ecclesiastical interests.[114]

Lists of this genre, in common with genealogies as discussed above, are categorised by Vansina as "cumulative accounts".[115] They are added to with each new reign and, for that reason alone, are subject to a certain "redundancy control". Retention of an ever-growing body of data poses certain practical difficulties, and there was no need to preserve record of superseded lineages. Dumville has suggested that the Irish king-lists were written down from the eighth century onwards.[116] Certainly the list which is most relevant to the present study, that of the rulers of north Leinster, would seem to have been first compiled about that time. Only from the seventh century does the list assume the appearance of a genuine record; in other words, from three to four generations prior to the earliest compilation. Many years ago Fr. Paul Walsh recognised that the early sequence of Uí Dúnlainge kings of north Leinster from Ilann mac Dúnlainge († 527) to Fáelán mac

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[114] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 103.

[115] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 24.

[116] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 103; Production and revision continued for centuries: LL king-lists were written c.1186-9 with additions up to 1201, see W. O'Sullivan, "Make-up of the Book of Leinster", 27.

Colmáin († 666) was in fact a converted pedigree.[117] The Uí Dúnlainge dynasty, especially its Uí Muiredaig offshoot, would in due course dominate Glendalough and its extensive *paruchia*.

It is clear, then, that regnal lists were subject to deliberate manipulation, quite apart from the natural displacement process due to cumulation of data. The alteration of lists to suit ideological purposes was no doubt facilitated by the fact that they were not public knowledge, but the preserve of professional learned men.[118] Information could be added to project a particular dynastic interest back into history, as in the case of the North Leinster list above. Moreover, as Dumville notes, references to earlier rival dynasties could be suppressed.[119] As with the sources discussed earlier, including the genealogies, the data-content of the king-lists is highly selective; they cannot be relied on to present an accurate picture of pre-Norman polity.

While the king-lists sought to legitimate claims to political power, the other rolls considered here - including the tract on homonymous saints and the Litany of Irish Saints - were composed for different purposes. The latter was, at least in origin, a devotional tract, with a composition date of c.800 suggested by Hughes.[120] The main relevance of the litany for the present study is the inclusion of a lengthy passage invoking the intercession of Cóemgen and his entire *familia*. The catalogue of names supplied includes several founder-patrons of lesser churches, some of whom are mentioned in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* or other

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[117] LL 39 b; *Bk Leinster*, I, p. 181; P. Walsh, "Leinster States and Kings", 48, 56.

[118] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 103-4.

[119] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 97, 101, instances data suppression in Northumbrian king-lists and suggests that cross-checking with other sources can reveal concealed information..

[120] LL 373 b; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1698-9; Charles Plummer, ed., *Irish Litanies* (London: Henry Bradshaw Soc., 1925), p. 56; K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 209.

sources; Byrne has expressed the view that this passage was extracted from a lost *Liber Confraternitatis Glindelachensis*.[121]

The roll of homonymous saints, titled *Comainmnigud Nóem Hérenn* in the Book of Leinster, has the appearance of an academic exercise. It lists hundreds of like-named ecclesiastics, some of whom are distinguished by epithets or by association with a place. The use of gentilic name-forms (i.e. *moccu* formula) and of hypochoristic name-variants (e.g. [Mo] C[h]onna < Colmán), both of which it is argued had died out by the eighth century, would suggest that the list was assembled from authentic Old Irish data.[122] However, the marked tendency to multiply the personages of numerous saints testifies to advanced fragmentation of cults, with the compilers failing to recognise variants of hypochoristic names. This seems to suggest that the compilation was effected at a later date. Nonetheless, the *Comainmnigud* records the association of certain foundations, represented here by their patrons, with Glendalough. This will be explored later (below, Ch. 6).

Finally, perhaps the most important of the "miscellaneous lists" to be considered here is the roll of guarantors to the *Cáin Adamnáin* of 697. Essentially a catalogue of prominent ecclesiastics and secular rulers who agreed to subscribe to Adamnán's Law (which sought to protect women and other non-combatants in time of war), this list has been assessed by Dr. Máirin Ní Dhonnchadha as linguistically archaic and "probably contemporary" with the promulgation of the law.[123] Its value in regard to the present inquiry lies in the fact that it places several clerics and dynasts, some of whom had Glendalough associations, in a politico-ecclesiastical context.

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[121] F. J. Byrne, "Derrynavlan", 123.

[122] LL 366 e 30 - 368 g 38; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1659 - 1672; M.A. O'Brien, "Old Irish Personal Names", 212, 218, 220; P. Ó Riain, "Cainnech alias Colum Cille", passim; Idem, "Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography", 147.

[123] Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, "Guarantor List of Cáin Adomnáin", *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 179; followed by M. Herbert, *Iona Kells & Derry*, p. 50.

1.1.8 : Charters

This particular category of source-material has a special importance for the present study, in that the collection relating to Glendalough comprises not only records of individual property transactions, but royal and papal confirmations of the full extent of abbatial properties as they stood when the charters were issued. The main limitation of this source for an historian seeking to trace the *paruchia* of Cóemgen is, however, the late twelfth century date of the collection. Postdating, as they do, the twelfth century synods of diocesan reform, the concern of the Glendalough charters is limited for all practical purposes to dependencies that lay within the boundaries of the territorial bishopric. It may be only fair, therefore, to take account of the caution sounded by Firey in relation to property records that can be described as regionally selective.[124] In addition, it must be recognised that properties of the pre-reform *Comarbaí Cóemgin* are now divided between abbot and diocesan bishop. Nonetheless, the letters of confirmation are of considerable value in view of the degree of continuity they display with earlier sources.[125]

As it happens, all the surviving Glendalough charters are post-Norman compositions.[126] Indeed, as Professor Mac Niocaill has pointed out, there are few surviving pre-Norman Irish charters although they were probably more common than surviving evidence suggests.[127] Certainly, some *libri confrater-*

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[124] A. Firey, "Cross-Examining the Witness", 34-5.

[125] John Bradley, "The Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement", in J. Bradley (ed), *Settlement and Society* (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), p. 59-60.

[126] Register of Archbishop Alen, esp. charters of Strongbow and confirmations of Pope Alexander III, A1 f.21b, 1, 1b; *Calendar of Archbishop Alen's Register*, ed. Charles Mc Neill (Dublin: Roy. Soc. Antiquaries of Ireland, 1950), p. 2-6; see *Crede Mihi*, ed. John T. Gilbert (Dublin: by the editor, 1886).

[127] Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed.), *Notitiae as Leabhar Cheannanais 1033-1161* (Dublin: Cló Mórainn, 1961), p. 5-6; Dr. Marie-Thérese Flanagan in her unpublished M.A. dissertation "Irish Monastic Charters 1142-1230", U.C.D. 1972, deals particularly with the charters of Irish kings, of which four survive from the pre-Norman period; see below, Ch.3.

nitatis or *libri possessionis* formerly existed; several such catalogues are mentioned in other sources and, as noted above, an extract from a Glendalough example may have found its way into the Irish litanies.[128]

On the question of dating, the situation in regard to charters (including those of Glendalough) may not always be as straightforward as it appears. On occasion, the date of a certain grant may be given. However, as with other Medieval Latin documents, dating on linguistic grounds is problematic; it is generally not possible to demonstrate that the language of the charter is contemporary with the transaction recorded.[129] Nonetheless, as observed by Gelling, the form of placenames used can be an important indicator, as can anachronistic references to institutions or arrangements.[130] In the case of the Glendalough charters, the polity represented is that which immediately preceded the appropriation of the Leinster kingdom by the Anglo-Normans. Hence, there is reference to the territory of Uí Muiredaig and Uí Máil, Uí Dúnchada and the land of Mac Dalbaig; while certain districts on the eastern seaboard are accorded the Scandinavian names of Arklow and Wicklow. Witness lists appended to charters can, on occasion, also provide some indication of date; certainly, all identifiable witnesses to transactions involving Glendalough flourished in the latter part of the twelfth century. An important point to be noted for the present study is that such lists often help to illuminate relationships between magnates, both secular and ecclesiastical. Appeal to the charter evidence will be made both in relation to the twelfth century political background and to the last phase of the *paruchia* (see below 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 6.2.5).

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[128] Ibid., p. 6-7; see also n. 120 above.

[129] Ibid., p. 4.

[130] Margaret Gelling, "The Placenames of the Isle of Man", *Jnl Manx Museum*, 7 (1970), 134-5.

1.2 : Interpretation of Documentary Sources

1.2.1 : The Historical Record and the Stratification of Sources

From the preceding discussion, it emerges that the internal historical record for Leinster may be traced from the eighth century. The initiation of a contemporary chronicle, probably at Clonard as noted earlier (above, 1.1.1), has been dated to c.775. Parallel to this, the king-lists and genealogies were first committed to writing, while the earlier historical literature, including the prototypes of the *Vitae Sanctorum* , may also date from about this time or shortly thereafter (above, 1.1.2 - 1.1.6). There are indications, as already observed, that this extensive range of sources reflects a common ecclesiastical environment and dynastic interest. The corpus of data under consideration was produced, for the most part, within northern Leinster. Indeed, much of it was transmitted through the ecclesiastical centre of Glendalough (or its dependencies) with a consequent emphasis on the interests of *familia Coemgeni* and the north Leinster dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge (particularly the Uí Muiredaig lineage), despite the occasional reflection of earlier dominance on the part of Uí Máil and other dynastic groups.

In view of the wide time-span covered by the present inquiry (from before the documentary period to the early post-Norman decades), it has been deemed appropriate to adopt the methodological expedient of stratifying the extensive range of sources to which appeal is made (Fig. 1B). In this way, the value of particular testimonies can be assessed to greater effect. The interpretation of evidence can depend on whether the source in question is a contemporary (or near contemporary) witness to the situation or event concerned, or indeed post-dates it by a considerable time. The problem here, however, is not resolved merely by ascertaining dates of composition; the difficulty is greatly exacerbated by the circumstances of transmission. In addition each genre of source continued to be produced throughout the period concerned in the inquiry. Later chronicles such

Fig. 1B : Stratification of the Sources

	Chronicles	Vitae	Poems and Stories	Genealogies	Martyrologies	Lists
500						
			Regnal Poems ?			
600						
						Cáin Adomnáin
700			Proto Timna ?			
	Clonard Chron.			Initial Compilation	M.T.	Kinglist ?
800		V. S. Coemgeni ?	Timna Fingal Rónáin ?		F.O.	Litany ?
		Proto Bethu Adamnáin ?				
900	Barrow Chron ?	Bethu Caimgin ?		Gen. of Saints ?		Comainm nigud
		Bethu Adamnáin				
	Clonmac. Chron ?				Glosses ?	
1000						
		Redacted V. S. Coemgeni ?				
			Clanna Bresail			
1100			Lebor na Cert Bóruma Laigen	Later Compilations		
					Glosses ?	
		Redacted Bethu Caimgin ?		Banshenchus		
					F.G.	Charters
1200		Redacted V. S. Coemgeni ? V. S. Laurencii				
				Topographical Poems		
1300						

as the West/Mid Leinster record for the tenth-eleventh century (above, p. 5-6) were initiated, new literary compositions including *Lebor na Cert* and the *Bóruma* were undertaken and more comprehensive martyrologies like F.G. and M.Don. were compiled. Free-standing documents of this order can readily be recognised and dated.

The situation in regard to other sources, notably king-lists, genealogies and the *Vitae Sanctorum* is less clear-cut. These survive in twelfth or thirteenth century redactions, but are demonstrably based on earlier proto-types. It is generally agreed that they are composite productions *(pace* Sharpe in relation to the *Vitae Sanctorum;* see above, p. 12, 14), in which layers can be distinguished. To propose that saints' lives should contain pointers to the time and interests of the author is one matter (see above, p.14, n.41), but to positively identify such contemporary allusions is quite another. Reference has already been made to the datability of strata on the basis of Irish language forms and to how, even in Latin texts, archaic versions of personal names or of toponyms are occasionally preserved (see above, p.10, n.32). In other instances, anachronistic episodes may provide a lead.[131] The *Vita S. Coemgeni* does not include a sequence that could be dated to the post-Norse period on the grounds of categorically anachronistic references. Clearly, the allusion to an ecclesiastical settlement in the lower valley §24 does not relate to the time of Cóemgen himself, but whether the expansion represented may have been as early as the eighth/ninth century or as late as the tenth is difficult to establish.[132] In most cases, as already observed, the identification of "layers" must depend on associating certain episodes with a known historical context (above, p. 14, n.n.45, 46).

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[131] The episode in *Vita S. Cainnici* §34 where soldiers of the early Uí Bairrche king Cormac mac Diarmata practice the Scandinavian *gall-cherd* may, on two counts, represent tenth or eleventh century re-casting. Cormac is anachronistically described as king of Uí Chennselaig while it seems unlikely that reference to Scandinavian customs, adopted into Irish practice no earlier than the tenth century, should have been introduced by a thirteenth century redactor (the explanation proposed by Sharpe).

[132] *Vita S. Coemgeni* § 24, *V.S.H.*, 1, p. 246.

The incorporation of earlier, possibly eighth century, strata in the twelfth century genealogical compilations has already been discussed. The difficulty which remains, however, is the identification of such strata. Dumville's approach of focusing on points where linear succession gives way to collateral lines may be usefully adopted here.[133] Thus the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty is seen to divide into three segments with the sons of Murchad, the third of whom was Muiredach (†760) from whom the lineage of Uí Muiredaig descended.[134] Similarly, the *Book of Leinster* includes a pedigree of Uí Garrchon (within whose territory Glendalough was situated) headed by two late eighth century dynasts.[135] Once identified, such points of genealogical division can be dated by reference to the annals, where obits of individuals from the pedigree (or identifiable kinsmen of theirs) may be recorded. Alternatively, if the genealogical sample is large enough, a 'relative' date could be arrived at by a process of generation count.[136]

The argument advanced here is that analysis of "layered" products, including hagiography and genealogies, is possible on the basis of internal evidence. Therefore, in addition to the chronological placement of "free-standing" sources such as M.T. or *Lebor na Cert*, the sub-stratification of source-compilations, where surviving recensions are twelfth century or later, can be undertaken.

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[133] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', p. 87.

[134] Rawl. B. 502, 117c 1 - 117d 25; *Corpus*, p. 12-14.

[135] LL 313a 20; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1338; *Corpus*, p. 39; The two concerned are brothers Cú Chongalt & Dondgal, dá mac Cethernaig. The death of Cú Chongalt's son Conaing (AFM s.a. 825) suggests a late eighth century *floruit* for the two brothers.

[136] Molly Miller, "Date-Guessing and Pedigrees", *Studia Celtica*, 11 (1976), esp. 99, where she supports the validity of "relative", as opposed to absolute, dating in seeking to establish a process. She argues that, in any case, absolute dating is unattainable without annalistic data; the "average" generation span or reign is not a demonstrable reality.

1.2.2 : Problems of Interpretation

Quite apart from the "layered" character of the saint's lives and of the genealogies as argued in the preceding section, these sources pose particular interpretational difficulties. Some would argue that one of the main purposes of the *vitae* is to assert rights and privileges, particularly entitlements to properties and possessions.[137] On the evidence of ecclesiastical placenames within saint's lives, and the *Vita S. Coemgeni* is no exception, it is tempting to propose a reconstruction of the relevant *paruchia*. Firey, it may be noted, is critical of what she views as a tendency to treat all references to placenames as potential property claims. She protests that "intuitive" discrimination is not enough, but puts forward no viable solution.[138]

Leaving aside temporarily the question of ecclesiastical placenames as indicators to the composition of *paruchiae*, the convention whereby other clerics are featured in the *vitae* of monastic patrons has been interpreted as representing the notion of confraternity. Kenney, and more recently Ó Riain, focused attention on the association of saints in hagiographical tradition.[139] However, the need for further refinement of methodology here has recently been highlighted by Bitel. She argues for a more precise analysis of the "narrative structure of saintly interactions", and indicates that a hierarchy is occasionally revealed among the characters.[140] By the same token, Doherty has pointed to the existence of different forms of confraternity. Possession or dominance of one foundation by another was not always implied; in some cases mutual association

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[137] K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 137, 139, 141; M. Herbert, "Beathaí na Naomh", p. 7, appears to accept the point, but somewhat guardedly. See above, p.7, n.19.

[138] A. Firey, "Cross-Examining the Witness", 42.

[139] Kenney, *Sources*, p. 299; P. Ó Riain, "Irish Section of Calendar of Saints", 90. See also above, n. 112.

[140] L. M. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 196, 205; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "*Isle of the Saints*, by Lisa M. Bitel: A Review", *The Catholic Historical Review*, 78 (1992), 440.

(against a common aggressor?) may be discerned.[141] Finally, it is worth recalling Ó Briain's caveat that accounts of visits by saints to other areas may, at least in some instances, represent late legends arising out of the dissemination of cults.[142] The occurrence of these motifs in the Cóemgen literature and the consequent implications for the inter-monastic relationships of Glendalough will be explored later (below, 6.2.4).

Analysis of the genealogies, as noted above, may also reveal covert data the interpretation of which is not always straightforward. In regard to royal pedigrees, it might generally be assumed that the last name mentioned in a given succession is that of the reigning king at the time of writing. Occasionally, however, the perspectival viewpoint of an extant recension may be gleaned from the treatment accorded to the dynast in question. The updating and highlighting of the Uí Muiredaig pedigree in the *Book of Leinster* has already been referred to (above, p. 23, n.77). Specifically, the line of descent from Fáelán mac Colmáin terminates with Muirchertach Ua Tuathail (†1164), father of St Lorcán. The pedigree is headed 'Genelach Ríg Laigen', which appears partisan in its pretentiousness. Moreover, the sons of Muirchertach are appended with Gillacomgaill (†1176) titled Rí Uí Muiredaig.[143] The inference would seem to be that the genealogies were emended following transfer of the *Book of Leinster* to Diarmait Mac Murchada's realm, where the Ua Tuathail line enjoyed extensive influence as Diarmait's lieutenants. The Glendalough-related issues involved here will be the subject of a later discussion (see below, 3.2.2, 5.2.2).

Dynastic pedigrees, where they exist in sufficient volume, can provide an indication of the naming practices followed by local ruling lineages. Patterns in

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[141] C. Doherty, "Some Aspects of Hagiography", 326-7.

[142] F. Ó Briain, "Hagiography of Leinster", p. 460, n. 26.

[143] LL 337 d 1; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1480; to title Muirchertach 'king of Leinster', surely the prerogative of Diarmait Mac Murchada, appears pretentious. A partisan reviser may, on the grounds that Diarmait aspired to a higher dignity, have accorded the provincial title to the Uí Muiredaig ruler as Diarmait's favoured lieutenant; see below, 5.2.2.

naming preference can in turn provide indicators towards dynastic origin, political contacts and aspirations. Thus, the ancestry of the Uí Garrchon rulers of East Wicklow was traced to Mess Corb, from whom Cóemgen of Glendalough was allegedly descended. According to one tradition, the lineage of Mess Corb was traced to the proto-historic rulers of the Domnainn; the name-element Mess (fosterling) does feature prominently in the early levels of the Laigin-Domnainn genealogies (see below, 2.1.1). The retention of Mess Corb as the ultimate ancestor of the historical Uí Garrchon may, therefore, represent an aspiration on the part of this minor dynasty to associate itself with the proto-historic Domnainn kings.[144]

In regard to name borrowing from other cultural groups, the genealogies of the north/east Laigin dynasties show surprisingly little evidence of contact with the Norse. However, from the eighth century onwards, the genealogical record of Uí Máil and Uí Muiredaig lineages are indicative of links with the North Britons and, at a later date, with the Normans (see below, 2.1.4, 3.1.3). Another consideration is the occurrence of the Mael/Gilla element compounded with a saint's name. Ó Cuív has pointed to the high co-relation between such names and the holding of religious office, especially in the post-Norse period.[145] On that account, Máel and Gilla compounds involving the name of Cóemgen (and indeed Comgall) seem to suggest politico-ecclesiastical ambition on the part of certain dynasties in the Glendalough region. The incidence and probable significance of this will be investigated in due course (see below, 5.1.1).

Any approach to the genealogies, however, must take account not only of linear pedigrees but of dynastic ramifications. Interpretation of the Laigin

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[144] Margaret C. Dobbs, "The Prefix *Mess* in Irish Personal Names", *Jnl Roy Soc Antiq Ireland*, 77 (1947), 147-9. This particular name-element, restricted to a small group of lineages which were of minor importance in the historical period, is equated by Dobbs with La Téne influence. See also below, 2.1.1.

[145] Brian Ó Cuív, "Personal Names as an Indicator of Relations between Native Irish and Settlers in the Viking Period", in J. Bradley (ed), *Settlement and Society* (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), p. 80-1; see also M.A. O'Brien, "Old Irish Personal Names", 212, 229, on late development of Gilla compounds probably from Norse original.

genealogical schema clearly involves more than assessing the arrangement of the compilations as noted earlier when considering the value of the genealogies as a source (above, p. 22). The order of arrangement may well have political significance, but attention is here directed to the structure of inter-dynastic relationships as it is portrayed. To interpret the relationship structure in a meaningful way requires a grasp of the political realities that prevailed at the time of composition. The dominance of the Uí Dúnlainge and of the Uí Chennselaig dynasties is reflected in the central position accorded to them within the schema. These and other lineages which supported their over-lordship are represented as descendants of Cathaír Már, while placement of Dál Messin Corb and Uí Máil (both important at Glendalough) outside of this circle may indicate their political isolation, more than declining power.[146]

While the genealogies undoubtedly have value for demographic study (noted above, p. 27), interpretational difficulties here must also be acknowledged. Aside from a catalogue of minor population groups, the record includes many discarded dynastic segments, some of which had adopted an ecclesiastical role at named locations within the Glendalough sphere. Analysis of this data, however, should take account of the fact that such topographical detail is for the most part embedded in strata of early genealogical material. The picture presented may therefore reflect the situation as it was in the eighth century or earlier, when these genealogies were first committed to writing. Allowance should also be made for the possibility that relationships claimed between population groups may not always be genuine. Occasionally, such claims are prompted by expedience, or may simply represent assumptions on the part of later redactors.[147]

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[146] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, 14-16, makes the interesting suggestion that position within the schema reflects geographical as well as political status; Ibid., p.17, expresses surprise at the exclusion of Uí Máil from the Cathaír Már framework, although that dynasty retained political power into the eighth century. The implication would seem to be, however, that Uí Máil later lost favour with Uí Dúnlainge (see below, Ch. 2).

[147] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies", p. 84, notes that the learned class often presume a relationship between scattered population groups, which share a common name.

1.2.3 : Problems in Interpreting the Proto-historical Period

The commencement of contemporary historical record within Leinster, as noted above, is relatively late; dating from the final third (or even final quarter) of the eighth century. Clearly, the annals, martyrologies and genealogies committed to writing from this time onwards were not compiled from nothing. Presumably, data already existed in the form of notes or lists. It may well be, as argued by Vansina, Finley and others, that oral transmission of genealogies, kinglists and similar data is generally reliable for three to four generations prior to the time of writing (above, n. 81). Nonetheless, questions may validly be posed regarding the reliability of data which purportedly relates to the seventh century or earlier. The importance of acquiring some understanding of this early period will be appreciated when one recalls that the foundation of Glendalough probably took place in the latter part of the sixth century; Cóemgen's obit, evidently a calculation, is placed at 618 (see above, p. 4, n.9). It appears that certain dynastic interests were present at Glendalough from its earliest phase, a 'reality' upon which later ecclesiastical lineages would base their claims to pre-eminence. Moreover, the political background against which the early community of Glendalough was established and subsequently took shape would have important consequences for the development of the monastic confederation, a point which will be developed later (below, Ch. 4, 5, 6).

It is certainly tempting to ascribe the extensive post-hoc coverage of the early period to "oral tradition", with the inference that the "respectability" thus conferred upon it somehow ensures its value as a reflection of contemporary historical reality. However, as already noted, all of the sources considered here were produced in (or transmitted through) north Leinster centres of ecclesiastical learning, which already by the eighth century were dominated by specific dynastic interests. To begin with, therefore, it appears open to question whether such learned and politically partisan institutions would ever have been concerned

with relaying "oral tradition", as it is defined by Henige.[148] We have, of course, no way of ascertaining whether versions of the earlier past portrayed in these surviving documents (all of ecclesiastical origin) ever represented popular belief. It seems more reasonable, nonetheless, to consider them as "testimonies" or "group accounts"; the oral memories of families, kinship groups or other tightly-knit communities.[149] They may, for that reason, be all the more susceptible to manipulation. Oral memories, whether popular tradition or group testimonies, are by definition not contemporary. They are not comprised of reminiscences or eyewitness accounts but are, as Vansina points out, to varying degrees institutionalised.[150] Quite apart from the "redundancy control" necessitated by the sheer effort of carrying an ever-growing past heritage into an ever-changing present, there are indications that records and narratives alike have been changed to meet new situations.[151]

The character and extent of the changes introduced clearly have major implications for the value of these accounts as historical witness and for how they should be interpreted. If we operate on the premise that they are likely to represent the past as it "should have been", then we should seek to view them as Mc Cone advises - in terms of what they are likely to have meant to their recorders in the eighth century or later.[152] Application of this principle to the genealogies is perhaps the least problematic. The cumulative character of genealogical data discussed above (1.1.4), whereby the principle of "redundancy control" generally operates on a three-to-four generation sequence, renders it

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[148] D. Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p. 2, defines oral tradition as recollections of the past that are "commonly or universally known in a given culture".

[149] Ibid.; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 18-9; M.I. Finley, "Myth, Memory and History", p. 27-8.

[150] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 12-13, 19.

[151] D. Henige, *Oral Historiography*, p. 5; D. Ó Corráin, "Historical Need", p. 143; Idem, "Legend as Critic", p. 25, accounts for the variability of oral memory in terms of "the cumulative reality of choices made in constructing the past" whereby tradition is "a series of sets of possible options".

[152] K. Mc Cone, *Pagan Past*, p. 4.

possible to identify the probable cut-off point of reliable transmission. The overtly political role of genealogies in legitimising regnal succession is another factor to consider. Hence, the genealogy of the Uí Dúnlainge rulers which may have been committed to writing in the late eighth century (above, n. 135), is quite likely to be accurate at least as far back as Fáelán mac Colmáin (whose obit is entered in the annals at 666), or even a generation further. The pedigree from that point to the eponymous Dúnlaing may be open to question, while the line from there to Cathaír Már is almost certainly spurious. Early ancestral figures are in some instances borrowed from heroic legend or from other genealogies, as Dumville notes; in other cases, however, they are territorial eponyms.[153] This factor alone may provide an insight into the likely priorities of eighth century compilers. For the then rulers of Uí Dúnlainge, descent from the territorial eponym represents a title deed, while the extended link back to Cathaír Már, common ancestor of all free lineages of Leinster, provides a framework which illustrates the pecking order of Laigin dynasties at the time of composition. Similarly, reference to marriages alleged to have been contracted between dynasties in the sixth or seventh century (including early Uí Dúnlainge/Uí Máil marriages) may in fact be clichés expressing inter-dynastic alliances that existed when the genealogies were committed to writing.[154]

The situation regarding representations of the early period in the lives of the saints, or in the annals, is more complex. Narratives like these were compiled, as discussed above, for a variety of reasons; their primary purpose was not to justify dynastic pre-eminence. They may have been based on some earlier notes and probably incorporated some oral memories, although these need not have had the same cumulative dynamic as genealogies or lists. Hence, as observed by

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153 D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 91; M. Miller, "Date-Guessing and Pedigrees", 102.

154 J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 21; cf A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, esp. p. 81-2, where he apparently accepts the marriages of Cairpre and Colmán as genuine.

Finley and by Vansina, isolated "post heroic" traditions relating to a group, or pieces of "historical gossip" which are not part of the group consciousness, can be transmitted for centuries.[155] The case of Adomnán's *Vita S. Columbae* is quite exceptional in regard to tranmission; not only was the life written within a century of the death of its subject, but the probable line of transmission may be traced.[156] The *Vita S. Coemgeni* is perhaps more typical in that the earliest written version probably post-dated the time of its subject by about two centuries, and there is no evidence of how the data was transmitted. Quite little information is preserved, as already remarked, in relation to Cóemgen himself.

The tradition that Cóemgen belonged to the dynasty of Dál Messin Corb, contained in the life and in all versions of his pedigree, may well be correct if only because of the consistency with which it is related.[157] This account of the saint's ancestry may originally have been accepted by the dominant Uí Dúnlainge interests because community testimony was too strong to permit its rejection. In any event, the Dál Messin Corb mantle was apparently assumed by later dynastic interests at Glendalough (above, 1.1.5). Whatever the genuineness of Cóemgen's dynastic origins, the saint's pedigree appears suspect, as the personal names of both parents and of all alleged siblings incorporate the element *cóem*. Questions may indeed be raised about the re-integration of cult alter-egos into the Glendalough schema, perhaps in line with Uí Dúnlainge aspirations (below, 6.2.3).

In contrast to an account of the saint's origin which may have been inherited, the alleged fostering by Cóemgen of the youthful Fáelán mac Colmáin, which implies an early Uí Dúnlainge influence in the area of Glendalough that seems anachronistic, may be an eighth century back-projection.[158] Clearly, the

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[155] M.I. Finley, "Myth, Memory and History", p. 26; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 17-18.

[156] M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 24-5, refers to the assembly of testimonies by the Abbot Ségéne (623-40) and his nephew Cummène Ailbe (657-69).

[157] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 1; *V.S.H.*, 1, p. 234; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 80, for versions of pedigree.

tendency for hagiographers to manipulate historical circumstances in regard to ecclesiastico-political relationships is not solely confined to the age of the founder-patrons. The anachronistic quality of the "Leinster episode" in *Betha Adamnáin*, which has the abbot of Iona intervene in a dispute involving Glendalough interests, seemingly points to political concerns of the time of composition.[159]

The fact that particular dynastic aspirations may prompt the resurrection of data relating to an earlier period, or may colour the way in which it is retold, need not invalidate the historicity of the central event involved. Hence, a substantial stratum of annalistic material, its present form probably cast in tenth century Mide-Brega but purporting to document the fifth-sixth century conquest of the midlands by the Uí Néill, may indeed approximate to the historical reality. The tenth century redactor presumably drew the list from an earlier source, although events of the fifth-sixth century clearly could not have been the subject of contemporary record. Memories of battles, in particular, have been included in Finley's category of "post heroic traditions".[160] Testimonies of this kind, which are not subject to the cumulative dynamic of genealogies and lists, need not be written down for two centuries and yet may be essentially reliable. Vansina indicates how accounts of battles could be transmitted for generations with changes in detail but with the central episode intact; this is most likely to occur in cases where battles resulted in dynastic or territorial change.[161]

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[158] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 31, 33-7; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 250-2; see below, 2.2.1 and esp. 4.2.2 on Smyth's reassessment of the Fáelán episode.

[159] *Betha Adamnáin*, p. 16-17; see below, 4.2.1.

[160] M.I. Finley, "Myth, Memory and History", p. 26.

[161] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, p. 19-20, compares versions of the Hopi-Navajo conflict near Fort Defiance c.1853, recorded in 1892 and 1936 respectively. Differences include the motive for the battle and the role accorded to the young Hani. This reflects the prominence later attained by Hani's descendants. An account of this battle was preserved because of the change in Hopi leadership it brought about, and the affirmation of a boundary with the Navajo; hence, it served the function of a charter.

The surviving record of Laigin-Uí Néill encounters may, therefore, not be reliable in regard to the prominent role accorded to certain Uí Néill dynasts including Cairpre. However, bearing in mind Ó Riain's observations on the occurrence of contests at boundaries, the geographical distribution of the battles may accurately reflect the progressive advance of Uí Néill into the midlands.[162] It may be inferred from the account that this process was still not complete by the late sixth century. The implications of this for the early development of Glendalough and its paruchial network will be examined later (below, Ch. 2, 4). It will be appreciated, therefore, that the problems posed by documentary coverage of the proto-historical period are quite complex. Some of the information relayed may be based on earlier records, some may represent genuine oral memory (whether popular tradition or group testimony). Much of the data will have been re-interpreted in the light of conditions which prevailed at the time of writing, occasionally it will have been invented from first principles. The difficulty for the historian lies in ascertaining the extent to which such accounts may still preserve a genuine reflection of an early situation. There may be a temptation to adopt the expedient of separating the apparently plausible from the implausible; but clearly this is not sufficient.

The adoption of "controlling sources" would appear to offer a more structured way forward. Such an approach is in fact recommended by a cross-section of practitioners over the last few decades.[163] In effect, it was through using the genealogies and annals as controlling sources that Paul Walsh produced his valuable reassessment of the early Leinster regnal lists.[164]

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[162] Pádraig Ó Riain, "Battle Site and Territorial Extent in Early Ireland", *Z.C.P.*, 33 (1974), esp. 73-5.

[163] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p.127, with particular reference to the annals; see also D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogy and Regnal Lists", p. 101, with reference to kinglists; F.J. Byrne, "Senchas", p. 142, cautions on the danger of obtaining a distorted picture through over-reliance on particular sources.

[164] P. Walsh, "Leinster States and Kings", 56-7.

Frequently it happens that an occurrence or a relationship reflected in one source will be substantiated or contradicted in another. In such cases, the probable driving interests behind each of the sources would need to be considered. Finally, it is worth recalling the argument of Ó Corráin that realignment of hagiographical or genealogical accounts is likely to occur at "nodal points".[165] Therefore, it is most important for analysis of accounts that one should have the facility to identify such reflections of political change - especially in relation to the early period.

1. 2. 4 : Structured Approaches to Interpretation

The difficulties inherent in reconciling conflicting accounts, especially in relation to the early period where the available data is sparse and diverse in character, has prompted a search for structured approaches to the evidence. There is, for instance, the "anthropological model" proposed by Patlagean with particular reference to hagiography. This approach seeks to interpret narrative sources as paradigms which are recognisable as standard forms with set meanings, in turn reflective of certain sets of prescribed circumstances.[166] The limitations of such a model for historical interpretation are quite clear. While the model highlights the well established susceptibility of orally transmitted data to change, there is a difficulty in that anthropology seeks to classify human behaviour according to general principles. History, however, is concerned with human intentionality which does not invariably follow rules! Efforts to determine

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[165] D.Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy", p. 83; C. Doherty, "The Irish Hagiographer", p. 11.

[166] Evelyne Patlagean, "Ancient Byzantine Hagiography and Social History", *Saints and their Cults; Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. S. Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), esp. p. 104, 112.

behavioural patterns in the composition of written sources appear even less convincing than attempts to set down prescriptions for the act of transmitting oral data. As discussed above (1.1.4, 1.2.3), common failure to accurately transmit genealogical data beyond three or four generations is due more to the cumulative nature of the data than to any prescribed behaviour. It may be observed that memory of social or political upheavals which resulted in significant change can last much longer. Ultimately, over-emphasis on patterns of behaviour does little to further procedure in a discipline which, unlike the generalising social sciences, is concerned with the particular.[167]

More recently, Mytum has proposed an approach to the study of the Early Christian period which he terms "processualist". Dissatisfied with what he views as a largely descriptive and "particularist" procedure, he opts instead to focus on large scale forces of change advocating explanation within a conscious theoretical framework, which is decidedly generalising in character.[168] Multidisciplinary in its structure, his approach appeals to evidence both from historical sources and from other disciplines, notably archaeology. However, "processualism" according to its own terms disregards the aims and procedures of the historian, relegating the value of historical evidence to a lower level than that which is derived from archaeology.[169] This in turn raises questions regarding the "picture of the past" sought by Mytum; it would seem to be one which is

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[167] The concern of history with the particular is discussed by Heussi, Aron, Oakeshott, Walsh, Gardiner, Dray, Carr and Lonergan; A.S. Mac Shamhráin [Alan James Mc Govern], "Epistemology and History: A Study in the Philosophy of Bernard Lonergan", unpublished M. Ed dissertation, University of Dublin, 1988, p. 61, 114-5.

[168] Harold Mytum, *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7-8; Nancy Edwards, "Review of *The Origins of Early Christian Ireland*", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 23 (Summer 1992), 125.

[169] H. Mytum, *Origins of Early Christian Ireland*, p. 4-5, defends his position with the epistemologically questionable claim that "historical data has been processed by other minds in the past whereas archaeological evidence has not"; N. Edwards, "Review of *Origins of Early Christian Ireland*", 126, notes that Mytum's actual presentation is in practice more descriptive than his theoretical approach might seem to suggest.

concerned solely with social and economic trends and in which there is no place for human intentionality.

Ever since the time of Mac Néill, it has been common for practitioners in the field of Early Irish history to urge reference to a wide range of historical sources and to advocate appeal to evidence from other disciplines. Some have confined themselves to suggesting an interdisciplinary approach, others have cited examples of other disciplines to which recourse might be made, including philology, archaeology and topographical data.[170] Ó Briain alone, however, proffers a guideline for a systematic approach to methodology in this field. The latter, whose scholarly background included the disciplines of history and theology, urges that the operations of criticism and synthesis in the practice of history should be preceded by a *heuristic* process. Conscious, no doubt, that he was writing for a lay readership, he does not define this concept; he merely explains that it involves "getting into contact with all sources".[171]

A heuristic process, which aims at transforming the unknown into known through bringing to light relevant data, may be defined as a function of transcendental method, which in turn is relevant to the operation of critical history; this discipline proceeds through the "scissors-like" operation of background knowledge upon data gathered, so that historical knowledge proceeds from historical knowledge.[172] Essentially, it is the approach endorsed by many twentieth century thinkers in the analysis of historical practice,

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[170] Eoin Mac Néill, *Celtic Ireland*, orig. publ. Dublin 1921, new ed. with introd., additional notes and references by Donnchadh Ó Corráin (Dublin: Academy Press, 1981), p. xv; F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 120; Howard Clarke, "The Topographical Development of Medieval Dublin", *Jnl Roy Soc Antiq Ireland*, 107 (1977), 52; Francis John Byrne, "Monastica et Onomastica", *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 261-4; A. Firey, "Cross Examining the Witness", 43; L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. xi; H. Mytum, *Origins of Early Christian Ireland*, p. 4-8.

[171] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 119. The author then lists examples of historical and non-historical sources of evidence.

[172] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed., (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), p. 22, 187-8, 204, 224ff; see also A.S.Mac Shamhráin [A.J. Mc Govern], "Epistemology and History", p. 100, 121-2, 144.

including historian-philosopher Carl Becker and theologian-epistemologist Bernard Lonergan. In practical terms, as Ó Briain points out, a heuristic process should involve a thorough familiarity with the general history of the period relevant to the hagiological (or otherwise historical) inquiry.[173] Following the guidelines set down by Ó Briain, the present study makes appeal to the widest possible corpus of historical data. Thus in reconstructing a view of the North Leinster polity, data from the annals, regnal lists and royal pedigrees will be combined with additional information gleaned from the Lives of the Saints and political statements implied in genealogical schemata. The task of tracing the politico-ecclesiastical relationships of Glendalough will follow a similar pattern. The Lives of Cóemgen will be assessed in conjunction with the *vitae* of other saints with whom the Glendalough patron was allegedly associated. Factors of affiliation in the martyrologies, genealogies, litanies and lists will also be considered in addition to the evidence of the charters. The entire corpus of data, moreover, will be approached in the light of what has already been established as historical conclusion. Finally, as a heuristic process requires that all sources be addressed, evidence from other disciplines (as advocated by many current practitioners including Byrne) will also be considered.

[173] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 119.

1.3 : Non Documentary Evidence

1.3.1 : Landscape Archaeology

Aston and others have demonstrated that the emerging discipline of landscape archaeology, which in turn is interdisciplinary in character, can make a substantial contribution to historical studies. It will readily be appreciated that the topography of a region such as north Leinster, in terms of mountain river and forest, probably influenced settlement patterns and thereby had implications for polity and inter-monastic relationships alike. Landscape archaeology, however, by taking account of soil types and the botanical record, can help to render settlement patterns more intelligible.[174] Field survey, systematically planned on the basis of indicators which include placenames and cartographic record, can help to identify undocumented settlement sites. The location of burial grounds, crosses or wells commonly point to the former existence of ecclesiastical settlements. If these sites can then be identified with foundations named in the record, some progress may be made in tracing the extent of the *paruchia*. The implications of this for Glendalough, in particular, will be examined later (see below, 6.2.5, 6.2.6).

Aerial survey, a technique which has been employed in relation to landscape archaeology, can reveal features that are not visible at ground level. For example earthworks, the full extent of which can not be adequately apprehended on the ground, can be traced in detail. Aerial photography can also bring to light previously unknown sites in the form of cropmarks. Such studies, by illustrating the sheer size of certain enclosures (up to 500m or 600m in diameter) and revealing consistencies in the planning and format of settlement

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[174] Michael Aston & Trevor Rowley, *Landscape Archaeology: An Introduction to Fieldwork Techniques on Post-Roman Landscapes* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1974), esp. p. 24.

types, can add to our understanding of settlement, social organisation and economy.[175] Fitting this information into the context of known political developments in pre-Norman Ireland can be difficult, however, in the absence of accurate dating. Such forms of survey do not in themselves provide evidence of dating, unless field remains are present, which by style or type may be associated with a particular era. In many cases, archaeological excavation would be necessary to place sites in a chronological context.

1.3.2 : Excavation and the Recovery of Artifacts

Artifacts can be, and indeed frequently are, recovered without excavation; stray finds are occasionally deposited in museums, while in more recent years systematic fieldwalking has brought to light many finds which at least can be precisely located and recorded. However, the absence of data in regard to stratification and context, which excavation can provide, can leave the significance of such finds open to question. It may not be possible, in all cases, to establish whether the artifact in question related to Early Christian/medieval activity or had been lost from an antiquarian collection.

The number of excavations carried out to date at sites within range of Glendalough is unfortunately limited. Nonetheless, a combination of evidence from excavation and stray finds indicates contact with and settlement by Britons and Scandinavians in the east Leinster area. Available archaeological evidence for links with Britain points to the Roman and sub-Roman period.[176] This is too early to have direct bearing on the present study, but it may be noted that political and ecclesiastical contact with Britain continued into medieval times and

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[175] D. L. Swan, "Monastic Proto-towns", p. 78, 97; Ibid., p. 95-6, discusses extent of settlement at Glendalough.

[176] J. D. Bateson, "Roman Material in Ireland: A Critical Reappraisal", *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, 73C (1973), 25, 27, 45-7, 51-2, 66, 68, 72, points to coin deposits and grave finds in north Leinster/Meath suggestive of contact with Roman Britain between 2nd and 5th centuries.

had important consequences for the Glendalough community (see below, 2.1.5, 4.1.3). Indications of Scandinavian Viking activity include evidence of settlement in the Wicklow area, from which location Glendalough was attacked; there is even some suggestion from coin deposits of a Norse presence at the ecclesiastical centre itself.[177]

Excavations at ecclesiastical settlements in the area can, at the most basic level, ascertain whether or not a particular site related to the pre-Norman period. At Cluain Dolcáin (Td and Par. Clondalkin), a foundation that had close connections with Glendalough, an early date is in any case firmly established by the documentary sources.[178] However at Balally, which is undocumented, surface indications suggest a late foundation. Excavation provides evidence (albeit slim) of a tenth century date which, if taken in conjunction with Nicholls' argument for associating the site with a segment of Uí Máil, could imply Glendalough connections.[179] At the site of Glendalough, such excavation as has taken place appears to have been limited to rescue operations in advance of O.P.W. developments. Of necessity, these have been restricted both in time and in scale. It is unlikely, on that account, that anything like an overall picture has been obtained. Nonetheless, evidence has come to light for iron working in the later medieval period with some suggestion of similar activity at an earlier date.[180] This compliments the picture of industrial-economic proceedings at the settlement

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[177] Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. III, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*, by Johs Bøe (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1940), p. 66, 73, 83, points to grave goods and stray finds in the south Dublin- Wicklow areas.

[178] Etienne Rynne, "Excavation of a Church Site at Clondalkin Co Dublin", *Jnl Roy Soc Antiq Ireland*, 97 (1967). See also below, Ch. 6.

[179] Charles Mount and Valerie Keeley, "An Early Medieval Strap Tag from Balally, Co. Dublin", *Jnl Roy Soc Antiq Ireland*, 120 (1990), 124, where the decoration of the strap tag is related to various 10th C parallels; Kenneth W. Nicholls, "Medieval Leinster Dynasties: Three Topographical Notes", *Peritia*, 5 (1986), 411-2, argues for association of the site with the Ua Amalgada line of Uí Chellaig Chualann. See below, Ch. 3.

[180] C. Manning, "Excavations at Glendalough", 344, 346, describes finds of charcoal pits and iron slag uncovered in Td Brockagh prior to carpark development. These were of 13th-14th C. date, but the author suggests that bullaun stones among earlier finds may have been used in grinding ores.

as reflected in written sources. The centering of such activities at the site may in turn help to explain the motivation for ongoing dynastic interest, so clearly in evidence at Glendalough (below, Ch. 4, Ch. 5).

1.3.3 : Placenames

The relevance of toponymics to early Irish studies has been recognised by scholars of philology and literature since the time of O'Donovan, but it is only in recent decades that practitioners in the field of history, including Ó Briain, Mac Niocaill, Smyth and Byrne (above, p. 53, n. 170) have commenced to apply it as part of historical methodology. The importance of correctly identifying placenames listed in the sources will be readily appreciated. It is clear that the placement of social or political developments in context can be helped by plotting sites at which recorded events occurred. Moreover, reconstruction of pre-Norman polity may depend on locating population groups in relation to named physical features (mountains, plains or rivers) or, if Ó Riain's above-discussed theory (p. 51, n. 162) is accepted as valid, on the identification of battle sites. In a post-Norman context, Price demonstrated how the process of sub-infeudation could be reconstructed from placename evidence.[181]

Nonetheless, it is quite another matter to appeal directly to the evidence of placenames, which do not occur in the sources, in the course of historical inquiry. Compound toponyms frequently include elements which are indicative of land usage or of settlement, both secular and ecclesiastical.[182] For instance, identification of probable pre-Norman secular sites can play a part in sketching

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[181] See Liam Price, "Placename Study as Applied to History", *Jnl Roy Soc Antiq Ireland*, 79 (1949), 31.

[182] A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Placenames as Indicators of Settlement", *Archaeology Ireland*, 5 no.3 (Autumn 1991), 20, 21.

the economic background of the area or in tracing population movements.[183] In addition, as Ó Briain in fact recognised, ecclesiastical placenames in which settlement elements are compounded with saints' names may be included among the factors that indicate the dissemination of cults.[184] It is quite possible that compound toponyms involving the name of the patron Cóemgen, or that of a member of his *familia,* could represent foundations that were dependent on Glendalough and so help in plotting the *paruchia.* The extent to which that may be so, especially in regard to east Leinster, will be examined later (see below, especially 6.2.6).

It is no less significant, however, that this particular class of ecclesiastical toponym should point to contact overseas. Placenames commemorating Leinster saints are well attested in Britain, particularly in the Isle of Man and in south-western Scotland, in contexts that appear to suggest close connection.[185] Nor was there any question of *cursus unicus;* eastern Leinster has its quota of placenames which commemorate British saints. The extent to which political and ecclesiastical contact between the northern Laigin and the north Britons is reflected in the written sources is a matter of considerable importance and will be discussed in some detail (below, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 4.1.3, 4.2.1).

Mytum expresses a certain scepticism on the question of dating the Irish Sea distribution of toponyms which involve saints' names. He considers that the class generally reflects later links, perhaps representing tenth century or later contact.[186] However, in regard to the ecclesiastical placenames of south-western Scotland, Nicholaisen argues strongly on the grounds of distribution that those

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[183] D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", p. 92, on placenames as indicators of population movements.

[184] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 120.

[185] M. Gelling, "Placenames of the Isle of Man", 133; W.F. Nicholaisen, "Gaelic Placenames in Southern Scotland", *Studia Celtica,* 5 (1970), 23-5, 34.

[186] H. Mytum, *Origins of Early Christian Ireland,* p. 31, 36.

involving the element Kil- *(Cell)* probably belong to the eighth century or earlier.[187] Mac Donald is for the most part willing to accept the conclusions of Nicholaisen, with some qualifications. Accepting that the distribution of Kil- is particularly concentrated in Argyll and the adjacent islands, he points to some instances further afield, at the far end of the Great Glen and in the Western Isles; on the question of dating, he indicates a few possible instances of later placename coinage involving Kil-, although he is apparently satisfied that most cases are early and that it had largely ceased to be a creative name-forming element by the ninth century.[188] It may be noted that several placenames of this particular group commemorate saints with Glendalough associations, notably Fáelán and Berchán, and the historical circumstances behind this apparent contact merits investigation (below, Ch. 4, Ch. 6). Nonetheless, Mytum's caveat is not without validity. Placenames are quite commonly not datable, and certainly the question of date must be seriously considered before proceeding to use them as evidence in an historical investigation.

1.3.4 : Dedications and Folk Memory

Church dedications were also among the possible indicators of cult diffusion listed by Ó Briain.[189] Granted, the ubiquity and timeless quality of dedications to "national" patrons such as Patrick or Brigit renders them of little value to the historian, in the absence of other supporting evidence. Nonetheless, dedications to minor saints whose cults were not widely diffused can represent a local commemoration of early date. The dedication of a ruined former parish

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[187] W.F.Nicolaisen, "Gaelic Placenames", 25, 26, 30.

[188] Aidan Mac Donald, "Gaelic Cill [Kil(l)] in Scottish Placenames", *Bulletin of the Ulster Placenames Soc.*, 2 (1979), 12-3, 17.

[189] F. Ó Briain, "Irish Hagiography", p. 120.

church at Drumcay (near Wicklow) to Berchán, a saint with Glendalough connections, may be viewed as a case in point.

The question of dating, raised in relation to placenames, is even more an issue in regard to church dedications. Although many toponyms cannot be dated accurately, as noted above, it is at least possible to establish that particular placenames were coined at a time when the Irish (or for that matter the Scandinavian) language was current in a given area. In addition, the late Deirdre Flanagan demonstrated that certain habitational elements, both secular and ecclesiastical, lost or gained currency at an identifiable stage; for instance the element *Domnach* appears to have fallen out of use from as early as the seventh century.[190] Similar criteria in regard to language or datability of usage do not necessarily apply to dedications. In rare instances, which include churches devoted to Cóemgen in Dublin and at Dunboyke and to Comgall at Carlow, records survive from a sufficiently early stage in the post-Norman period to suggest pre-Norman commemoration.[191] Nonetheless, it remains the case that most church dedications cannot be dated.

This problem of datability is even more of an issue in regard to the dedication of holy wells. It may be observed that wells, along with crosses and burial grounds (above, p. 56), feature among the indicators to early or medieval ecclesiastical sites. Wells commemorating saints with Glendalough connections, including Cóemgen, Mochonnóg and Baoithín are found in various parts of Cos. Wicklow, Kildare and Dublin, but whether these represent formal consecrations of genuinely early date or popular devotion of modern times is uncertain. It may be significant, as Jackson notes, that the distribution of certain dedications appears

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[190] Deirdre Flanagan, "The Christian Impact on Early Ireland: Placenames Evidence", in *Ireland and Europe: The Early Church*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), p. 25f; eadem, "Some Less Frequently Attested Irish Placename Elements of Archaeological Interest", *Nomina*, 7 (1983), 31, observes that a range of secular habitative elements gradually lose currency from 13th C., while *daingean* is attested only from 12th C.

[191] Archbishop Alen's Register, s.a. 1179, 1181/98, 1219/28; *Calendar*, p. 7, 26, 58.

to reveal a geographical pattern.[192] There are also intimations that certain well-dedications may have been changed, following the arrival of the Normans, to commemorate Continental saints. There are at least two possible instances of such a change at the expense of a Glendalough saint. There are wells of St. James at Castledermot Co. Kildare and at Ballyogan Co. Dublin, both of which seem to represent Norman re-dedications; it may therefore be significant, as Bishop Donnelly pointed out, that the feast of James the Less at 1 May coincided with that of Mo Chóem, an alleged member of the *familia Coemgeni* and possibly an alter-ego of the Glendalough patron.[193]

It must be conceded that the interpretation of dedication evidence is problematic. As Firey maintains, there is an acute need for more exploration of patterns of cult development.[194] Besides even if, in individual cases, it can be established that a church or well was consecrated to Cóemgen in pre-Norman times, the implications of that for ecclesiastical politics are far from clear. Cult diffusion need not necessarily have direct bearing on the make-up or extent of monastic federations. Such caution is perhaps even more necessary in assessing the significance of named features at certain sites, such as "St. Kevin's Chair" or "St. Kevin's Footmark". Quite possibly, these merely reflect popular devotion of recent times. The folk story relating to Mo Chonnóg (below, Ch. 4) is equally undatable. Allowing that the genre of oral tradition to which it belongs would not have the dynamic of genealogy, the story could preserve an example of what Vansina has termed "historical gossip" and be centuries old. Even at that, whether or not it actually reflects a pre-Norman situation must remain uncertain. This class of data can hardly, in its own right, constitute evidence for historical

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[192] Patricia Jackson, "The Holy Wells of Co Kildare", *Jnl Co Kildare Arch Soc*, 16 no.2, (1979-80), 137, notes restriction of Brigit dedications to the north of the county.

[193] Ibid., 137, 150; cf Nicholas Donnelly, *A Short History of Some Dublin Parishes*, (orig publ. Dublin: Catholic Truth Society, c. 1909, reissued Dublin: Carraig Books, 1979), part 5, p. 178-9; see below, 6.2.3, 6.2.6.

[194] A Firey, "Cross-Examining the Witness", 36-7.

inquiry. It may, however, support evidence which derives from datable written sources.

1.3.5 : Reconciliation of Documentary and Non-documentary Evidence

Even among the practitioners of early Irish history that have, in recent decades, advocated appeal to evidence from other disciplines, it is recognised that difficulties exist in this regard. Problems in the coordination of different types of evidence and in the reconciliation of conclusions derived from dissimilar methodologies have been noted.[195] To date, however, there has been insufficient analysis of the difficulties involved. Only by apprehending the nature of the problem can progress towards resolving it be made.

The late Kathleen Hughes had, perhaps, identified part of the difficulty. Historians, she considered, seem to have an almost unreasonable expectation that certain other disciplines, notably archaeology, can provide "definite answers to fundamental general questions about material culture".[196] For the most part, however, the archaeologist is concerned with individual instances. The focus of concern is the site in its singularity; general conclusions may be made, but it is not essentially a generalising science. It appears, therefore, that scholars from the discipline of history, which is concerned primarily with the particular, are inclined to seek in other disciplines the means to make generalisations. Instances of this practice can be found in the work of various practitioners, including Smyth and Mytum.

To base an argument for the extent of the Hiberno Norse kingdom of Dublin to the Wicklow Mountains on the association of a raw material and the

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[195] H. B. Clarke, "Topographical Development", 52; Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History and Archaeology of Two Related Viking Kingdoms*, 2 vols., (Dublin: Templekieran Press; New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1977, 1979), II, p. 191-2.

[196] K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 17.

identification of an isolated placename is tenuous indeed.[197] Similarly, to argue that concentrations of ringforts should have implications for numbers of aristocratic families and so for regnal succession appears to be stretching the evidence.[198] The fact remains that the presence of raw materials in a centre such as Dublin could be interpreted in any one of a number of ways; they could have been acquired from various sources, and could have been obtained through trade without any political implications. Ringforts were not exclusively the property of royal dynasties; moreover, as a monument type they span such a wide chronological range that it would be necessary to obtain dates to ascertain whether or not a "concentration" belonged to the same era. By the same token, an apparently isolated placename, especially one of questionable date, may have implications for settlement, but need not involve a political agenda. Price has indicated that placenames must be viewed within the context of surrounding toponyms - for instance within the civil parish.[199]

To proceed in this way from a single datum to a conclusion is an instance of deductive reasoning. Precedent, or a general rule, suggests that the presence of certain indicators implies a particular outcome. The discipline of history, however, employs inductive reasoning with an on-going process of data gathering and evaluation, always with respect for the particular. It is this very line of reasoning which Mytum has chosen to reject on grounds which, to say the least, appear superficial (above, p. 53, n. 169). The key to the methodological difficulty posed here may well have been identified many years ago by Ó Briain, when he inferred the primacy of historical evidence. Within the scope of

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[197] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 44, argues that use of red deer antler in Dublin and the occurrence of the placename Rath Turtle near Blessington indicates Norse control of the Dublin Mountains. Available historical evidence, certainly for the heyday of the Dublin kingdom, does not appear to support this conclusion; J. Bradley, "Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement", p. 57, accepts the placename evidence.

[198] H. Mytum, *Origins of Early Christian Ireland*, p. 152-57.

[199] L. Price, "Placename Study as Applied to History", 29.

historical inquiry, evidence from other disciplines may be admitted in support, but the conclusion must take account of available written testimony and be arrived at by an inductive process.

In summary, therefore, the range of documentary sources available for the period of the investigation is both wide and diverse. There are indications of a contemporary chronicle within Leinster from the latter part of the eighth century, which broadly corresponds with the commencement of local literature (including hagiography) and the writing down of genealogies and lists. The surviving charters relating to Glendalough are post-Norman in date. Interpretation of the principal hagiographical sources, the lives of the saints, is problematic because serial redaction has resulted in a "layered" product. The function of genealogies (both secular and lay) as "title deeds" has led to manipulation, while the characteristic dynamic of genealogies and lists, has resulted in transmissional difficulties. The compound nature of so many of the sources means that stratification according to date of composition is not adequate to resolve the complex problems of interpretation. The post-hoc documentation of the pre-documentary period prior to c.700, an understanding of which is important to appreciate the political and ecclesiastical heritage of the early Glendalough community, presents particular difficulties. The probable origin of the data, the way in which it may have been transmitted and what it most likely meant to the people who committed it to writing must be taken into account. Following the direction outlined by Ó Briain half a century ago, it seems appropriate to adopt a heuristic approach that will make appeal to all available evidence. In this way, each written testimony will be subjected to a controlling source. Evidence from other disciplines (including archaeology and toponymics) will also be admitted, but with primacy accorded to the written record and to inductive reasoning.

Chapter 2 : Political Background c. 500 - 1014

2.1 : The Political Heritage of the Early Glendalough Community.

2.1.1 : Leinster Kingship and Dynastic Politics to the Seventh Century

The importance for the present study of achieving an understanding of early Laigin polity will, as noted in the foregoing discussion, be readily appreciated. In the first instance, reconstruction of dynastic relationships and of early geo-politics illustrates the political background against which the Glendalough community was originally founded. In addition, light may be shed on the changing dynastic orientation of the ecclesiastical settlement and on the consequent network of contacts which it achieved in the course of time. These factors in turn apparently underlie the composition of the community (insofar as this is known), the abbatial succession and the establishment of a confederation with other foundations. This relationship between dynastic interest, ecclesiastical government and paruchial extension forms the basis of the chapters to follow.

The problematic nature of inquiry into the early political history of Leinster has already been indicated; lack of a contemporary record before the eighth century necessitates dependence on a range of later sources, including kinglists, regnal poems and later compilations of annals, with supplementary data from hagiography and the pre-Norman genealogies. Appeal to this retrospective and fragmentary evidence as a collective whole, in the interest of finding controlling sources, is the most expedient approach in relation to the early historical period, and is broadly followed by professors Byrne, Ó Corráin, Mac Niocaill and Smyth. The latter, as already observed (above, 0.4), has focused on the study of early Leinster in particular.

In reconstructing the early political history of Leinster, modern scholarship accepts as a starting point that the early supremacy attributed to the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty represents an artificial construct. The pioneering reassessment on Walsh's part of the Laigin kinglists, noted earlier in the discussion of individual sources (above, 1.1.7), revealed the linear character of these lists and demonstrated how they formed the basis of later annalistic synchronisms, which gave the illusion of an early Uí Dúnlainge dominance.[1] It is considered instead that the Old Irish regnal poems, some of which may have been composed in the seventh century, provide a more reliable indicator to the early kingship of the Laigin. The poem *Nidu dír Dermait*, which, as previously indicated (above, 1.1.3), is considered by Ó Corráin to represent a sixth century reality, preserves mention of Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss rulers; indeed, the case for an early ascendancy on the part of the latter dynasty would seem to be strengthened by the occurrence near Slane of an ogham stone of possible fifth century date.[2]

In spite of an apparent lack of reference, as observed by Walsh,[3] in the extant regnal poems to the alleged ancestral lineage of Cóemgen, Dál Messin Corb, there is reason to consider that the dynasty's achievement is in fact recalled in the commemoration of the proto-historic kingship of the Fir Domnainn (noted above, 1.1.3). The suggestion of Smyth that Dál Messin Corb (along with the allegedly related Dál Coirpri Arad) may represent an early historical offshoot of the proto-historic Fir Domnainn or Dumnonii seems persuasive, even if his argument, which follows an earlier proposal of O'Rahilly, is not demonstrated very clearly.[4] Essentially, his point relates to the name-element Mes[s], borne by

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[1] P. Walsh, "Leinster States", 48, 56-7, notes that these alleged fifth-sixth century Uí Dúnlainge obits are omitted by the original hand of A.U., and attributes their presence in A. Tig and A.F.M. to a tabular synchronism of early Leinster kings, based in turn on these kinglists.

[2] D. Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends", p. 56-9; Idem, "Mag Femin", 97; such an ogham record, however, need not imply overkingship of the Laigin at that time. See above 1.1.3.

[3] P. Walsh, "Leinster States", 55.

the eponymous ancestor Mess Corb (and by ancestral figures of certain other lineages including Dál Coirpri and Uí Fothaid), and to the prominence with which that element is featured among the Domnainn in the proto-historic levels of the Laigin genealogies. There is indeed ample reason to consider that the genealogical tradition of Dál Messin Corb has been deliberately falsified (see below Appendix 1).

This picture of the Laigin overkingship at the dawn of the historical period, presented by the early regnal poems, would seem to be supported by later tradition as reflected in the synthetic annals and in hagiographical and heroic literature. An early Dál Messin Corb overkingship of Leinster is clearly implied, as Smyth points out, in an annalistic account of the Uí Néill- Laigin conflict which may have been assembled in the ninth century (above, 1.1.1). It is quite evident that this sequence of battles, representing highlights of the Uí Néill conquest of the Midlands from the perspective of the victors, cast into a chronological framework best preserved in the earliest stratum of A.U., does not represent a contemporary record. The same version of events is reflected in the *Boruma* Saga. Yet there are certain indications that the tradition they represent may be genuine. Smyth and Byrne both consider it significant that the only two Leinster dynasts named in the entire stratum, Finnchad and his son Froech (the latter titled Rí Laigen), may be traced in the genealogies to the lineage of Dál Messin Corb.[5]

Further corroboration of that same dynasty's early dominance in the Leinster kingship would seem to be provided, as Smyth also indicates, by the *Bethu Pátraic* or Tripartite Life of Patrick. Three episodes in this source which, as noted above (1.1.2), may be a tenth century product, bring Patrick into contact with dynasts of Dál Messin Corb. In an account which, Smyth argues plausibly,

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[4] A.P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", 129ff; Idem, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18; see Rawl B 502, 118a 29, 118a 47; *Corpus*, p.20-1; see also below, Appendix 1.

[5] A.U. s.a. 485, 492; Rawl B 502, 120ba 19; *Corpus*, p. 39; see A. P. Smyth, "Huí Néill ", 121, 128; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 138; see below, 2.1.2.

may have originally related to Palladius, Patrick attempts to land at Inber Dee and is confronted by a ruler named Nath Í mac Garrchon.[6] In subsequent episodes, which appear anachronistic, the saint blesses Marcán mac Cillíne of Uí Garrchon at Naas but is rebuffed by his alleged kinsman Driccriu at Ráith Inbir.[7] Marcán is included in the Uí Garrchon pedigree where his placement would seem, on the basis of a generation count, to suggest an early seventh century *floruit*.[8] Clearly there is chronological (and perhaps a certain geographical) confusion here. Nonetheless, as Smyth points out, the very inconsistencies caused by reworking the episodes fail to conceal that the Uí Garrchon kings of Dál Messin Corb were the focus of the earliest Leinster tradition relating to the introduction of Christianity.[9] Furthermore, there is the suggestion of a kingship at Naas, lasting until c.600 A.D. or later, on the part of a dynasty that had already been relegated by the hagiographer's time to the coastlands of Co. Wicklow. Difficulty in reconciling traditions of different date in relation to the Dál Messin Corb kingship probably explains the apparent digression in Patrick's itinerary which brings him to Ráith Inbir, which would seem to have been located in the south Co. Dublin or north Co. Wicklow area.[10] Nonetheless, the retention by Dál Messin Corb until

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[6] *Bethu Pátraic*, ll. 293-4, 312-14, p. 19-20; see A.P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", 131; Idem, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 127, n.17.

[7] *Bethu Pátraic*, ll. 2178-80, 2190-1, p. 113.

[8] Rawl B 502, 120 ba 13; *Corpus*, p. 39.

[9] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", 131.

[10] On the location of an early Uí Garrchon/Dál Messin Corb kingship in N.E. Leinster, see Liam Price, "Glendalough: St Kevins Road", in *Féilsgríbhinn Eoin Mhic Néill*, ed. John. Ryan (Dublin: Three Candles, 1940), p. 253-6; Idem, *The Placenames of Co Wicklow*, 7 vols (Dublin: Dublin Inst. Adv. Studies, 1945-67), VII (1967), introd., p.xv; K.W. Nicholls, "Land of the Leinstermen", 544-5, suggests a location for Ráith Inbir on the estuary of the Dargle or Dodder which seems more plausible than that of O'Donovan at Inber Dea. However, Nicholls' placement of the original Dál Messin Corb seat in this area is unconvincing; a concentration of Dál Messin Corb ecclesiastical sites in south Co. Dublin is more than matched by west Wicklow and Co. Kildare (below, Ch. 6), while the earliest record implies that this area was peripheral to early politics and would not have furnished the central location needed for overkingship.

c.600 even of a local kingship centred on Naas would accord with the tradition of Cóemgen's birth at Tipperkevin, in the Barony of South Naas.[11]

A further indication that Dál Messin Corb was still a force to be reckoned with perhaps as late as the seventh century is found in the Old Irish historical tale *Aided Máelodráin.* Here we find Máelodrán, a descendant of Dimma Crón of Dál Messin Corb, placed two generations later than Marcán mac Cillíne in the genealogies, described as a slaughterer of the Uí Máil.[12] While saga material which post-dates the events it purports to describe by some two hundred years is not always reliable in terms of detail, it seems to have been recalled at the time of composition that Dál Messin Corb was still strong enough to oppose the designs of the Uí Máil dynasty, which enjoyed its period of ascendancy from the late sixth through the seventh century.

It seems equally reasonable that other dynasties which, according to the regnal poems had once provided overkings of the Laigin, including Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss, retained some vestige of their former power throughout the same period. The *Vitae* of saints Abbán (§33), Cainnech (§34), Comgall (§42) and Fintan (§17) which, as Sharpe argues (above 1.1.2), were probably first composed c.800, represent the seventh century Uí Bairrche dynast Cormac mac Diarmata as king of Uí Chennselaig. By the same token, the late topographical poems of Ó Dubhagáin style the ruler of Uí Enechglaiss as *Flaith Almhaine,* perhaps reflecting memory of a time when that dynasty, having been displaced from the kingship of Tara, was still powerful in northern Leinster.[13]

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[11] Rawl. B. 502, 120 ba 13; *Corpus,* p. 39; *Betha Caoimghín,* III § 3, *B.N.E.* I, p. 156; II, p. 152, locates Cóemgen's birth at Ráith an Tobair Ghil, which has been equated with Tipperkevin; see L. Price, *Placenames,* VII, p. xv-xvi.

[12] *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories,* p. 51.

[13] *V.S.H.,* I, p. 23, 164; II, p. 16, 102; see *Topographical Poems,* ed. J. Carney, ll. 869-70, 1065-6, p. 32, 40.

The overall picture provided by this assemblage of sources is quite consistent and would seem to be generally reliable if at times inaccurate in chronology. The impression thus created is that a substantial body of tradition, relating to these dynasties survived into the documentary period; enough to show that they once shared in the overkingship of the Laigin and were probably still of regional importance in north-east Leinster in the late sixth to early seventh century. This was the so-called "age of saints" and it was about this time that the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough was first established. It may not be entirely coincidental that lineages of the three dynasties Dál Messin Corb, Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss, all of which appear from the later historical record to have been of minor significance, featured prominently in the administration of Glendalough. The ancestral line of the founding patron Cóemgen is traced to Dál Messin Corb, while lineages of the other two dynasties would feature in the later abbatial succession (below, Ch.3).

The process by which Dál Messin Corb, Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss came to be dispossessed is not charted in surviving sources, but certainly the advent of contemporary historical record finds all three dynasties reduced in importance, merely the rulers of small local patrimonies in eastern Leinster. The indications are that Dál Messin Corb having been displaced from the Liffey Plain, was pushed into lands which straddled south Co. Dublin and north Co. Wicklow, where the above-discussed royal site of Ráith Inbir would seem to have been located. Later still, the dynasty was driven further south into the Barony of Wicklow, where its principal lineage of Uí Garrchon came to feature in the record as local kings of Fortuatha Laigen (the subject peoples of Leinster). It might be inferred from the annals that this process of dispossession was not completed until the closing years of the eighth century.[14] The location of Glendalough in or

[14] *Lebor na Cert* , ll. 1613, 1636-9; p.108, 110, represents Uí Garrchon as tributary to the king of Leinster. A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 52, considers that this tributary position probably existed from the end of the eighth century. Prior to this, the lineage would seem to have featured as adherents of the Uí Máil overkings (see below, 2.2.1).

adjacent to this later Uí Garrchon patrimony may be an important consideration here; certainly there is a chronological parallel between the ultimate reduction of Uí Garrchon and the extension of Uí Dúnlainge control over that ecclesiastical centre.

If the retrospective annalistic account of the sixth and seventh centuries throws little light on the displacement of the early dynasties, it helps to identify other royal lineages which came to prominence during this time. Of the eight overkings of Leinster recorded in the annals for the sixth century and for the first half of the seventh, all but one would seem to have been dynasts of Uí Fáilge, Uí Chennselaig or Uí Máil.[15] An ancestral figure of the Uí Fáilge dynasty, Fáilge Berraide, is credited with kingship of the Laigin during the closing stages of the Uí Néill conquest of Mide. Subsequently, a late sixth century dynast of the same lineage, Bruidge mac Eogain, as Smyth remarks, is the first Laigin king recorded in the annals after the wars with Uí Néill.[16] A generation later, the assassination in 604 of Uí Fáilge dynast Áed Rón, on the same day as Áed Sláine (progenitor of Síl nÁedo Sláine), apparently at the instance of Clann Cholmáin king Conall Guthbind mac Suibni,[17] may suggest an alliance between Uí Fáilge and a disaffected segment of the Southern Uí Néill. Indeed Smyth considers, as noted earlier (above 1.1.3), that the poem *Timna Cathaír Maír* as initially composed sought to justify an Uí Fáilge ascendancy achieved, perhaps, in the context of an alliance with Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss. Smyth's argument, supported by the fact that a similar political alignment is reflected in the poem *Clanna Falge Ruis in Rig*, is persuasive.[18]

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[15] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 503, 505-6; Idem, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 16-17; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 138, 142; G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 17-8, 19, 81.

[16] A.P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 503.

[17] A.U. s.a. 603; the attribution of this killing to a certain Áed Gustán, described as *comhalta Conaill*, is an interpolation.

While it is clear that Uí Fáilge maintained a regional importance for quite some time (below, 2.1.3), it would seem that the overkingship of the Laigin slipped from their grasp. With an annal record that is probably not complete, aside from not yet being contemporary, full and accurate reconstruction of the regnal succession for this early period may be beyond our reach. Placement of an obit for Áed Cerr, king of Leinster, at 595 by the Four Masters (it is not found in the main annals) does little to inspire confidence, especially as that source presents the dynast in question as a son of the Uí Dúnlainge ancestor Colmán Már. However, balancing the absence of Áed from Uí Dúnlainge genealogies with his inclusion in the Leinster kinglist (part of which, as noted above, was falsified in Uí Dúnlainge interests), Walsh proposed that he is probably to be identified with Áed Díbchíne son of Senach Díbech of Uí Máil.[19] Throughout this period, Uí Máil (below, **Fig. 2A**) was apparently contesting the supremacy of the Laigin with Uí Chennselaig. The latter lineage supplied Brandub mac Echdach (defeated at Slabra c.605 and subsequently slain) and perhaps also his successor Rónán mac Colmáin, whose alleged link with Uí Dúnlainge appears almost as spurious as that ascribed to Áed Cerr.[20]

Following what may have been a brief resurgence on the part of Uí Bairrche, Suibne Menn an ephemeral overking of Leinster who died c.624 would seem to have belonged to that lineage,[21] the overkingship of the Laigin was from about that time held by Crimthann Cualann, son of Áed Díbchíne of Uí Máil. This dynasty which, with periodic intermissions, maintained its ascendancy into the

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[18] A.P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 516-7, 522 n. 1; LL 49a; *Bk Leinster*, I, p. 241-2; the *Timna*, in Smyth's view, was recast c.800 with a focus on Fiachu Ba hAicciď to justify the new Uí Dúnlainge supremacy, but retained the former "primacy" accorded to Rus Fáilge; see below.

[19] Rawl. b 502, 125 a 3, 14, 24; LL 318 a 14; *Corpus*, p. 76-7, 357; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1367; P. Walsh, "Leinster States", 57; G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 19.

[20] Rawl. b 502, 117 e, 7; LL 316 c 65, 317 a 11; *Corpus*, p. 15, 346-7; cf Rawl. b 502, 124 b 36; LL 316 a 12, b 14; *Corpus*, p. 74, 339, 341; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 289-90.

[21] A.U. s.a. 624; Rawl. B. 502, 122 ac 38; *Corpus*, p. 53.

eighth century and preserved a local importance thereafter, is the first in the historical record to assert its political dominance over Glendalough (see below, 4.2.1). On that account, it seems ironic that Uí Máil should, in common with Dál Messin Corb, be completely omitted from the revised *Timna Cathaír Máir*.

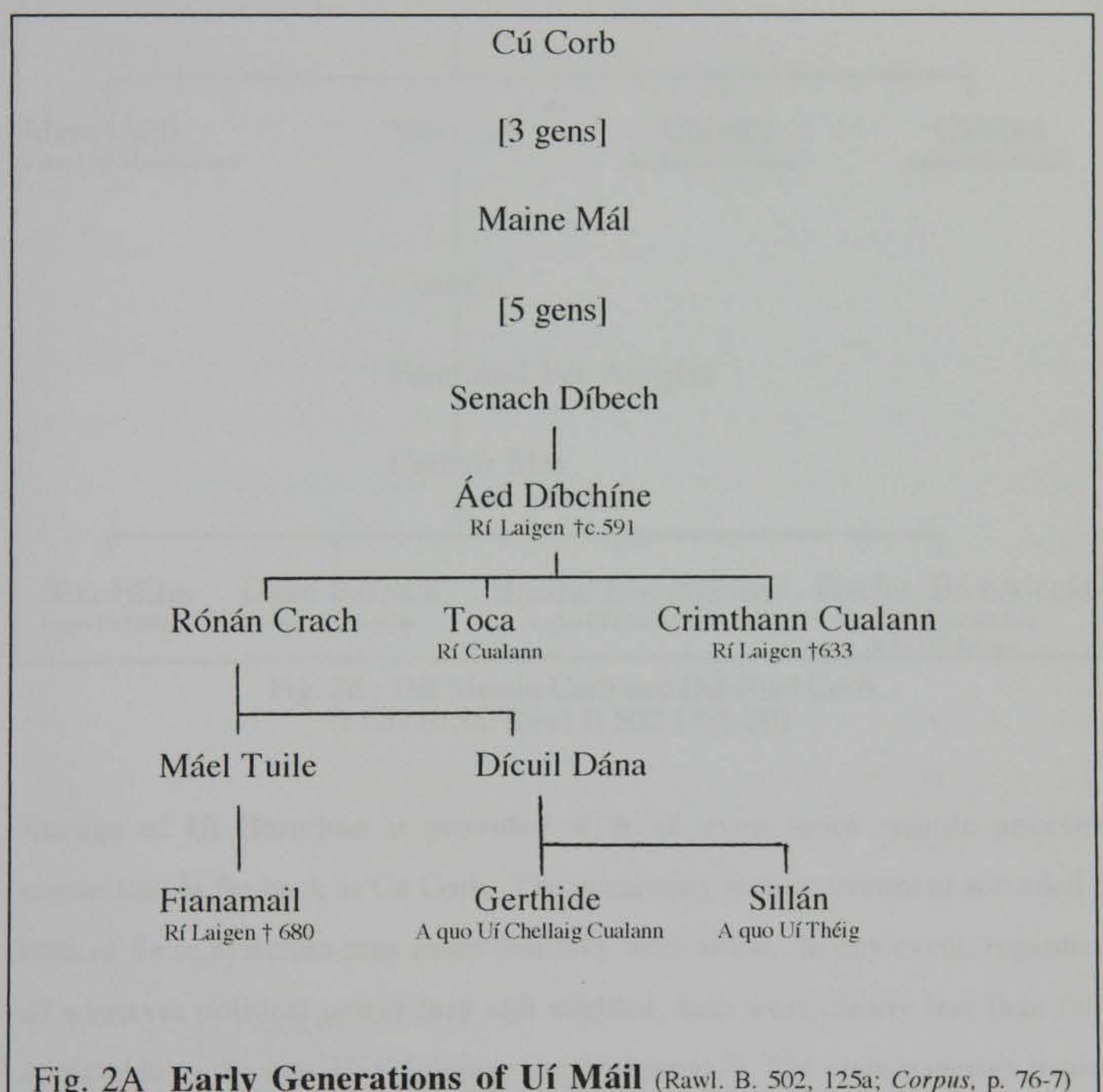


Fig. 2A **Early Generations of Uí Máil** (Rawl. B. 502, 125a; *Corpus*, p. 76-7)

In contrast, Uí Enechglaiss and Uí Bairrche, although accorded subordinate roles, are included. These dynasties, of minor political importance by the documentary period, enjoy a central place in the Laigin genealogical schema which would seem to have been cast in its present form around the end of the eighth century (above,

1.1.4). Uí Enechglaiss and Uí Bairrche are grouped with the descendants of Cathaír Már (see **Fig. 2B**), while Uí Máil are marginalised within the schema and are made to descend from a brother of Cathaír Már, while the Dál Messin Corb

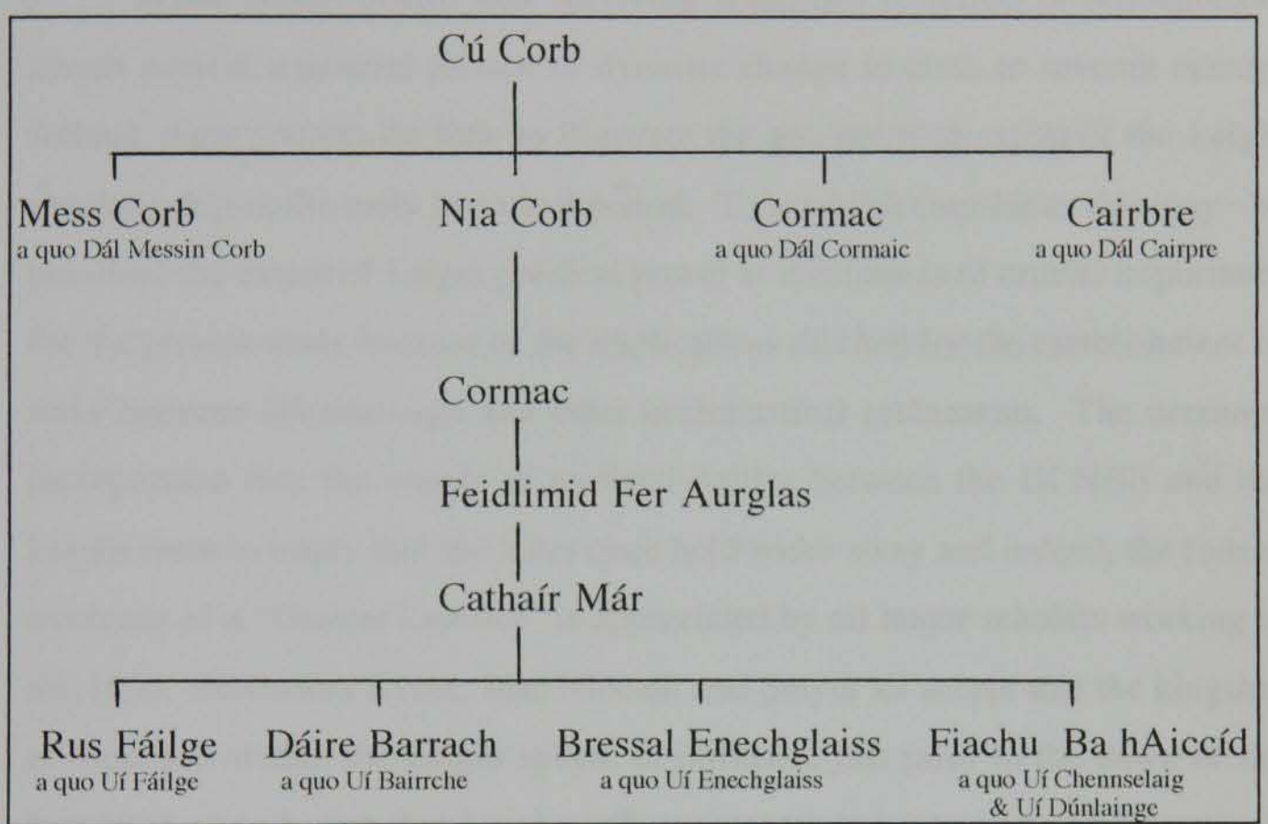


Fig. 2B : Dál Messin Corb and Dál Niad Corb
(LL311c 58; Rawl B 502 118b 30)

lineage of Uí Garrchon is provided with an even more remote ancestral connection as far back as Cú Corb. The apparently similar treatment accorded to both of these dynasties may mean that they were allied. In any event, regardless of whatever political power they still wielded, both were clearly less than fully acceptable to the new Uí Dúnlainge establishment.[22] The circumstances behind this eighth century political re-alignment at provincial level merit separate consideration (see below, 2.2.1).

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22 Rawl B 502, 120a11, LL 312c57; *Bk Leinster*, 6, p.1331; *Corpus*, p.35; F.J. Byrne, 'Genealogical Tables', in *A New History of Ireland*, vol.9 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Table VIII, p.134.

2.1.2 : The Probable Extent of Laigin Overlordship at the Beginning of the Historical Period

While regnal poems and surviving traditions reflected in retrospective annals present a general picture of dynastic change in sixth to seventh century Ireland, these sources do little to illustrate the geo-political extent of the Laigin overkingship in the early historical period. To establish (insofar as this may be possible) the extent of Laigin political power at this time is of crucial importance for the present study because of the implications this had for the establishment of links between Glendalough and other ecclesiastical settlements. The accounts incorporated into the annals of midland battles between the Uí Néill and the Laigin seem to imply that the latter once held wider sway and indeed, the former existence of a "Greater Leinster" is appreciated by all major scholars working in this field. Professors Byrne, Mac Niocaill and Smyth all accept that the kingship of Tara was within the Laigin sphere of influence just prior to the dawn of the historical period, and that Laigin influence extended into parts of Munster.[23] Moreover, it is agreed that the contraction of this overlordship was a gradual process which carried on into the early historical period, contrary to later claims framed in the interest of Uí Néill and the Eóganachta. The probability that the conquest of the midlands by the Uí Néill extended into the sixth century will be discussed presently (below, 2.1.3). Regarding the Munster marchlands, Mac Niocaill has pointed out that little is known of the Eóganachta kings prior to the late sixth century,[24] while it seems likely that rule of the marcher territory of Osraige by the Corco Loígde dynasty (which, although of Munster origin,

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[23] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 133-4; G. Mac Niocaill,*Vikings*, p. 10; A.P. Smyth,"Huí Néill", 129 f; Idem, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18.

[24] G. Mac Niocaill,*Vikings*, p. 12.

apparently represented Laigin interests) continued beyond the 583 traditional cessation date.[25]

It is generally acknowledged that genealogical traditions, often vague and confused, associating various population groups of the midlands and north Munster with the Laigin, survive in the extant corpus. Byrne and Smyth observe that the Gáileoin were closely associated with Dál Messin Corb and other Domnainn dynasties in the Central Plain and, presumably at an even earlier date, in northern Connacht.[26] Ó Corráin implies that the Gailenga, although probably of non-Laigin origin, may originally have been associated with this federation.[27] An alleged Laigin presence in north Munster has also been noted; Byrne remarks on the claim of Leinster origin in the genealogical tradition of Dál Cairpri of Araide and in that of the Eli.[28] The validity of such accounts as an explanation for biological ancestry is of no concern here; the fact remains that they are an important indicator of Laigin overlordship.

However, the fact remains that the dispossession of the Laigin (in terms of process or timescale), and the geo-politics of their quondam overlordship have, to date, not been systematically studied. The approach taken here is to reassess the extent of Laigin influence in the Midlands and northern Munster, mainly from the evidence of the pre-Norman genealogies, as a prior step to reconsidering the contraction of Leinster as represented in the annals. In the light of such trends as

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[25] *Timna Cathaír Máir* (Appendices A & B, Lebor na Cert), p.166-7, 174, lists Airgetros in Osraige as a fortress of the king of Leinster; *Lebor na Cert*, p.38-9, 110-1, 181, 187, the king of Osraige pays no tribute to the king of Caiseal, but receives a stipend. In contrast, he pays a substantial tribute to the king of Leinster; see F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.141, 181; G. Mac Niocaill,*Vikings*, p. 84-6.

[26] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 132-3; A.P Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18, notes the location of Dún nGáileoin in territory of Dál Messin Corb (LL 311a 29).

[27] D. Ó Corráin, "Historical Need", 150-1, 153-4, notes a tract on Gailenga in Choraind listing segments which reside "in regi[onibus] omnibus habitaverunt Tuatha Domnand et Tuatha Gaileoin" (Lec. 224 rc).

[28] F.J. Byrne, Kings, p. 133. The district of Araide, the name of which is preserved in the Barony of Arra, Co. Tipperary, had close connections with Glendalough; see below, ch. 6.

may emerge, parallels between the secular power of the Laigin overkings and the influence of ecclesiastical centres such as Glendalough will be explored in the chapters to follow.

There is a veritable wealth of genealogical traditions and of topographical data within the surviving *corpus;* enough to suggest that Laigin influence in the midlands and more especially in Munster was quite pervasive. If the survival of Laigin traditional heritage in the midlands appears scant by comparison, this may be because the Uí Néill overlords were more effective than their Munster counterparts in suppressing its traces in the record. The genealogical tradition of the **Corco Roíde** in the Co. Westmeath lakeland district may represent a case in point. This population group, which left its name on the Barony of Corkaree probably, as Walsh observes, once occupied a wider territory.[29] It seems likely, moreover, that their genealogy underwent some alteration. Walsh, indeed, associates the name of Corco Roíde with "the most ancient stratum" of designations and casts doubt on the theory of genealogical origin ascribed to them, while Smyth remarks that various minor population groups later provided with Uí Néill affiliations were originally Laigin.[30] Certainly, the attempt at tracing the ancestry of Corco Roíde to a Fiachu Roída who, along with Déissi ancestor Fiachu Suidge and Eochaid Finn of the Fothairt, is represented as a brother of Conn Cétchathach appears most unconvincing.[31] One notes, however, the personal name Mes Roída among the early generations of the Domnainn (see Appendix 1). Perhaps in an earlier genealogical schema the Corco Roíde were accorded a Laigin origin. The tradition may later have been suppressed in the wake of the Uí Néill conquest of the midlands when, along with their non-Laigin

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[29] Paul Walsh, *Ancient Westmeath*, orig. publ. 1938, new edition (Mullingar: Lilliput Press, 1985), p.15, points to the alleged itinerary of Patrick in Tírechán which seems to suggest that Uisnech was situated in or adjacent to Corco Roíde.

[30] Ibid., p. 21-2, A.P Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 505.

[31] Rawl B 502, 137b 48, 139b 34, 143b 16, *Corpus*, p.130, 133, 156.

neighbours, the descendants of Roída were attached to the Connachta stem. Such a sequence of developments seems all the more likely given the survival of copious topographical, annalistic and hagiographical data indicating that this area was closely associated with Laigin dynastic interests and with cults of Leinster saints, including that of Cóemgen of Glendalough.[32]

It may be noted that the genealogical traditions of several dynasties of undoubted Munster origin bear the clear imprint of a former Laigin association. The minor ruling dynasty of **Múscraige Tíre**, adjacent to the Laigin of Araide, provides a typical example. The mother of the sons of Cú Corb is said to have been Eithne daughter of Cairpre (or Oengus) Músc, an ancestor-figure of the Múscraige rulers.[33] The genealogy of the **Corco Loígde** which, as noted above, held the kingship of Osraige until the end of the sixth century or later, can be seen to reflect that lineage's position as client of the Laigin. Historically, the dynasty of Corco Loígde has perhaps the best claim to represent the Dáirfine, an early confederation among the Érainn. However, the genealogical tradition of the Corco Loígde ruling lineage has clearly absorbed Laigin elements. One version groups together five sons of Dáire Sírchréchtach as ancestors of Corco Loígde, Calraige, Corco Oircthi, Laígis Laigen and Dál Messin Corb.[34] Even if there is insufficient evidence to date them relative to each other, the existence of contradictory accounts in the genealogies of Corco Loígde and Calraige hints at artificial construction and suggests that a conflation of traditions took place.[35] It

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[32] The territory includes Fremu, or Frewin Hill, site of a victory by the above mentioned Fáilge Berraide over the Southern Uí Néill; Paul Walsh †, *The Placenames of Westmeath* (Dublin: Dublin Inst. Adv. Studies, 1957), p. 32, 143; see below, 6.2.3.

[33] Rawl. B 502, 119 a 11, ab 19; LL 312 a 24; *Corpus*, p. 26-7 .

[34] Rawl B 502, 155a 11, *Corpus*, p.256; This tradition is further expanded with additions from metrical and prose Dinnsenchus in BB 196 e 11, see John O'Donovan (ed), *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* (Dublin: Celtic Soc., 1849), p.8, 30.

[35] LL 325f 22, *Bk Leinster* , VI, p.1411, includes Lugaid Corb as a son of Dáire Sírchréchtach but does not name him as ancestor of Dál Messin Corb. The genealogy of the Calraige, Rawl B502, 143a 44, 143a 47; *Corpus*, p. 155, includes two versions, one with three sons of Dáire (ancestors of Corco Loígde, Calraige and Corco Oircthi) and another which adds Lugaid Lon and Lugaid Fer Corb.

may be noted that early connections between the Corco Loígde and affiliated Dáirine lineages with Leinster, in both the ecclesiastical and secular spheres, are well attested. The association of clerics from these realms with Glendalough will be discussed later (below, 4.1.3).

Other Munster dynasties which may once have formed part of an early grouping among the Érainn include the **Uí Liatháin** and **Uí Fidgente**. The attachment of these lineages, in the person of their alleged common ancestor Dáire Cherbba, to the genealogical schema of the Eóganachta is clearly a politically motivated contrivance of later date, when they emerged as rulers of petty kingdoms in the south and west of Munster respectively. Other, seemingly earlier, genealogical traditions suggest that they belonged to the Dáirine.[36] Certainly, they had their own Leinster associations; Dáire Cherrba is supposed to have been born in Brega, on the north-eastern marches of Laigin territory, while Fiachu Fidgeinti, an alleged son of Dáire Cherrba and eponymous ancestor of Uí Fidgente, is credited with an attack on Aenach Colmáin in Mag Liphi.[37] A branch of Uí Liatháin, known as **Cenél Dalláin**, is almost certainly the lineage of that name featured in Glendalough tradition. This connection will be examined later (see below, 6.2.4).

The genealogies of **Uí Meicc Brócc** and **Cenél Sodailbe**, adjacent to Corco Loígde and questionably included within the Eóganachta framework, also imply possible Leinster connections. Appended to the tract on Uí Meicc Brócc, there is mention of a certain Cennselach mac Labrada of the Laigin and his son Aires, a quo Dux Dubchormac.[38] Cenél Sodailbe, allegedly a branch of the

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[36] LL 321d 35, 321h 23, 325e 41; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1385, 1388, 1410. Rawl B 502, 151a 48, 51, 152a 4; *Corpus*, p. 224-5, 230; see F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.178, 180.

[37] LL 321d 65, 321 h 41; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1385, 1388; Rawl B 502, 151a 56, 152 a 9; *Corpus*, p.225, 230.

[38] LL 326d 20, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1417; Rawl B 502, 150a 51, *Corpus*, p.214. The exact connection between Uí Meicc Brócc and the descendants of Cennselach is not clear.

Eóganacht lineage Uí Echach Muman, are traced to Fedlimid mac Sodailbe de Chorco Birnd, suggesting a link with Dál mBirn of Osraige, perhaps dating to the time of Laigin supremacy; moreover, the pedigrees of this lineage feature several distinctively Laigin personal names.[39]

In the south-east corner of Munster, the genealogical tradition of the rulers of **Déissi Muman** also seems to reflect contact with the Laigin. Their royal pedigree includes variants which trace their origin to Mess Corb son of Mess Gegra, which seems to represent a Domnainn strand.[40] Moreover, the cult of St. Brigit was well represented in their territory, and a segment of the ruling lineage was known as Uí Brigti.[41] It may not be entirely coincidental that the Déissi patrimony lay adjacent to other lineages claiming Laigin descent. The neighbouring kingdom of **Uí Fothaid** (Bys. Iffa and Offa Co Tipperary), which was apparently ruled by a dynastic group formed from an amalgamation of minor lineages, has a somewhat confused but quite emphatically Laigin tradition of ancestry. One tradition traced their origin to the three sons of Maicniad (or Lugaid), allegedly a descendant of Nuadu Necht; alternative versions linked them to sons of Feidlimid, a great-grandson of Coirbre Nia-Fer, or to daughters of Nár mac Airmora.[42] The common denominator in these seemingly conflicting genealogical accounts is an underlying claim of Domnainn or Dál Messin Corb ancestry.

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[39] Note the personal names Gerthaide, Dícuill and Cú Congelt among the Cenél Sodailbe and Cenél nÁeda, which may reflect a Laigin (esp. Uí Máil) influence; see LL 326b 55, cf LL 326 c 15, 40; Rawl B 502, 150a 37; *Corpus*, p.212; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1415, 1416.

[40] Genelach na nDési, LL 327g 16, has Art Corp mac Mes Gegra mac Cuirp; cf Lec. and BB variants insert Art Corb mac Misi Cuirb mac Misi Geadra; *Corpus*, p. 394; Seamus Pender (ed), *Déissi Genealogies* (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1937), P. 3.

[41] Uí Brigti LL 328 a 39, 328 b 8; *Corpus*, p. 397, 398; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1428-9; *Déissi Genealogies*, ed. Pender, p. 7, 60-1.

[42] Rawl B 502, 128a 53, 155b 34, 156a 1; *Corpus*, p.99, 264, 266.

As observed earlier, fragments of Domnainn genealogy apparently became woven into Déissi tradition. Indeed Pender suggested that the Art Corb strand in the Déissi genealogies related to the Uí Fothaid.[43] The latter lineage was traced to Fothud Airgdech and his brothers, an individual named Fothud mac Luigdech (a descendant of Art Corb) features among the Déissi, while another Fothud (mac Echach Lámdeirg) is represented as an ancestor of Cóemgen of Glendalough.[44] There is evidence to suggest that the cults of several saints with Glendalough associations became established in the territory of Uí Fothaid (see below, Appendix 3).

In addition to the plethora of genealogical traditions which suggest some Laigin association, if not Laigin descent, on the part of various ruling lineages in the midlands and in Munster, a wealth of topographical detail survives which would place minor segments of Leinster origin in these same areas. The Central Plain, especially the lakeland area of Co. Westmeath where the above-discussed Corco Roíde were located, was home to a number of discard lineages associated with the Domnainn, Dál Messin Corb and Uí Bairrche. Included are four family-groups allegedly descended from Conall son of Eochu Inmete; **Uí Báethallaigh** were apparently resident at Cell Bicsige (Td. & Par. Kilbixy, By. Moygoish), **Uí Chúáin** and **Uí Draignén** were located in Fobur (Barony of Fore) while **Uí Brittáin** were adjacent to Síl Meldae.[45] The Dál Messin Corb segment of **Uí Beccáin**, apparently related to Síl Forranáin, was found at Scothbae and **Cenél Chiaráin**, perhaps of Dál Messin Corb origin, would seem to have been located

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[43] *Déissi Genealogies*, ed. Pender, index, p. 56.

[44] LL 328 c 26-8, 42; cf LL 351 e 18; *Corpus*, p. 400; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1430, 1565.

[45] Rawl B 502 118b 26-8; LL 311c 53-4; *Corpus*, p. 24; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1331; J. Carney (ed.) *Topographical Poems*, p. 92, suggests that Síl Meldae is probably identical with Uí Mhealla.

amongst the Luigne.[46] Further to the north-west, **Clann Chairpri** of Uí Bairrche was situated among the Conmaicne Réin.[47]

There is an equal volume of topographical data recording segments of Laigin origin throughout Munster. Another lineage of **Uí Chiaráin**, which may relate to Dál Messin Corb or to Uí Theig of Uí Máil, would seem to have left its name on the Barony of Ikerrin, in Co. Tipperary.[48] The Uí Garrchon segment of **Uí Cholmáin Fortabuil** was perhaps located in the same general area; Fortabul may be represented by Td. Fortel, Par. Birr, By. Ballybritt, Co. Offaly. Certainly it appears that branches of Dál Messin Corb were established in northern Munster; a fifteenth century genealogical tract in a manuscript of the Stowe collection notes '**Dál Meascorb**' among the 'Daertuaitib Caisil'.[49] Elsewhere, segments claiming descent from Augen Aurgnaid of the Domnainn occupied parts of Mag nAilbe and Mag Roigne, the latter plain being in east Munster, between the River Nore, Slieveardagh and Slievenamon.[50]

Minor offshoots of other Laigin dynasties were also to be found throughout the province. A segment of the obscure **Uí Dercmossaig** apparently resided at Achad Bó in Osraige, perhaps not far from a segment of **Uí Bairrche**.[51] The **Uí Chuanach** lineage of Uí Enechglaiss left its name on the Barony of Coonagh in east Co. Limerick while a little further south the Fothairt lineage of **Uí Chúlduib**

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[46] Rawl B 502 120 ac 26; LL 313 a 5; this segment may be commemorated in Td. Clonykerann, Par. Kilconican, By. Lune. Marked on Petty's Barony Maps, the placename no longer exists; see Y. M. Goblet (ed), *Index of Parishes and Townlands of Ireland from 17th Century Maps* (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1932), p. 23, 154.

[47] Rawl B 502 122 ab 34-5; cf BB 124 ab; Rawl B 502 128 b 5; *Corpus*, p. 38, 53, 99.

[48] Uí Chiaráin: LL 318 a 12; *Corpus*, p. 37, 357; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1337, 1367.

[49] Roy. Ir. Acad, Stowe MS C12 [Ir. MS XiX], f.40, 11, 24, 27; see Kathleen Mulchrone and Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (ed), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy: Fasiculi 26-7* (Dublin: RIA/Hodges Figgis, 1943), p. 3414-8; see below, Ch.6.

[50] LL 311a 28, 311c 44-5, 49, *Bk Leinster*, vol.6, p.1327, 1330; Rawl B 502, 118a 36; cf BB 120a 34, *Corpus*, p.20-1; J. Radner, index *Fragmentary Annals*, p. 236.

[51] Uí Aindli Achaid Bó (and Uí Chuanda Chilli Bicneadan; there are several places so called) < Dearcmaiseach mac Cathaír Máir: Lec 90 vc 35; note also Uí Bairrche Meic Niad Coirp in Osraige, Rawl B. 502, 130 a 46; *Corpus*, p. 69, 115.

Laigen was situated in Múscraige Mittine.[52] It may be of further significance that no less than five townlands, extending from Co. Laois down through Munster, appear to preserve the dynasty name of Uí Fáilge; there are difficulties here, however, as an initial 'a' to represent the Irish genitive ua, while attested, is rare.[53] It is also true that the dating of toponyms, in the absence of documentary evidence, may be open to question. However, given the distribution of Laigin elements throughout Munster and the historical record of Uí Fáilge activity within that province, these placenames may indeed reflect early settlement.

Quite apart from indications of Laigin settlement in the midlands and in Munster, however, the topographical data of the genealogies preserves reference to *forsluinte* from these districts that became attached to the dynastic networks of Leinster. Two segments from immediately north of the Liffey, **Huí Chonáin** Cluana Tarb and **Huí Dimmae** Leccerdae which were located *ic Findglaissi.* became attached to Dál Messin Corb and Uí Fáilge respectively.[54] From somewhat further afield, the position of **Síl Cechtain** di Chonnactaib as a *forsloinne* of Dál Messin Corb may reflect an even earlier situation, when Laigin overlordship extended across the Shannon.[55]

Quite a range of *forsluinte* of Munster origin is attested; **Cenél Lugair** Arada is found among Uí Enechglaiss and **Huí Cael** Lugair, **Síl Faidloga** de Chechtruga Arad, **Huí Butu** di Uaithnib Tíre and **Huí Némáin** meic Lonáin do

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[52] Uí Chuanach: Rawl B 502 123 f 43; Uí Chúlduib: 126 b 6; *Corpus,* p. 67, 86; Art Ó Maolfabhail (with Nollaig Ó Muraíle, Alan Mac an Bhaird et al.) ed., *Logainmneacha na hEireann: Co Luimní* (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1990), p. 261-2.

[53] The Tds are: Afoley, Par. Rearymore, By. Tinnahinch; Affaleymore*, Par. Templemore, By. Eliogarty; Affoleyshane*, Territory of Ileagh, seems now By. Kilnamanagh; Affoly, Par. Modeshell, By. Slieveardagh; Affolee, Par. Aghavallen, By. Irraghticonnor; the two north Tipperary examples no longer survive, and are known only from 17th C maps. Compare Townland Index with Y.M. Goblet (ed.), *Index of Parishes.* The writer is obliged to Nollaig Ó Muraíle for sounding a cautionary note on this matter.

[54] Rawl B 502, 120ac 45, 123f 18, *Corpus,* p.38, 65.

[55] BB 124 ab; *Corpus,* p.38.

Feraib Maigi Féne all feature among Uí Garrchon.[56] The genealogy of the (in later times at least) relatively minor Leinster dynasty of Uí Briúin includes *forsluinte* from the south-western reaches of Munster; **Huí Mannadáin** ó Rout Tarsna i crich Hua Fidgenti and **Huí Díláin** ó Domnach Mór Mittine i Mumain.[57] The segment of **Cenél Cruaichni** di Eoganacht was settled in Uí Bairrche (location not defined) while a branch of **Dál mBirn** in Uí Máil apparently left its name on the ecclesiastical site of Cell Moccu Birn (Td. Killickabawn, Par. Kilcoole, By. Newcastle, Co. Wicklow), which in later times figured among the properties of Glendalough.[58] It also seems possible that segments of the **Corco Oircthi** and of the **Calraige** may have been settled in Leinster; the former may be commemorated in the parish name of Clonyhurk (By. Upper Phillipstown, Co Offaly) and in the townland of Clonehurk (Par. Clonenagh, Co. Laois). The late Seán Mac Airt considered that the townland of Calary (Par. Kilmacanogue, By. Rathdown, Co. Wicklow) could represent Calraige.[59]

The account of Laigin affiliations, discard segments and *forsluinte* provided here does not claim to be exhaustive; various other minor population groups within Leinster, which on the basis of present evidence are untraceable, may prove to be of Midland or Munster provenance. Other Laigin segments, which at present are not locatable, may ultimately be placed beyond the boundaries of the later medieval province of Leinster. Nonetheless, a general picture of the extent of Laigin influence as reflected in the genealogies is represented in the accompanying map (**Fig. 2C**).

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[56] BB 124ab 21; Rawl B 502, 120ac 44, 120bb 11-12, 124a 5, *Corpus*, p.38, 40; LL 313a 16, 35-6, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1338.

[57] LL 316bb 45-6, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1358.

[58] Rawl B 502, 122 ac 49; LL. 314 a 48; see*Corpus*, p. 54; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1344; Price, *Placenames*, VII, p.388-9; Dál mBirn was the ruling lineage of Osraige; see below, ch. 4, ch. 6.

[59] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 510.

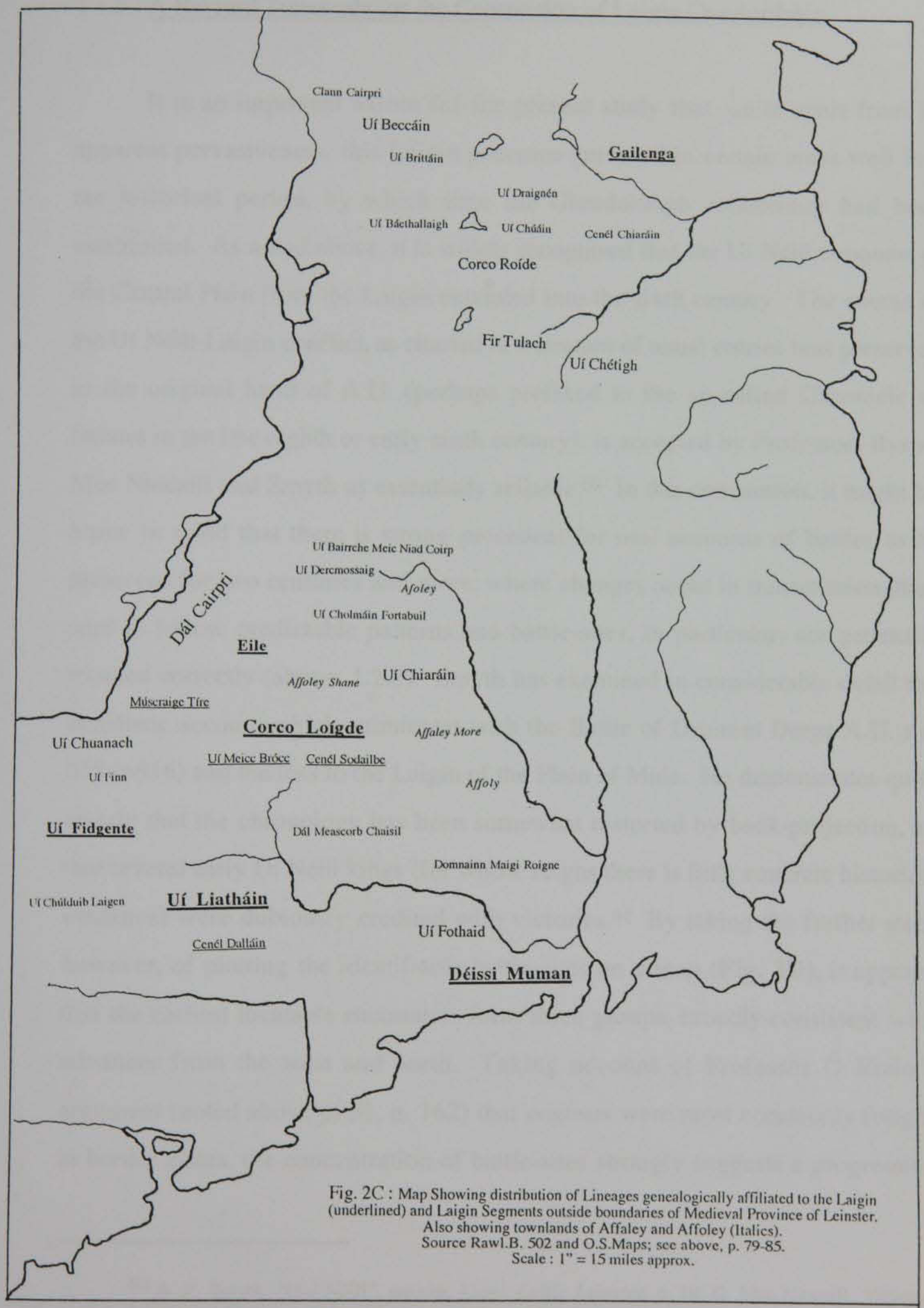


Fig. 2C : Map Showing distribution of Lineages genealogically affiliated to the Laigin (underlined) and Laigin Segments outside boundaries of Medieval Province of Leinster. Also showing townlands of Affaley and Affoley (Italics).
Source Rawl.B. 502 and O.S.Maps; see above, p. 79-85.
Scale : 1" = 15 miles approx.

2.1.3 : A Revised Timescale for the Contraction of Laigin Overlordship

It is an important axiom for the present study that, quite apart from its apparent pervasiveness, this Laigin presence persisted in certain areas well into the historical period, by which time the Glendalough community had been established. As noted above, it is widely recognised that the Uí Néill conquest of the Central Plain from the Laigin extended into the sixth century. The course of the Uí Néill-Laigin conflict, as charted in a stratum of annal entries best preserved in the original hand of A.U. (perhaps prefixed to the so-called Chronicle of Ireland in the late eighth or early ninth century), is accepted by Professors Byrne, Mac Niocaill and Smyth as essentially reliable.[60] In this connection, it might be borne in mind that there is strong precedent for oral accounts of battles to be preserved for two centuries and more; where changes occur in transmission, they tend to follow predictable patterns and battle-sites, in particular, are generally recalled correctly (above, 1.2.3). Smyth has examined in considerable detail the annalistic account which culminates with the Battle of Druimm Derge A.U. s.a. 515 (=516) and the loss to the Laigin of the Plain of Mide. He demonstrates quite clearly that the chronology has been somewhat distorted by back-projection, so that several early Uí Néill kings (for whose reigns there is little concrete historical evidence) were dubiously credited with victories.[61] By taking the further step, however, of plotting the identifiable battle-sites on a map (**Fig. 2D**), it appears that the earliest locatable encounters form three groups, broadly consistent with advances from the west and north. Taking account of Professor Ó Riain's argument (noted above p. 51, n. 162) that contests were most commonly fought in border zones, the concentration of battle-sites strongly suggests a progressive

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[60] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", passim; Idem, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18; G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 15-6; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 133, 138, also seems to accept the tradition.

[61] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", esp. 121-2, 125-9.

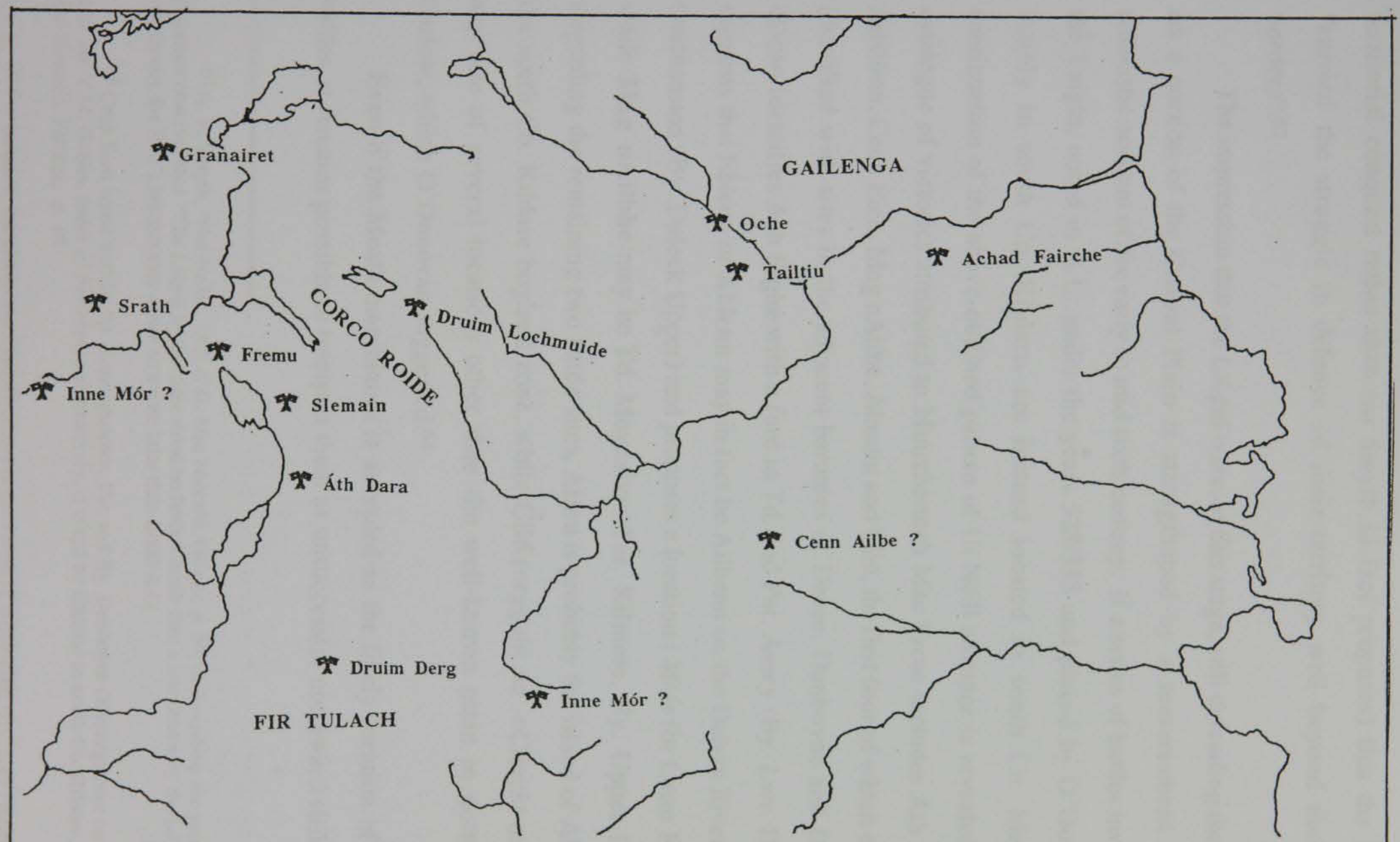


FIG. 2D : Map of Uí Néill - Laigin Battles 5th-6th c (after A.U.). Scale 1" = 7m (approx).

territorial conquest rather than (as Smyth in fact proposes) that the Laigin "carried the struggle in defence of their territory well beyond their own borders".[62]

The impression that the Laigin were, at this stage, still defending their hold on a portion of the Central Plain is strengthened by a reassessment of the annalistic account of the early to mid sixth century. If a series of battles involving the Laigin, noted in A.U. under the years 528/533 and placed by O'Donovan mainly in south Co. Kildare, are instead located in south Co. Meath, a continuation of the above-outlined pattern of Uí Néill advance is revealed. The catalogue of victories attributed to Muirchertach Mac Ercae includes Áth Síghe, Aibhlinn, Cenn Eich, Mag nAilbe, Almuin and Cliú, the first four of which may be identified with sites in the adjacent baronies of Deece, Dunboyne and Duleek. Hogan identifies **Ath Síghe** with a ford in Td. and Par. Assey (By. Lwr. Deece), suggests that Eblenn or **Ablenn** may in fact be Ailbenn on the Delvin River, near Gormanston (By. Duleek Upper) and proposes a location *i Mide* for **Cenn Eich**,[63] while **Mag nAilbhe** may be Td. Moynalvy, Par. Kilmore, By. Upper Deece. Regarding the remaining two battle sites, **Almu** is probably the island of Allen in the north Co. Kildare bogland zone, while **Cliú** *(orggain na cCliach)* may be any one of several locations other than the well-known plain in north Co. Carlow, which O'Donovan suggested.[64]

Even if the Meath marchlands is accepted as the likely location of these battles, it remains possible to interpret them as unsuccessful northward strikes by

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[62] A. P. Smyth, "Huí Néill", 142; cf G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 36, in describing the geography of politics observes that "The Laigin by this time ruled no further north than a line drawn by the Liffey and its tributary the Rye"; but this may relate to a time later than c.600 A.D.

[63] Cenn Eich could well be Td. Kennaghstown, Par. and By. Dunboyne (Kennegstown on Petty's Map; see Y.M. Goblet, *Index of Parishes)* ; alternatively, it could be situated in north Co. Kildare, see G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 18.

[64] For instance, the placename Clyduff occurs in the Parish of Kilclonfert (By. Lwr Phillipstown, Co. Offaly), within easy striking distance of the Uí Néill powerbase of Tethbae.

the Laigin. Perhaps the Laigin did pursue an offensive northwards into Uí Néill territory. There are notices of Leinster victories preserved in A.F.M., fought in the first third of the sixth century at **Luachair** and **Finnabair**, which may be located in the Barony of Upper Duleek.[65] The subsequent victory at **Tortu** c.543 (A.U.) has been identified by Hogan with a location further north-west in the land of Uí Tortain, Barony of Upper Navan.[66] On balance, however, especially with the distribution pattern of earlier encounters, such a concentration of activity within a limited area seems to suggest that Laigin overlordship in the area had not yet been lost (**Fig. 2E**).

Indeed there are indications that up to the end of the sixth century, by which time the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough had been established and the dynasties of Uí Chennselaig and Uí Máil had asserted themselves politically, the Kildare-Meath border was still a zone of conflict. According to A.F.M., at least some of the battles involving the Uí Chennselaig overking Brandub mac Echdach took place in this marcher area. The engagement at **Mag nOchtair** (A.U. s.a. 589=590) for instance, is stated by the Four Masters to have been near Cluain Conaire (Td. and Par. Cloncurry, By. Oughteranny).[67] The same source notes (s.a. 597=601) *Bemenna Branduib i mBregaib*, while the defeat of this Uí Chennselaig king at **Slabra** would also appear to have taken place in Co. Meath.[68] It is scarcely without significance that the dynasty of Fer Tulach, whose territory was represented in later times by the Barony of Fertullagh in the

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[65] A.F.M. s.a. 506; C.S. s.a. 524. Hogan suggests that Luachair is near Fennor, Co. Meath. There are two townlands so named in By Fore, one in By. Lower Duleek and one in Par. Ardcath, By. Upper Duleek. The latter site is perhaps the most likely.

[66] *Onomasticon*, p.115, notes that *Bile Torten* was sited *apud familiam Aird Breccáin*.

[67] The location of battles attributed to Brandub in this area raises questions about Dún Buchat and Dún Bolg, which the *Boruma* place near Dunboyke, Co. Wicklow, presumably because Uí Felmeda, an Uí Chennselaig line descended from Brandub, subsequently settled there.

[68] A.U. s.a. 604=605; *Onomasticon*, p. 603, locates Slabra *i Mide*.

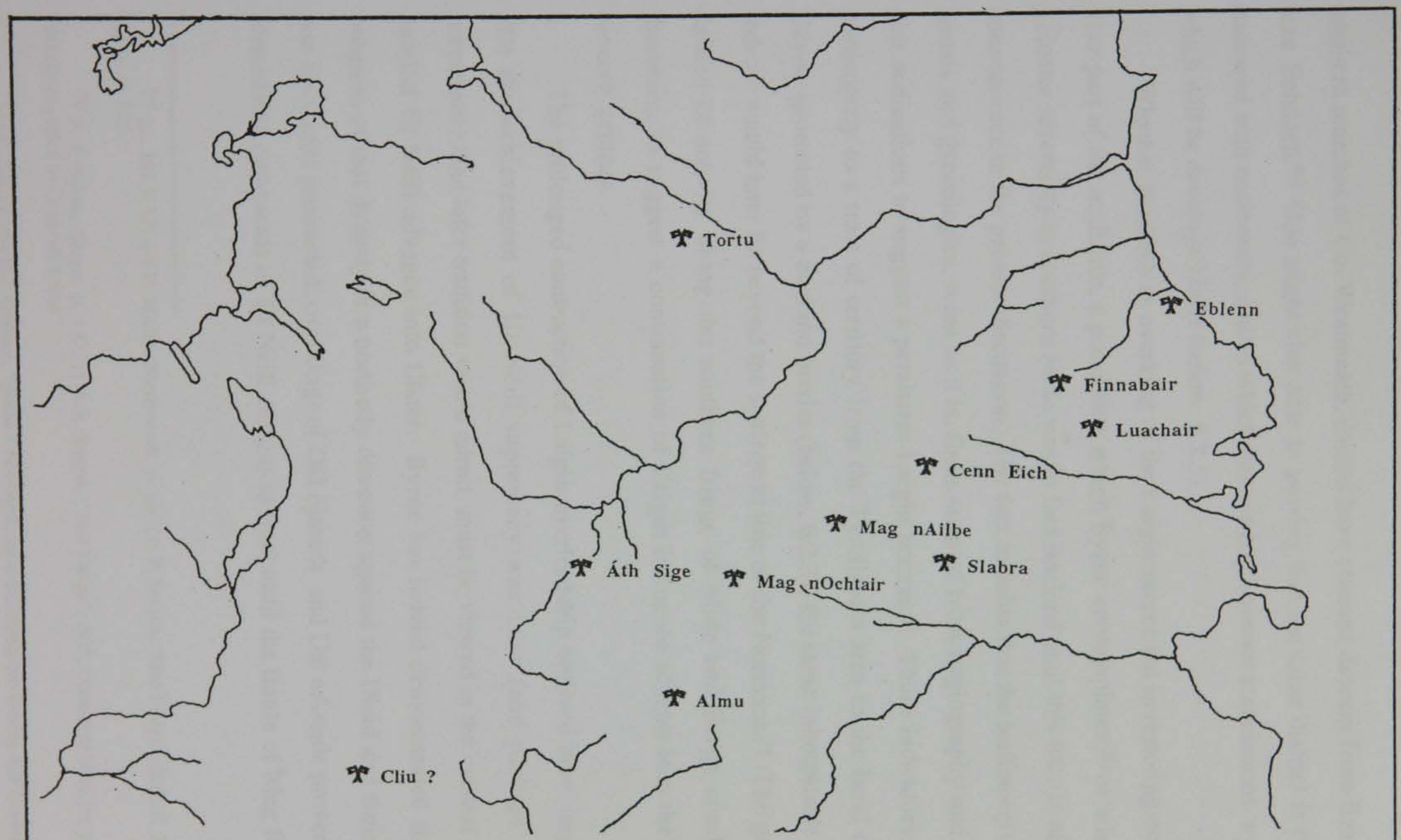


FIG. 2E : Map of Uí Néill - Laigin Battles 6th-7th c (after A.U.). Scale 1" = 7m (approx)

southern marches of Co. Westmeath, should have claimed descent from Brandub mac Echdach.[69] One might also note in passing that the same district is richly endowed with ecclesiastical sites which have strong Leinster associations, a point which will be developed later (below, 6.2.3).

Whether Brandub as overking of the Laigin succeeded in restoring control over part of the midlands, a possibility which Byrne contemplates,[70] or whether Leinster suzerainty in southern Mide was in fact retained until this time is of little consequence in the present discussion. The fact remains that the testimony of the annals and genealogies, scant as it is, finds support from hagiography and from cult dedications to suggest a persistent Laigin presence. These indicators point particularly to a tract of territory from the Tyrellspass area to the bend of the Boyne, protected by a bogland barrier (below, 6.2.3); the same inhospitable tract, indeed, would later lie beyond the settlement line of the Normans.[71] The general pattern of activity along the southern fringe of Mide and Brega combines, therefore, to suggest a continuation of Laigin influence at least into the early seventh century.

The prolonged contraction of Laigin overlordship outlined here, implying that the achievement of Uí Néill supremacy was later (and perhaps more precarious) than later tradition would admit, must be viewed in the context of the parallel Uí Néill advance into Ulster. Byrne has indeed demonstrated that the progress of that dynasty in a northerly direction against the Ulaid and their allies was also quite protracted; overkings of Dál Fiatach and Dál nAraide proved to be formidable opponents of Uí Néill designs at least until the Battle of Mag Roth in

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[69] LL 391 b 37; see P. Walsh, *Westmeath*, p. 162; A.P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 505; F. J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 143.

[70] F. J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 142; cf A.P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 505, considers that the area was "already engulfed by Brandub's time".

[71] G.F. Barrett and B.J. Graham, "Some Considerations concerning the Dating and Distribution of Ring Forts in Ireland", *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 38 (1975), 39.

637 and may have retained an overlordship as far south as the Boyne into the early years of the seventh century.[72]

Uí Néill penetration into Brega appears therefore to have been slow; accounts preserved of sixth century battles suggest dynastic activity in the western half of the region. The encounter at Detna *i nDrumaibh Breg* would seem to have taken place west of Crossakeel in the Barony of Upper Kells and the slaying of Tuathal Máelgarb in the same general area, while the location of Odba, where an internal Uí Néill conflict took place in 612, may have been near Navan.[73] With such little data available, it is difficult to establish precisely at what stage the Uí Néill overkings secured their authority over the eastern reaches of Brega.

Questions also arise in regard to the petty rulers of this coastal strip from the Liffey to the Boyne. The kings of Gailenga (who may have originally been allies of the Laigin; see above, n. 27) are provided with a possibly spurious genealogical link to the ruling lineages of the Saithne and Ciannachta.[74] This latter dynasty, according to one genealogical tradition, originated in the Munster marchlands; the eponymous ancestor Tadc mac Céin is represented as a son of Ailill Aulom, or the line is related to the Éli through the common ancestry of Finchan mac Féicc.[75] If this account of Ciannachta origins holds any validity, one might expect the lineage to have been allied to the Leinster cause. According to the saga *Cath Crinna*, the Ciannachta are settled in Mide by Cormac mac Airt, as ancestor of the Uí Néill, in reward for driving the Ulaid from

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[72] Francis John Byrne, "The Ireland of St Columba", in *Historical Studies 5*, ed. J.L. McCracken (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1965), p.49; Idem, *Kings*, esp. p.111-13.

[73] A.U. s.a. 529=520, 543=544; *Onomasticon*, p. 344, 450 for location of Detna and of Grellach Eillte near Sliab Gamh; G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 90.

[74] Rawl B 502 153 b 52; LL 329 a 48; *Corpus*, p. 246; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1435; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 69, considers that the Ciannachta were of Connacht-Uí Néill origin and that the Munster genealogy is erroneous.

[75] Rawl B 502 154 a 25; LL 329 ab 55; *Corpus*, p. 248; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1435.

the Boyne.[76] The implication here is that the lineage owed its position to the Uí Néill kings and certainly, in later times they did feature as their allies. Nonetheless, the account of *Bellum Lochara.* (A.U. s.a. 534) represents the Ciannachta as opponents of Uí Néill, which Mac Niocaill considered strange.[77] This contest corresponds to the time when the Uí Néill advance against the Laigin in Brega was proceeding apace. Moreover, there are indications that the Ciannachta were well disposed towards the Laigin, particularly the Uí Máil dynasty, at least to the end of the seventh century (below, 2.1.4). It is worth noting that the Uí Néill lineage of Síl nÁedo Sláine had secured control of most of Ciannachta by the early eighth century.[78] On that account, it might be reasonable to suggest that the saga *Cath Crinna,* which is an eighth century product, represents a situation that came about not too long before the time of composition; that a re-alignment of relationships involving the Ciannachta and Uí Néill took place perhaps at some point in the seventh century, which may well correspond to the historical displacement of the Ulaid from the Boyne.

Protracted as the Laigin withdrawal and corresponding Uí Néill advance may have been, there are indications in the annals as late as c.700, by which time Laigin overlordship of Mide certainly belonged to the past, that the dynasty of Uí Fáilge continued to pursue claims in the midland area. Smyth observes the intermittent targetting of the Westmeath lakeland by kings of this lineage, and suggests that the district concerned formerly lay within their realm; an Uí Fáilge king was apparently slain near Loch Semdide in 604, while the dynasty suffered

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[76] LL 328 f; *Bk. Leinster,* VI, p. 1433f; see F. J. Byrne, "Ireland of St Columba", p.41; Idem, *Kings,* p.68-9; cf K. McCone, *Pagan Past,* p.242, where the author indicates a Munster tradition, preserved in the tract *Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta* in the Laud genealogies; here, in return for his assistance, Cormac mac Airt rewards Fiachu Muillethan with Ciannachta lands.

[77] G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings,* p. 18; the battle would be quite explicable, however, if the Ciannachta had not yet succumbed to Uí Néill pressure.

[78] F. J. Byrne, *Kings,* p.88, 118; M. Ní Dhonnchadha, "Guarantor List", 213, points out that Conaing mac Amalgada †742 was the first Síl nÁedo Sláine dynast titled *Rí Ciannachtae.*

reversals at Cúl Corrae in Corco Roíde in 652, and again in 714 at Garbsalach near Lake Derravaragh.[79] The question of a Laigin ancestry for the rulers of Corco Roíde (above, n.n. 29, 30) and the proximity of Dál Messin Corb segments may be of relevance here. It may also be significant that the traditional location for the mid seventh century slaying of the grandsons of Áed Sláine, by Dál Messin Corb dynast Maelodrán mac Dimmae Cróin, was at Muillenn Odráin in the same district.[80] This ongoing political involvement with the Lakeland area on the part of Laigin dynasts was paralleled, as already noted, by continued ecclesiastical interests (below, 6.2.3).

Indeed in the Munster marchlands, although data is considerably less plentiful, such indications as there are point to a similar pattern. As noted earlier, Mac Niocaill observes that little is known of the Caiseal kings prior to c.573, implying that the main phase of Eóganacht expansion through central Munster may be viewed as a late sixth-early seventh century development.[81] Again, a delayed contraction of Laigin overlordship, especially in the northern and eastern marchlands of Munster, may help to explain why the annals and genealogies apparently reflect the involvement here of Uí Fáilge and Uí Máil, dynasties which enjoyed a time of ascendancy in the sixth and seventh centuries. The distribution of placenames which, although undatable, may commemorate an Uí Fáilge presence has already been discussed (above, n. 53). Somewhat more concrete evidence is provided by an annal preserved in A.I. which records s.a. 598 the battles of Rath in Druad and Ard Sendaim, adding 'Huí Fhinn fugerunt, Araid victores'. The entry certainly has an authentic appearance in terms of language

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[79] A.U. s.a. 603, 651, 713; A.F.M. s.a. 600, 649; A.P. Smyth, "Huí Fáilgi", 505-06, 512-15.

[80] A.U. s.a. 650 merely reports the slaying; A.F.M. s.a. 647 draws upon historical tradition to deliver a fully embellished account complete with location identified with Td. Mullenoran, Par. Portshangan, By. Corkaree; see P. Walsh, *Westmeath*, p. 147-9.

[81] G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 8, suggests that the brunt of this offensive drive, perhaps facilitated by the Déissi and certain Érainn peoples changing sides, would appear to have been borne mainly by the Corco Loígde, Uí Liatháin and Uí Fidgenti. The case for Laigin connections on the part of these lineages has bee already discussed (above, 2.1.2).

and format; moreover, minor conflicts between peripheral lordships were generally not of concern to the synthetic historians who left their imprint elsewhere in the compilations of annals. There is a possibility, if Byrne's detection of a Bangor interest in the affairs of the Limerick area is acceptable (above, p. 2, 3; n.5, n.8), that it may be a near-contemporary notice. The importance of the entry, from the point of view of the present inquiry, is the reference to Uí Fhinn. This lineage is genealogically connected to Uí Fáilge, its ancestry traced to Óengus Finn son of Rus Fáilge, and would appear to have left its name in the Barony of Coshma Co. Limerick.[82] In view of the above another less explicit entry in A.I. s.a. 595, which records 'Bellum Duin Cocuiche', may merit some attention. The personal name here associated with the fort is perhaps a garbled form of Cú Cocríche, a name which features in the genealogies of Uí Fáilge.[83]

The Leinster and Osraige connections of the alleged Eóganachta segment Cenél Sodailbe have already been mentioned (above, n. 39). It may be noted that certain personal names among this lineage, including Fothud, Dícuill and Gerrthide, are especially typical of Uí Máil.[84] Moreover, within the Osraige genealogies, the lineage of Uí Dega Tamnaig (probably located in the Barony of Clarmallagh Co. Laois) features a range of personal names, including Dímma, Senach, Mál, Fothud, Gerrthide, Echen and the rather suspect Cóemchenn (also rendered as Cóemgen Cass). The same lineage has at least four segment

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[82] Lec 89 rb 9;*Corpus*, p. 56; A. Ó Maolfabhail et al., *Logainmneacha: Co. Luimní*, p. 259, gives Tulach Ó bhFinn for Tullovin, Par. Croom; Ibid., p. 171-2, discusses Par. Effin (By. Coshma/ By. Coshlea) and concludes "ní léir brí an ainm"; while an initial 'e' is rare as an anglicised rendering of Uí, such is attested. Effin could conceivably represent Uí F[h]inn.

[83] Rawl B 502 123 c 13, d 11; LL 314 bc 33, 56; *Corpus*, p. 61, 62; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1346-7; D. Dumville and K. Grabowski, *Chronicles and Annals*, esp. p. 17, 21-2, discuss entries of apparent Leinster interest in A.I. There are also notices of 6thC. battles at Clochar Aithime and at Luimnech, but no details survive; see above p. 2, 3, nn. 5, 8.

[84] Rawl B 502, 150 a 40, 41; LL 326 c 9, 15-16; see *Corpus*, p. 212-13; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1415-16.

designations distinctly reminiscent of the Uí Máil dynasty; Uí Dimmae, Uí Dícolla, Uí Bercháin and Uí Máil.[85] This accords well with the apparent persistence of Corco Loígde overlordship in Osraige into the seventh century. Late survival of Laigin pretensions on the north-eastern fringe of Munster might also help to explain the otherwise strange notice in A.I. s.a. 706, concerning a slaughter of the Laigin around Gabair.[86] The pursuit of faded claims in this area was presumably no less a priority than in the midlands.

2.1.4 : Leinster Contact with North-East Ulster and with Britain

It is clear, therefore, that the polity and geo-politics of Leinster in the early days of the Glendalough community clearly differed quite considerably from the familiar picture of the Classical period. The gradual contraction of Leinster overlordship in the course of the sixth century, as the Uí Néill dynasties steadily advanced across the Central Plain, resulted in isolated segments of Laigin lineages becoming stranded like rock pools left by the receding tide. Even if these pro-Laigin elements had been absorbed by their conquerors by the time the genealogies were first compiled in the eighth century, the extent to which they were still recalled would suggest that they had survived to within living memory of that period. A situation in which the overkingdom of Ulster may have extended to the Boyne up to the early seventh century (above, n. 72), would have facilitated communication with the dynasties of the north-east, notably with Dál nAraide. A similar situation prevailed regarding contact with the south.

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[85] Rawl B 502 128 b 38-42, 53, 129 a 5-6, 31 ; LL 339 ac 30, b 30, bc 9-12, 40-44; *Corpus*, p. 102-05; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1494-6.

[86] D. Dumville and K. Grabowski, *Chronicles and Annals*, p. 30, consider this Co. Limerick location strange; note, however, the location of Uí Chuanach etc (above, Fig. 2C)

Indeed there are intimations that dynastic links may have been established between Dál nAraide and the Munster marches, via Leinster. A.U. notes s.a. 573 (=574) 'Bellum Tola et Fertola', which was located by the original hand 'in regionibus Cruitne'. A marginal addition in T.C.D. H.1.8, in the interpolating hand H2 (that of Cathal Mac Maghnusa), attributes the victory to the Dál nAraide dynast Fiachra mac Baetáin, and identifies the battle site as 'nomen camporum etir Éle ocus Osraige'.[87] There is an understandable temptation to dismiss this gloss as simple confusion of locations on the part of a later scribe, but a question remains regarding the strange reference by Adomnán to Scandlán mac Colmáin (seemingly a grandson of the then Corco Loígde king of Osraige) as a prisoner at Druim Cett.[88] It may be significant that among the *forsluinte* of Uí Echach Cobo (allegedly a branch of Dál nAraide) are several segments of obscure origin, with shadowy Munster connections. These include the Gáelraigi, Dál mBuachallo and possibly the Corco Dalláin, the kindred from which sprang Cainnech of Achad Bó.[89]

Certainly the Laigin dynasty of Uí Máil, which enjoyed particular prominence in the seventh century (above, n. 19, Fig. 2A), strove to retain a shaky alliance with the Ciannachta and with their overlords Síl nÁedo Sláine, perhaps with a view to keeping open the line of contact with the north-east. Fianamail mac Máele-tuili, under whom Uí Máil staged a political comeback following the emergence of Uí Dúnlainge, apparently failed in an effort to re-establish some degree of Laigin authority in southern Brega. In 677, a foray on his part into Brega was repulsed near Lagore by the Uí Néill high king Fínsnechta Fledach of Síl nÁedo Sláine. Arguably the ablest of Fianamail's successors, Cellach mac

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[87] A.U. s.a. 573; S. Mac Airt † and G. Mac Niocaill (ed.), *The Annals of Ulster*, pp. ix, 87.

[88] *Vita S. Columbae Adomnani*, ed. A.O. & M.O. Anderson, new ed. revised by M.O. Anderson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), I, § 11, p. 34-5.

[89] Rawl B 502, 157, 15, 26, 30 ; LL 331 a 25, 50; 331 b 9; *Corpus*, p. 278-9; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1415-16.

Gerthide (known as Cellach Cualann) made extensive use of political marriage-alliances with the ruling lineages of Brega. One of Cellach Cualann's wives (almost certainly not his first; she outlived him by twenty six years) was Bé Bail, daughter of Síl nÁedo Sláine high king Sechnassach mac Blaithmeic, while another wife was a lady of the Ciannachta. Two of his daughters were married to Síl nÁedo Sláine dynasts; Derbforgaill to the high king Fínsnechta Fledach and Muirend to Irgalach of North Brega.[90]

Whatever role these Brega connections may have played, it seems clear that the Uí Máil rulers contrived to retain some link with the ruling dynasties of north-east Ulster up to the beginning of the eighth century. Through these lineages in turn, via their Scottish colonies and perhaps separately via the Isle of Man, Uí Máil established contact with the Northern Britons.[91] Arising from the colonisation of Dál Riata in Scotland, one might reasonably expect to find an Ulster presence among the Britons of the north. Dynasts of Dál Fiatach and Dál nAraide, notably Báetán mac Cairill and Fiachna mac Báetáin, are credited with military expeditions to the Isle of Man and to Lothian from the late sixth century onwards, while few surviving ogham inscriptions (such as those at Andreas and at Ballaqueeny, Isle of Man) seem to point to settlement by Cruthin lineages.[92] The extent to which the Laigin kings developed their Ulaid-north British contacts, especially during the ascendancy of Uí Máil, is reflected in the annals and genealogies alike. There is reference to Cellach Cualann having employed British mercenaries, who participated in the battle of Selgg against Uí Chennselaig

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[90] Lec., 391; D.2.1 (R.I.A.), 96 b; "Banshenchus", ed M. C. Dobbs, *Revue Celtique*, 47-9 (1930-32); 48 (1931), 185, 223. Cellach may also have sought some *modus vivendi* with the rival Uí Dúnlainge dynasty in northern Leinster; his daughter Conchend married Uí Dúnlainge king Murchad mac Brain.

[91] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18-19, points to Iron Age direct sea-routes between south-west Scotland and the Wicklow and Wexford coasts; see below, nn. 93, 94.

[92] A. U. s.a. 582, 623; F. J. Byrne, "Ireland of St Columba", p. 46-7; R.A.S. Macalister (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, 2 vols. (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1945, 1947), I, p. 479-80, 481; Robert H. Kinvig, *The Isle of Man: A Social, Cultural and Political History* (Liverpool: University Press, 1975), p. 40.

in which Fiachra and Fianamail, sons of Cellach were slain.[93] These Britons may have come, as Mac Niocaill suggests, from Rheged via the Isle of Man, where their leading men sought refuge following expulsion by the Angles.[94] Further to this, Smyth points to a sequence of entries in A.U. between 682 and 709, which appears to indicate a gradual progression of British military activity from Dál Riata to northern Leinster.[95]

As is the case with the ruling lineages of north-east Ulster, the pre-Norman genealogical record of the Uí Máil dynasty preserves P-Celtic personal names such as Matudán, with some distinctively British examples including Toca and Artúr.[96] Indeed the borrowing of this latter name seems to point directly to Uí Máil contact with northern Britain. Caintigern daughter of Cellach Cualann († 733 =734 A.U.), whose historical reputation rests on her later role as a holy widow was married, according to the Breviary of Aberdeen at 7th January, to 'Feriacus, regulus of Monchestree'.[97] It is tempting to identify the latter with Dál Riata dynast Feradach hOa Artúr who, in 697 along with Cellach Cualann, signed the list of guarantors for the Law of Adomnán.[98] A marriage between Caintigern

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[93] A. U. s.a. 709; A.P. Smyth, "Kings, Saints and Sagas", forthcoming, discusses the identification of Selgg or Aife and places it at the top of the Glenn of Imaal.

[94] G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 112-13.

[95] Alfred P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland A.D. 80-1000* (London: E. Arnold, 1984), p. 25-6, 82, also notes that the commencement of this odyssey corresponds in time with Ecfrith's conquest of Rheged.

[96] Rawl B 502, 125 a 3, 17, 18; *Corpus*, p. 76; F.J. Byrne, "Ireland of St. Columba", p. 41, notes P-Celtic character of Matudán; Kenneth H. Jackson, "The Arthur of History", in R. Sherman Loomis (ed.), *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 3; Conor P. Hartnett, "Irish Arthurian Literature" (unpubl. Ph. D. dissertation, New York University, 1973), p. 9, 11-12, on prevalence of the personal name Arthur among Strathclyde Britons and on its transmission to Ireland as evidence for contact.

[97] Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, new ed. re-edited with preface by Marjorie Anderson, 2 vols. (Stamford, Lincs.: Paul Watkins, 1990), I, p. 231 esp. n. 3.

[98] M. Ní Dhonnchadha, "Guarantor List", 194-5, observes that Feradach's grandfather Artúr mac Conaing mic Áedán mic Gabhráin was slain (probably at a relatively young age) in battle with the Miathi c.595.

and Feradach, whose grandfather was the earliest historically attested Artúr, could explain how this rare and peculiarly North British personal name occurs several generations later in the genealogy of Uí Máil and subsequently in that of Uí Dúnlainge.[99] Such direct contact with the colonies in northern Britain on the part of Cellach (and perhaps some of his antecedents) may be the historical reality reflected in the eighth century saga *Fingal Rónáin*, in which the Uí Máil king Rónán mac Áedo is married to a daughter of Eochaid of Dún Sobairche (Dunseverick, Co Antrim) and his son Máel Fothartaigh flees to Scotland.[100] This wide-ranging dynastic contact on the part of seventh to eighth century Laigin overkings, who seem to have still nurtured aspirations to political influence beyond the boundaries of the historical province of Leinster, has implications for the ecclesiastical fortunes of Glendalough which will be examined presently.

2.1.5 : Implications of a Protracted Leinster Overlordship

The protracted decline of Laigin suzerainty in fringe areas such as southern Mide through the sixth and into the seventh century presumably facilitated Uí Máil and other lineages, through the agency of detached segments and judicious marriage alliances, to retain dynastic links with Ulster and Britain as late as the eighth century. As noted above (2.1.1), the system of dynastic association is closely paralleled by a network of ecclesiastical contacts. This is reflected in the diffusion of saints' cults, in the mobility of clergy and, perhaps related in turn to these two factors, the extension of 'monastic paruchiae'.

The geographical spread of Leinster saints' cults, traceable in placenames and dedications through the midlands and into the north east, is remarkable. No

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[99] Rawl B 502, 125 a 41; *Corpus*, p. 78; see also below, 3.1.

[100] *Fingal Rónáin*, p. 3 ; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 52, 82. Note that some of Cellach Cualann's Uí Dúnlainge predecessors had apparently established similar links; The *Banshenchus* claims that Uí Dúnlainge king Bran mac Conaill († 693) married Almaith of Dál Riata; Lec. 391; D.2.1 (R.I.A.), 96 b; "Banshenchus", ed M. C. Dobbs, 185, 221.

less noteworthy is the relatively dense occurrence of dedications to Leinster patrons in northern Britain, generally viewed as an area of Ulster colonisation. The diffusion of the Brigit cult has been widely discussed; it is well represented in the midlands (where dedications are plentiful and where several episodes of the Vita S. Brigitae are set), not much in evidence in the north-east but prominent in the Isle of Man and in Argyll (with Brigidine placenames and dedications much in evidence), leaving aside consideration of southern Britain and Continental Europe which lie outside the bounds of the present study.[101] The case of Brigit is perhaps not typical as, unlike the majority of patrons including Cóemgen of Glendalough, she had acquired something of a universal status.[102] The cults of other Leinster saints are represented throughout the Irish Sea area in circumstances that *(pace* Mytum) are taken to suggest settlement at an early date.[103]

In particular, the commemoration of Rónán in the Isle of Man and of Berchán in Scotland may be indicative of Uí Máil influence.[104] A rather more clear-cut connection between Uí Máil and the Church in North Britain is found in the person of Caintigern, the above mentioned daughter of Cellach Cualann, who adopted the religious life after the death of her husband. Caintigern, along with

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[101] E.G. Bowen, "The Cult of St. Brigit", *Studia Celtica*, 8-9 (1973-4), esp. 39, 41-2; P. Walsh, *Westmeath*, passim; Felim Ó Briain †, "Brigitana", ed. from unpubl. work by F. Mac Donncha, *Zeitschrift fur Celt. Phil.*, 36 (1978), 114-6, 124-5; P.M.C. Kermode (ed.), *The Manx Archaeological Survey*, 6 vols., new ed. with foreword by J.R. Bruce, (Douglas: Manx Museum, 1968), I, p. 7; III, p. 31; W. F. Nicholaisen, "Gaelic Placenames", esp. 24-5.

[102] Charles Thomas, "An Early Christian Cemetery and Chapel on Ardwall Isle, Kirkudbright", *Medieval Archaeology*, 11 (1967), 182.

[103] C. Thomas, "Ardwall Isle", 181-2, supports ante 700 date, by which time the term *cell* was already applied to developed sites with cemeteries; see above, 1.1.3, where the arguments of Mytum, of Nicholaisen and of Mac Donald are discussed.

[104] LL 351 f 55, h 20; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1567-8; other saints named Berchán include one of Dál Messin Corb lineage; P.M.C. Kermode, *Manx Archaeological Survey*, I, p. 6, on dedications to Rónán; W.F. Nicholaisen, "Gaelic Placenames", 24, notes Kilbarchan, Renfrew.

her son Fáelán and kinsman Congan, became associated with a number of sites in South-Western Scotland (see below, 4.1.3).

The above-discussed alliance with the Ciannachta and with their overlords Síl nAedo Sláine may well have facilitated Glendalough, and the dynastic interests which lay behind it, in promoting the spread of its saint's cults via this'Brega corridor' to north-east Ulster and Britain. Indications that the cult of the patron Cóemgen extended into Ulster and Man, to be followed at least part of the way by paruchial claims, will be discussed later (below, Ch. 4, Ch.6). Dedications to several saints with clear Dál Messin Corb or Glendalough associations, including Eógan, Nath Í and Glúnsalach, are found in the north-east, notably within the realm of Dál nAraide.[105] In addition, it emerges that several saints' cults, apparently of southern British origin but established and 'localised' within the Glendalough sphere of influence, were brought to Scotland as part of the same movement.[106] Nor was there any question of a *cursus unicus;* the limited record available to us for the early period shows that ecclesiastics from Ulster made their way south to Glendalough in the course of the seventh century. No doubt this mobility of personnel, presumably via the same 'Brega Corridor' helps to explain the diffusion of saints' cults from Dál nAraide and from other east Ulster kingdoms into Leinster.

Interaction between Glendalough and Laigin interests within Munster, suggestive of close connections, is also in evidence especially in the north and east of the province. The establishment of Leinster saints' cults in these parts, which may in turn have involved some interchange of clergy, involved the commemoration of Cóemgen and apparently of other saints with Glendalough

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[105] Eógan, who is alleged to have been Cóemgen's tutor, is closely associated with the see of Ard Sratha (Ardstraw) in Airgialla; Nath Í, is commemorated at Cúl Fothirbe and Glúnsalach at Cell Sléibhe, both in Dál nAraide territory (see below 6.2.1, 6.2.3).

[106] Notably the cults of Petróc and of Mo Chonnóc (see below, 4.1.3).

associations.[107] On the eastern shore of Lough Derg, the influence of the *familia Coemgeni* was so strong that one genealogical commentator felt obliged to record a claim to the effect that Cóemgen was, without satire, the king of Araide.[108] Again, there was something of a two-way flow; however, while dedications to Munster saints are to be found in Leinster, there is nothing to suggest that these cults were commemorated at Glendalough.[109] The apparent parallels between the geo-political ambition of patronising dynasties and the composition of the Glendalough community, the diffusion of its saints' cults and the expansion of its *paruchia* will be explored later (below, Ch.4 and Ch. 6).

2.2 : The Political Order of Leinster Seventh to Tenth Centuries.

2.2.1 : The Conflict of Uí Máil and Uí Dúnlainge Seventh to Eighth Centuries

It might be inferred from the above discussion (2.1.3) that the over-kingship of Leinster had commenced, in the course of the seventh century, to assume the geographical limits that it would have until it was dismantled by the Anglo-Normans in the 1170s. As the province took its political shape, the dynasty that was to dominate throughout the early historical period became established. The lineage of Uí Máil which, as noted above, enjoyed a period of ascendancy in the seventh century, was gradually superseded by Uí Dúnlainge. There are indications that, by the end of the seventh or beginning of the eighth century, the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough had already developed

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[107] Some case can perhaps be made for the cult of Mochonna in Corco Loígde and Fáelán in the Déissi representing Glendalough interests; see below, 4.1.3 and Appendix 3.

[108] E. Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 34; BB 154 a; The Book of Ballymote Facsimile, with introduction by Robert Atkinson (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1887); see below Ch. 6.

[109] Note dedications to saints of Corco Loígde origin, including the daughters of Léinín; the probable Munster associations of Sillán of Glendalough and of Mo Locé, whose foundation of Templeogue later formed part of the *paruchia Coemgeni*, are discussed below, 4.1.3 and 6.2.1, 6.2.5.

beyond the stage of simple hermitage. It has been suggested that some foundations and artificial terraces in the upper valley may date to the eighth century the period which, according to Doherty, witnessed the commencement of commercial activity at ecclesiastical settlements.[110] Indeed, it appears that Cellach Cualann, the last and probably the most colourful ruler of his line to achieve the provincial kingship had, already by c.700, taken steps to assert the authority of his dynasty over Glendalough. The implications of this political intervention will be discussed at a later stage (below, 4.2.1).

As early as the reign of Crimthann Cualann, the emerging dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge was already strong enough to challenge Uí Máil. Fáelán mac Colmáin, effectively the founder of Uí Dúnlainge fortunes, apparently allied himself with the Clann Colmáin line of the Southern Uí Néill. According to the annals, he married Uasal, sister of Clann Cholmáin king Conall mac Suibni; omission of this marriage-alliance from the Banshenchus may reflect the strained relationships that existed by the time this source was compiled.[111] With the support of his Uí Néill and Munster allies, Fáelán secured the discomfiture of his Uí Chennselaig and Uí Máil rivals. In 633, Crimthann Cualann was defeated and slain in the Battle of Ath Goan the site of which, given its location *in Iarthar Liphi* and the participation of Clann Cholmáin and Munster dynasts, might perhaps be sought in the upper reaches of the Barrow, in west Co. Kildare.[112] Contrary to the claims of the Middle Irish king-lists, it seems doubtful that this political enterprise on Fáelán's part in fact secured the overkingship of Leinster for the Uí Dúnlainge

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[110] E. R. Norman & J.K. St. Joseph, *Early Development of Irish Society*, p. 120; C. Doherty, "Monastic Town", p. 65.

[111] A.U. s.a. 642 records the obit of Uasal; she is called wife of Fáelán in the other annals; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 154.

[112] A.U. s.a. 633; Liam Price, "The Antiquities and Placenames of South Co. Dublin", *Dublin Historical Record*, 2 no. 4 (June-August 1940), 127, had identified the site of this battle with Athgoe, Par. and By. Newcastle, Co. Dublin.

dynasty. Byrne questions the chronology ascribed to Fáelán, commenting on the calculation of the 666 obit from regnal lists and adding that the title *Rex Lagenensium* is accorded in A.U. to Uí Chennselaig dynast Crundmáel Erbuilc, in the 656 notice of his death.[113] It could be further added that the scarcity of reference to Fáelán mac Colmáin from 633 to his obit date does little to substantiate the case for his alleged reign as king of Leinster. He is not so titled, nor is he accorded any mention in the main hand of A.U.; only a marginal gloss to an entry at 628 describes Fáelán mac Colmáin as *rex Laegen.*[114] On the basis of the evidence available, it would seem that Fáelán should be credited with no more than an ephemeral over-kingship of Leinster; it may not be without significance that a genealogical gloss should remark of his son Conall *rex non fuit sed in ainm.*[115]

It seems reasonable that Fáelán mac Colmáin's achievement should perhaps be viewed as the establishment, with Clann Cholmáin support, of a strong Uí Dúnlainge kingship within northern Leinster rather than an overkingship of the entire province at this time. Indeed Smyth points to data preserved in the Uí Dúnlainge genealogies which suggests that the dynasty was very much engaged in consolidating its position in Co. Kildare throughout the seventh and into the eighth century; Máel Umae, a brother of Fáelán mac Colmáin, is credited with the overthrow of an Uí Ercáin dynast at the latter's fortress of Cell Roiss (Td. and Par. Kilrush, By. West Offaly), while a great-great nephew of Fáelán, Cellach mac Cind Faelad, who probably flourished in the first

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[113] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 151.

[114] A.U. s.a. 628; where Fáelán slays Uí Cennselaig dynast, Crundmáel Bolg Luatha.

[115] A.U. s.a. 645, 647, 660 does not mention Faelán by name in connection with defeats of the Uí Chennselaig and Osraige kings; cf G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, where the author appears to accept Fáelán's role in this catalogue of battles; LL 316b 5: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1357, records genealogical gloss; Dobbs, "Women of the Uí Dúnlainge", 199, 200 cf 205; note, however, A.U. s.a. 692, where Fáelán's grandson Bran mac Conaill is titled *Rex Lagenentium.*

third of the eighth century, is acclaimed as the conqueror of Uí Gabla Roírend, a territory in the Barony of Narragh and Reban West.[116]

Another marriage alliance on Fáelán's part with the rulers of Fothairt, the dynasty to which the ancestral line of St Brigit was traced, probably served the strategic purpose of helping to establish an Uí Dúnlainge presence at Kildare.[117] The extent of Uí Dúnlainge influence at what was commonly perceived as the premier ecclesiastical centre of Leinster may be judged from the combined genealogical and annalistic record, which names two abbots (Brandub and Óengus) and a *rígepscop* (Áed Dub) of that dynasty at Kildare during the seventh century.[118] The *Vita S. Brigitae* of Cogitosus, probably written in the mid to late seventh century, depicts Kildare as a grand basilica with such considerable means that royal patronage seems to be implied; indeed it is distinctly possible that the *Vita* was commissioned by the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge.[119]

In all probability, Fáelán mac Colmáin was responsible for securing the dominant position of his dynasty over the ecclesiastical centre of Kildare before the middle of the seventh century. There is no supportive evidence from other sources, however, for the inferences of later Glendalough hagiographers that Uí Dúnlainge interests were represented there at this early date.[120] The principal dynastic interest at Glendalough at this time was almost certainly that of Uí Máil.

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[116] LL 316a 24: Rawl B. 502, 124b: *Corpus*, p. 74, 339; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1355-6; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p.66-7.

[117] Sarnat of Fothairt was mother of Conall mac Fáeláin; LL 316 b 4; *Corpus*, p. 341; M.C. Dobbs (ed.) "Banshenchus", 221; Idem, "Women of Uí Dúnlainge", 199.

[118] A.U. s.a. 638, obit of Bishop Áed Dub brother of Fáelán; see Rawl. B 502, 124 b 27 and LL 316 a 10, 26; *Corpus*, p. 73, 339.

[119] *Vita S. Brigitae*, § 32 .1-3, .9-10; S. Connolly and J.M. Picard (ed.), "Cogitosus: Life of St. Brigit", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 117 (1987), 5-6, 25-7; F. Ó Briain †, "Brigitana", 135-7, speculates that Cogitosus (= Toimdenach?) *nepos Áedo* (not de Nepotibus Áedo, therefore not of Uí Áedo) may have been related to Bishop Áed Dub.

[120] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 31, 33-4, 36-7; V.S.H., I, p. 250-2; the historicity of this episode is discussed below, 4.2.2.

This lineage, in the face of expanding Uí Dúnlainge power, successfully contended the overkingship into the early eighth century and may have retained something of its dominance in the ecclesiastical sphere. The extent to which this may have been so will be investigated in detail (below, 4.2.1).

Nor is it necessary to assume that the political power of Uí Máil evaporated overnight following the death in 715 of Cellach Cualann, the last provincial overking of his line. The evidence suggests that the dynasty assumed a defensive posture as it struggled to contend with inter-dynastic competition. The fortunes of Uí Máil faded as several sons of Cellach were slain in battle, probably by Uí Dúnlainge opponents; Áed was slain at Finnabair (seems to be Td. Fennor, Par. Duneany, By. Offaly), Crimthann was slain *immatura aetate* at Belach Licce (perhaps near Tallaght Hill, By. Uppercross, Co Dublin), while Etarscél fell at Inis Breguin or Bairenn, which may mean the River Burren, Co Carlow.[121] Nonetheless, the dynasty was still sufficiently powerful in 770 to strike at the Ciannachta of Brega and to survive a reversal at Áth Cliath.[122] It may not be entirely co-incidental that Uí Garrchon rulers of Dál Messin Corb, which would later be politically isolated along with Uí Máil, were about this time contesting with the Southern Uí Néill at Cell Coca (Kilcock, Co. Kildare) and on the River Rye. In the latter encounter, they were supported by a dynast of Cenél Uchae, apparently from near Fid Cuilinn, Barony of Connell, Co Kildare.[123]

For Uí Garrchon and Uí Máil alike, however, the closing decades of the eighth century appear to mark a watershed. In the former kingship, Cú Congalt's

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[121] A.U. s.a. 718, 725, 726; L. Price, "Placenames of Sth. Co. Dublin", 127, locates Belach Licce; Joan Radner, index to *Fragmentary Annals*, p. 229, locates Bairenn; G. Mac Niocaill, Vikings, p. 121, places *Bellum Finnubrach* near Slane, in the context of a campaign against the Southern Uí Néill by Uí Dúnlainge overking Murchad mac Brain.

[122] A.U. s.a. 769.

[123] A.U. s.a. 778, 780, records the deaths in battle of Fergal mac Dúngaile and Cú Congalt mac Cethernaig; Rawl B. 502, 118b 23, 121bb 51, locates Cenél Uchae adjacent to Cenél Atheman Criathar (there was another branch in Uí Bairrche Tíre); *Corpus*, p. 23, 49; see also Appendix 1.

probable successor Domnall mac Ceiternaig who died *in clericatu* (A.U. s.a. 782), is recorded as *Rex Nepotum Carrcon;* thereafter, rulers of this lineage are called kings of Fortuatha Laigen. The ruler of Uí Máil in the corresponding period was Tuathal, son of the Crimthann who had died young in 726. Tuathal, who headed the Uí Téig lineage of Uí Máil in the latter part of the eighth century and to whose reign the military exploits of 770 would seem to belong, is described at his death in 778 as king of Cualu. His son in turn, Fiachra mac Tuathail (†804), carries the less prestigious title of *rex Nepotum Teig* in his obit.[124]

2.2.2 : The Ascendancy of Uí Dúnlainge Eighth to Ninth Centuries

It is possible that the dominant position eventually achieved by the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty may have been effected at least in part through marriage alliance with Uí Máil. Murchad mac Brain was apparently married to Conchend, a daughter of Cellach Cualann.[125] Such a union, which was probably historical, may be the reality behind the genealogical tradition which claimed female ancestors of the Uí Máil lineage for Fáelán mac Colmáin; the latter's mother Fedelm is linked to Uí Téig Cometa, a segment which was associated, perhaps, with Kilquade, Co Wicklow; her mother in turn, Lassi ingen Fergnae, is traced to the Uí Máil of Domnach Sinchell.[126] What may have been an effort on Cellach's part to achieve a *modus vivendi* with political rivals [above, n.89], could well

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[124] Rawl. B 502 125 a 11; *Corpus*, p. 76; A.U. s.a. 777, 803.

[125] LL 316 a 46: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1356; M. Dobbs, "Women of Uí Dúnlainge", 198; G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p. 121, indicates a possible instance of Murchad m. Brain receiving military support from the sons of Cellach against the Uí Néill.

[126] LL 316b 7-10: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1357; M. Dobbs, "Women of Uí Dúnlainge", 199, n.36; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 81; L. Price, Placenames, VII, p. 386, does not associate Kilquade with Uí Téig, but notes the earliest spelling Killecovat.

have provided Murchad mac Brain with useful connections to assert the cause of Uí Dúnlainge.

Murchad was responsible for the signal defeat of the Uí Néill at the Battle of Allen in 722, in which high king Fergal mac Máele Dúin of the Cenél nEógain fell. This victory, which for a time halted efforts of the Uí Néill to subjugate Leinster, almost certainly marks the 'arrival' of the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty as overkings of the province.[127] The decades that followed the Battle of Allen saw Murchad and his sons achieve effective control in Northern Leinster and establish the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty as a dominant political force within the province. Three of Murchad's sons were ancestors of dynastic segments, which between them monopolised the Leinster overkingship for more than three centuries.

In many respects, however, the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge failed to achieve the level of power that it sought. Byrne identifies serious weaknesses in the "superficially impressive succession of Uí Dúnlainge princes"; he stresses the extent to which they were dominated by Uí Néill overlords, the lesser titles accorded by the annals to certain ninth century Uí Dúnlainge dynasts, and the difficulty in establishing the sequence and chronology of the Uí Dúnlainge overkingship at certain periods.[128]

Considerable emphasis is placed by professors Byrne and Mac Niocaill on the efforts of the Uí Néill high-kings to subjugate Leinster which were renewed from 770 and became more intensive around the turn of the ninth century.[129] The dynasty of Clann Cholmáin, which had found common cause with Uí Dúnlainge a century earlier, was at this stage asserting its own claims to the Uí

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[127] A.U. s.a. 721; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p.xiv; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 144, 146.

[128] John Ryan, 'The Ancestry of St Laurence O'Toole' *Reportorium Novum* 1 No.1 (1955), 69, described the shared Uí Dúnlainge kingship as "... the most perfect example known to history of the working out in practice of the Irish theory of succession"; cf F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, esp p. 160-3, for a more critical view.

[129] G. Mac Niocaill, *Vikings*, p.140ff ; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 157-8.

Néill high kingship and was perhaps concerned about the growing power of the Leinster rulers. It would seem that neither Donnchad Midi's hosting to Leinster in 770, nor the defeat he inflicted on the forces of Uí Dúnlainge in 780 did much to prevent that dynasty from consolidating its position within northern Leinster. However, deep divisions had clearly emerged between the incipient segments of the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty, providing the Uí Néill high kingship with an opportunity to intervene with increasing success. Bran Ardchenn mac Muiredaig, who had succeeded to the overkingship of the Laigin in 785, evidently saw alliance with Clann Cholmáin as the most effective way of promoting his interests. His marriage to Ethne, daughter of Donnchad Midi, and acceptance of military support from his father in law may have prompted his assassination by Fínsnechta mac Cellaig, who had Bran Ardchenn and his wife burned to death at Cell Cúile Dumai, Co Laois.[130] This Fínsnechta, who bore the soubriquet Cetharderc (signifying, perhaps, 'the circumspect'), represented the emerging segment of Uí Dúnchada, descended from Dúnchad son of Murchad. It may have been Fínsnechta's overt ambition, particularly in regard to securing control of the ecclesiastical centre of Kildare, that led the Uí Néill high king Áed Oirnide of Cenél nEógain, in 805, to intervene and partition the kingship of Leinster between representatives of the Uí Fáeláin and Uí Muiredaig segments. Nonetheless, Fínsnechta returned to power and, in spite of Uí Néill pressure, his lineage of Uí Dúnchada would dominate Kildare throughout the ninth century; nine members of Fínsnechta's line (including four siblings) succeeded each other in senior ecclesiastical office at Kildare, while an expansion of the cult of Brigit in north-central Leinster, discernible in hagiographical sources, may also date to this period (below, 4.2.2).

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[130] A.U. s.a. 793, 794; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 158.

The relative weakness of the Uí Dúnlainge lineages in responding to Uí Néill aggression need not obscure the success of the dynasty in asserting its power within the bounds of Leinster and particularly in the north and east of the province. The three main branches of Uí Dúnlainge carved their own patrimonies out of the earlier dynastic overkingdom, which spanned the fertile lands of the Liffey Plain. The lineage of Uí Dúnchada extended its patrimony eastwards into south Co Dublin, driving a wedge between the Liffey and the contracting lordship of Uí Máil.

The pattern of Uí Dúnlainge (particularly Uí Dúnchada) expansion and consequent peripheralisation of the older dynasties has an important bearing on the present study. It seems clear that a modus vivendi was reached with Uí Fáilge, in the interests of retaining control over Kildare. By the same token, the allies of Uí Dúnlainge would seem to have included Uí Bairrche and Uí Enechglaiss. Both of these dynasties receive honourable mention in *Timna Cathaír Máir* which, as already noted (above, 1.1.3), bears the signs of eighth century re-working. Dáire Barrach, eponymous ancestor of Uí Bairrche, receives second mention in the 'testament', after Rus Fáilge. He is given Cathaír's weapons, appropriate no doubt to the dynasty's position as defenders of Uí Dúnlainge's southern marches against Uí Chennselaig. Bressal Enechglaiss, third in the testament, having been sent to the sea-coast, is granted ships.[131] The dynasty of Uí Enechglaiss may, on that account, have been already located on the east coast by the time the *Timna* was recast *ante* 800. More to the point its kings had, in common with the rulers of Uí Bairrche, managed to align their interests with those of Uí Dúnlainge.[132] That these lineages should have attained the higher levels ecclesiastical office at Glendalough during the ninth century may not be entirely coincidental.

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[131] *Timna Cathair Máir*, Appendix A, *Lebor na Cert*, p.152, 154; see also F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.139-40.

[132] Neither feature among the tributary states in *Lebor na Cert*, but both are accorded generous stipends; *Lebor na Cert*, ll. 1561-4, 1585-8, p. 106.

For Uí Máil and Uí Garrchon, this eastward expansion of Uí Dúnlainge led, as already noted, to quite a different outcome. These dynasties seem to have declined rapidly from a position of relative strength c770 or 780 to a state of virtual impotence. While lesser titles are accorded to rulers of both lineages, Uí Garrchon appear to have sunk even further to a tributary status.[133] Marginalisation in the genealogical schema and omission from the (revised) *Timna Cathaír Máir*, both products of the late eighth/ early ninth century, may indicate as observed above, political isolation as much as weakness. It is distinctly possible that the reduction and peripheralisation of Uí Máil and Uí Garrchon from this time onwards arose because of a 'conflict of interests' within the ecclesiastical sphere, involving these dynasties and Uí Dúnlainge.

Certainly, it would appear that the political collapse of Uí Máil and Uí Garrchon facilitated the extension of effective Uí Dúnlainge control over Glendalough. There are indications in the record that the ecclesiastical settlement came under the sway of Uí Dúnlainge around the end of the eighth or beginning of the ninth century. The import of this new dynastic dominance for Glendalough will be discussed later (below, 4.2.2).

2.2.3 : Uí Dúnlainge Under Pressure Ninth to Tenth Century

The effect of Uí Néill suzerainty on the kingship of Uí Dúnlainge is discussed both by Byrne and Ó Corráin. Although the attempt by high king Áed Oirnide in 805 to partition the Leinster kingship did not last, efforts to exploit divisions between the segments of Uí Dúnlainge continued; the Leinster kingship was again divided in 818, and in 835 Uí Dúnchada dynast Bran mac Fáeláin was

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[133] *Lebor na Cert*, ll. 1613, 1639, p. 108, 110, accords tributary status to Uí Garrchon as kings of Fortuatha Laigen; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 52, may be correct in suggesting that this state of affairs dated back to the pre-Norse period, if by this he means the eve of the Viking incursions c. 800.

"ordained" by high king Niall Caille as king of the Laigin.[134] Sustained Uí Néill pressure was clearly a major contributory factor to the gradual weakening of Uí Dúnlainge's hold on the Leinster kingship. The above-noted tendency to accord lesser titles to Uí Dúnlainge rulers in the course of the ninth century is doubtless symptomatic of a dynasty in difficulties.

It is generally agreed that the problems of Uí Dúnlainge were greatly exacerbated from the late ninth century onwards by the settlements of the Norse, the expansion of the Dublin Kingdom, especially from the early tenth century, contributing in no small way to the ultimate demise of the dynasty.[135] To chart the extent of territorial gain by Dublin at the expense of Uí Dúnlainge and its subkingdoms falls outside the scope of the present study, and in any case is difficult to ascertain. In the absence of a historical record for the Dublin colony, any assessment of Norse settlement must depend solely on archaeological and toponymical evidence, some of the problems in relation to which have already been raised (above, 1.3.3). While available data is admittedly scarce, the indications are that Norse colonisation south of Dublin was mostly confined to the coastal area and the Liffey valley as far as Leixlip.[136] The extensive overlordship attained by the Norse king Sitric Gale and his son Gothfrith from 917 onwards, as described by Smyth, would appear to have been of short duration and to have collapsed after the sackings of Dublin in the 940s by the southern Uí

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[134] The kingmaking activities of Áed Oirnide and Niall Caille are discussed by D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 31, and in more detail by F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 161-2.

[135] F. J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.162-3; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 101; see also A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p.43-4.

[136] Pádraig Ó hEailidhe, "Early Christian Grave Slabs in the Dublin Region", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 103 (1973), esp. 52, 59; Elizabeth O'Brien, "Churches of South East Co Dublin Seventh to Twelfth Centuries", in G. Mac Niocaill & P.F. Wallace (ed.), *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney* (Galway: University Press, 1988), p.510, discuss distribution of 'Rathdown Slabs', dated to the ninth-tenth century; Liam Price, "The Grant to Walter de Ridelsford of Brien and the Land of the Sons of Turchill", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 84 (1954),74; Idem, *Placenames*, VII, p.xxii-iii; J. Bradley, "Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement", p. 56, 57 discuss placenames.

Néill king Congalach mac Máele Mithig.[137] From the mid tenth century, it would seem that only the lineage of Uí Dúnchada, whose patrimony lay in the shadow of Dyflinarskiri, was subject to particular pressure. In the course of little more than forty years, no less than five Uí Dúnchada dynasts, Muiredach mac Fáeláin, Domnall Clóen mac Lorcáin, Gillacéile mac Cerbaill, Mathgamain mac Cerbaill and Donnchad mac Domnaill were either slain or captured.[138]

For Glendalough and the petty kingdoms which surrounded it, the Age of the Norsemen seems to have brought no discernible change. Notwithstanding an occasional raid, there is nothing in the annal record to substantiate the claim of Smyth that the kingdoms of Uí Enechglaiss or the Fortuatha were "eclipsed" or "rendered amorphous" by the Viking onslaught.[139] On the contrary, the annal record shows that these dynasties not only survived, but pursued their own political destiny in the centuries which followed. On the basis of this same record, Etchingham recently framed an essentially similar interpretation of east Leinster regional polity in the tenth to eleventh centuries.[140] It might further be added, however, that Glendalough survived intact and retained its properties in the Wicklow and Arklow areas, where Norse settlement is indeed clearly in evidence (see below, 6.3.2).

A more long-term and, perhaps, ultimately more serious threat to the beleaguered Uí Dúnlainge kingship came from the dynasty of Osraige. At the time of the Norse settlements, the king of Osraige was Cerball mac Dúngaile progenitor of Clann Dúngaile. His career became enmeshed in saga, episodes of

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[137] A.P. Smyth, Scandinavian York and Dublin, p. 18-9, 22, 24, 33, 118, 120-1.

[138] A.U. s.a. 966, 979, 994, 996, 999.

[139] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 51, 54-5, 149 (map). There was temporary upheaval in the kingship of Fortuatha Laigen mid 10th C., and dynastic competition for control of Glendalough did intensify; ultimately, however, the annals do not support Smyth's hypothethical 'Ascaill Gall', which included a deep stretch of coastline as far as Kilmichael Point.

[140] Colmán Etchingham, "Evidence of Scandinavian Settlement in Wicklow", in *Wicklow: History and Society*, ed. Ken Hannigan and William Nolan, forthcoming.

which are woven into a chronological framework in the Fragmentary Annals.[141] Nonetheless, sufficient data is ascertainable for Cerball to be seen as an ambitious and resourceful dynast who concluded marriage-alliances with the Uí Néill dynasty of Clann Cholmáin, with the Loígis and Síl Chormaic (a lineage of Uí Chennselaig) rulers of west Leinster and with immigrant Norse chieftains; he also appears to have acted as protector of the incipient kingdom of Dublin.[142]

It would appear that, from the mid-ninth century, Cerball mac Dúngaile actively pursued pretensions in Leinster; in 870, he invaded northern Leinster in force, defeated the Laigin at Dún Bolcc and slew their king Bran mac Muiredaig of the Uí Muiredaig segment of Uí Dúnlainge.[143] From that time at least there are indications that an Osraige-west Leinster alliance was formed, which included the ruling lines of Loígis, the Síl Cormaic lineage of Uí Chennselaig and perhaps, at a later date, Uí Bairrche.[144]

Indeed, Byrne points to the achievement of Diarmait, son of Cerball, in celebrating the Óenach Carmain c. 899, and argues that only the emergence of Uí Fáeláin dynast Cerball mac Muirecáin, who allied himself with the Uí Néill high king Flann Sinna, frustrated Osraige designs at this time.[145] Cerball mac

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[141] Frag. A. = 854, 858-64, 870-1.

[142] M.C. Dobbs (ed.) "Banshenchus", p. 186, 225; Frag.A. § 246, 260, for marriage of Land, sister of Cerball, to Máel Sechnaill mac Máil Ruanaid; Frag.A. § 327, 360, for her subsequent marriage to Gáethíne mac Cinaeda; A.F.M. s.a. 916 for obit of Mór, daughter of Cerball, *Bantigerna Laigen Deasgabair* (=wife of Áed mac Duibgilla?); *The Landnamabok* records marriages of daughters Robarta and Gormlaith to Norse chieftains; Charles Haliday, *The Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, originally publ. 1881, reprint (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), esp. p. 101; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 162-3.

[143] Frag.A. § 387, = 870.

[144] In addition to marriage alliances (above, n. 142), Cennétig mac Gáethíne of Loígis and Áed mac Duibgilla of Uí Chennselaig lend military support to Osraige; Frag.A. § 308, 387, 431. Kings of Uí Bairrche support the Laigin cause at Belach Mugna and in slaying Áed mac Duibgilla Frag.A. § 423, 431= 908, c.912 A.D. A great-granddaughter of Cerball may have been involved in a marriage-alliance with an Uí Bairrche dynast at a later date; "The Ban-Shenchus", 118; the occurrence of such rare personal names as Buadach and Forbasach in the genealogies of both dynasties may suggest that inter-marriage took place at an earlier stage.

[145] A.F.M. s.a.894 have a garbled entry noting Diarmait's celebration of the Óenach Tailten; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 163.

Muirecáin was probably the last Uí Dúnlainge ruler to exercise effective control as over-king of the Laigin, before the already-weakened dynasty slid into terminal decline in the tenth century. This Leinster king's notable success in stalling the Osraige endeavour appears to form the theme of the Middle Irish poem *A Bairgen ataí i nGabud*. The dispute to which the poem refers was set in Magh Dála on the border with Osraige, and the Leinster cause is championed by Cerball mac Muirecáin and ten of his sub-kings. Most of these are identified by notes to the text and several can be traced in the extant genealogies. It may be significant that nine of the kings belong to northern Leinster, to the mórthuath of Uí Dúnlainge. The only exception is one Ciarmac Sláne who, according to a gloss was rí Fer na Cenél.[146] This was a minor lordship on the east coast of Co Wexford; curiously, the only royal fortress outside of northern Leinster (aside from Airgetros) listed in the pro-Uí Dúnlainge *Timna Cathaír Máir*, that of Ard Ladrann, was situated on the same coast.[147] This apparently limited penetration by Uí Dúnlainge into south Leinster would have a certain bearing on the ambitions of Glendalough, as will appear from scrutiny of the relevant sources (below, Ch. 6).

Neither the death of Osraige king Cellach mac Cerbaill with the Munster forces at Belach Mugna in 908, nor a slaughter of Clann Dúngaile with Cellach's grandson in 974 stopped the aggression of this dynasty towards Leinster.[148] From the above account it may be seen that, for most of the tenth century, the kings of Osraige were in a position to exercise a significant influence over

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146 LL 46 a-b; *Bk. Leinster*, I, p. 223-5; T.P. O'Nowlan (ed.), "The Quarrel about the Loaf", *Ériu*, 1 (1904), esp. 130-1; verses 2 and 4 list Cerball mac Muirecáin (Uí Fáeláin, sl. 909), Lorcán mac Dúnchada (Uí Dúnchada, sl. 913), Muirecán (Uí Muiredaig), Domnall mac Murchada (Uí Gabla), Cobtach (Fothairt), Máel Calainn mac Gormáin (Fortuatha, viv. 908), Ugrán mac Cennétig (Loígis), Óengus (Uí Fáilge), Tressach mac Beccáin (Uí Bairrche), and Tadc *a táeb Iarba* (uncertain; perhaps Uí Máil?). Lorcán Liamna (duplicate of Lorcán mac Dúnchada) and Ciarmac Sláne are named in verse 6.

147 E. Hogan, *Onomasticon*, p. 410, locates Fer na Cenél in By. Shelmaliere East; *Lebor na Cert*, Appendix A, p. 166, gives the *Timna* list of fortresses.

148 Frag.A. § 423 = 908; A.F.M. s.a. 972 records the slaughter of an Osraige force under Diarmait mac Donnchada (mic Cellaig) in Iarthar Liphe.

Leinster in political terms. Of more direct relevance to the present study, however, is the fact that the dynasty appears to have realised a considerable degree of ambition in the ecclesiastical sphere. The record indicates the presence of Osraige or west Leinster clerics at ecclesiastical settlements extending from Lethglenn and Glenn Uissen by way of Dísert Diarmata to Glendalough. In addition, the establishment of west Leinster saints cults (including those of the Loígis-based Fintan and Barrow Valley-based Moling) in the north-east, especially in the hinterland of the Norse kingdom of Dublin, may reflect Clann Dúngaile interests (see below, Ch. 4).

It is clear, therefore, that a range of political forces, including the Southern Uí Néill and more particularly the Dublin Norse, contributed to the ultimate demise of the Uí Dúnlainge overlordship in northern Leinster. From the perspective of Glendalough and its affiliated foundations, however, the most significant factor was not Norse but Osraige ambition and, in the longer term, the fact that Uí Dúnlainge (especially Uí Dúnchada) collapse allowed other local political interests within central Leinster to come to the surface. This, in turn, had important consequences for ecclesiastical affairs (below, Ch. 4).

Chapter 3: The Political Background c.900 to c.1240

3.1 : The Kingship of Uí Muiredaig to 1042

3.1.1 : Emergence and Struggle for Survival to mid 10th C.

Sustained pressure from the Norse kingdom of Dublin and from Osraige, which eventually caused the Uí Dúnlainge overkingship to break down, would seem not to have affected all three lineages of that dynasty to quite the same degree. As the tenth century wore on and the power of Dublin was curbed by the Uí Néill high kings, Uí Dúnchada remained within the Norse kings' reduced sphere of influence and continued to be dominated by them (above, 2.2.3). The annal record makes it clear, however, that the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, located in south Co. Kildare, was able to assert its claims to the overkingship of Leinster with increasing confidence from the mid tenth century onwards. It was in the context of this political expansion that Uí Muiredaig commenced to extend its influence over several ecclesiastical settlements in mid-Leinster, culminating in a clear instance of dynastic intrusion into the abbacy of Glendalough during a period of ascendancy in the early eleventh century (see below, 5.1.1).

This marked improvement in the fortunes of Uí Muiredaig from the mid tenth century was due to a rather fortuitous combination of circumstances. Prior to that time, the dynasty's achievement was unremarkable; political successes attained were short-lived, to be followed in most cases by periods of decline. Early representatives of the lineage to be listed as kings of Leinster were merely appointees of the Uí Néill overlords. By the second quarter of the ninth century, however, Uí Muiredaig had established its own patrimonial kingdom (a territory

directly subject to rulers of that lineage) within the district of Iarthar Life; it would appear that the first patrimonial king was one Artúr mac Muiredaig.[1]

The Uí Muiredaig kingdom, broadly corresponding to the medieval ecclesiastical deanery of Omurthy, included what later became the baronies of Kilkea-Moone, Narragh-Reban and part of Connell. As Smyth points out, there is a certain difficulty in defining boundaries in such a flat, featureless district, but it seems reasonable to suggest that Uí Muiredaig lands extended as far north as the Curragh. The focal point of the Uí Muiredaig patrimony was the hillfort of Maistiu (Mullaghmast), while their lands also included the site of Forrach Pátraicc.[2] Further to the south lay the territory of Dál Cormaic, centred on the hillfort of Roíriu, or Mullaghreelion, which would in due course be taken over by Uí Muiredaig. Expansion into the Dál Cormaic lands south of the River Greese took place only gradually. The tenth century *Vita Tripartita* seems to reflect, as Herbert and Ó Riain have noted, an Uí Muiredaig advance in the vicinity of Maen Colum Cille, presumably still within living memory at that time.[3] (**Fig. 3A**).

It is possible that some of the early aggrandisement of Uí Muiredaig was carried out with the assistance of Uí Máil; certainly, later expansion in mid-Leinster was achieved at the expense of the older dynasty. As noted earlier, the Banshenchus records that Conchend († 738 A.U.), daughter of Cellach Cualann and wife of the Uí Dúnlainge king Murchad mac Brain, was the mother of the eponymous Muiredach.[4] The occurrence of the rare personal name Artúr, the

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[1] A.F.M. s.a. 845 (=847), where Artúr is incorrectly titled *Tigerna Airtir Life;* cf A.F.M. s.a. 881, where his son Gairbeit mac Artúir († 883) is recorded as *Tánaisi Iarthair Liphi*. The probable significance of this rare personal name Artúr is discussed below, n. 5.

[2] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster,* p. 42.

[3] *Vita Tripartita* in Egerton 93, ll.2195-2201; *Bethu Pátraic*, ed. Mulchrone, p.113-114, Patrick, ambushed by the Laígis maic Find near Maen Colum Cille, prophesies that they will be ruled thereafter by a *flaith echtrann*; see *Betha Adamnáin*, introduction, p. 17-18. Ultimately, most of the ecclesiastical settlements dominated by Uí Muiredaig would be transferred to Glendalough (below, 4.2.2 and 6.2.5).

[4] Lec 391a, D.2.1 (R.I.A.), 96v; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 185, 220; Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, "The Prose Banshenchus", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, U.C.G., 1980, § 372, p. 262, 380.

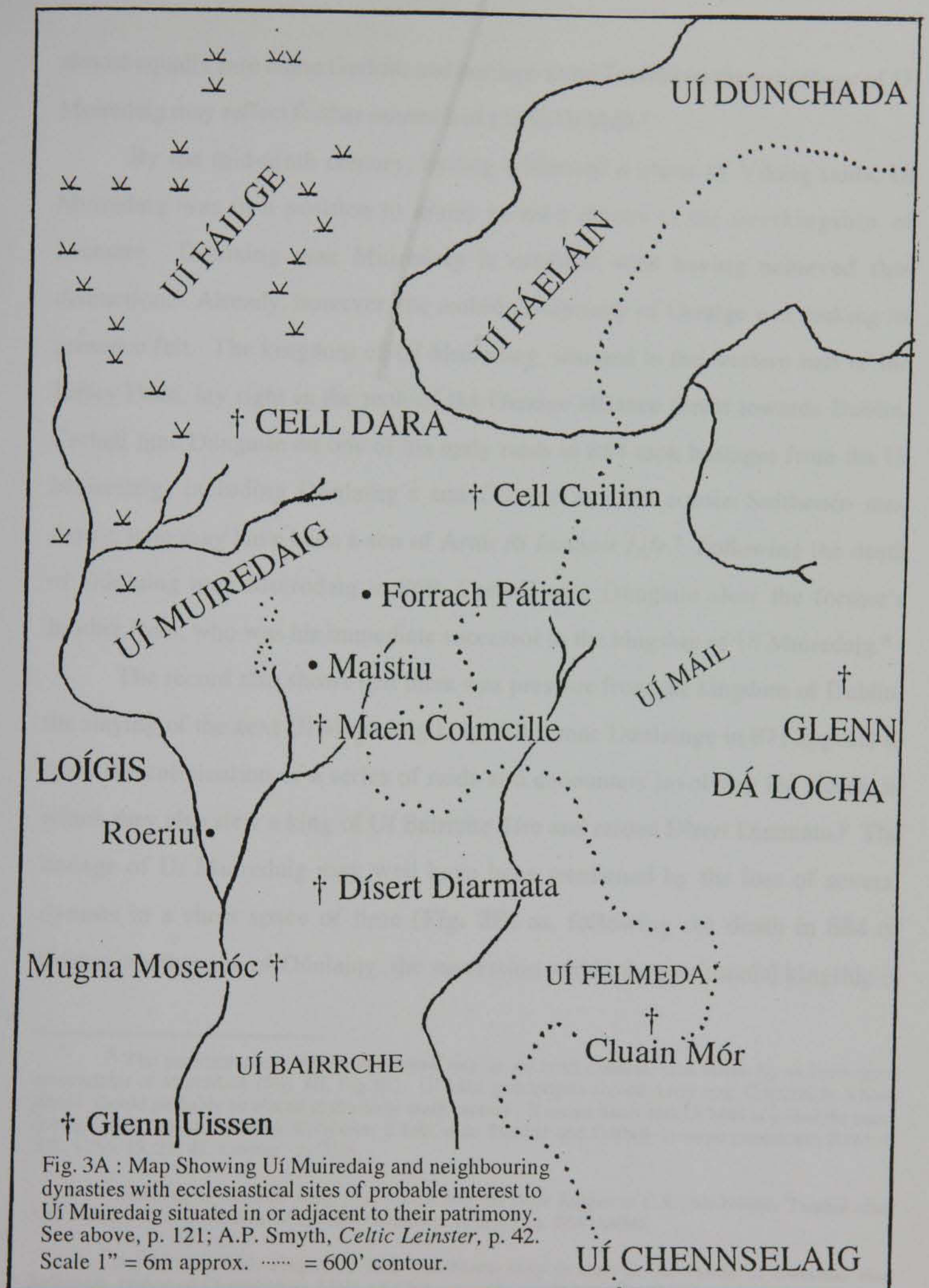


Fig. 3A : Map Showing Uí Muiredaig and neighbouring dynasties with ecclesiastical sites of probable interest to Uí Muiredaig situated in or adjacent to their patrimony. See above, p. 121; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 42. Scale 1" = 6m approx. ····· = 600' contour.

almost equally rare name Garbíth and perhaps even Tuathal in the genealogy of Uí Muiredaig may reflect further marital links with Uí Máil.[5]

By the mid-ninth century, having withstood a phase of Viking raids, Uí Muiredaig was in a position to assert its own claims to the overkingship of Leinster. Dúnlaing mac Muiredaig is credited with having achieved that distinction.[6] Already, however, the ambitious dynasty of Osraige was making its presence felt. The kingdom of Uí Muiredaig, situated in the western half of the Liffey Plain, lay right in the path of the Osraige-alliance thrust towards Dublin. Cerball mac Dúngaile on one of his early raids in 858 took hostages from the Uí Muiredaig, including Dúnlaing's son Coirpre and his cousin Suithenén mac Artúir, who may have been a son of Artúr *Rí Iarthair Life*.[7] Following the death of Dúnlaing mac Muiredaig in 869, Cerball mac Dúngaile slew the former's brother Bran, who was his immediate successor in the kingship of Uí Muiredaig.[8]

The record also shows that there was pressure from the kingdom of Dublin; the slaying of the next Uí Muiredaig king, Ailill mac Dúnlainge in 871 appears to mark the culmination of a series of raids and encounters involving the Norse, in which they also slew a king of Uí Bairrche Tíre and raided Dísert Diarmata.[9] The lineage of Uí Muiredaig may well have been weakened by the loss of several dynasts in a short space of time (**Fig. 3B**) as, following the death in 884 of Cairbre another son of Dúnlaing, the succession within the patrimonial kingship is

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[5] The personal name Artúr, extremely rare in an Irish context, was borne by at least three descendants of Muiredach (Fig. 3B, Fig.3C). Uí Máil genealogies record Artúr mac Cosccraich, whose *floruit* should probably be placed in the early ninth century. It seems likely that Uí Máil acquired the name through their British connections (above, 2.1.4); note Tuathal and Garbíth in same genealogy; Rawl. B 502, 125 a 15, 21, 41, *Corpus*, p. 76-8.

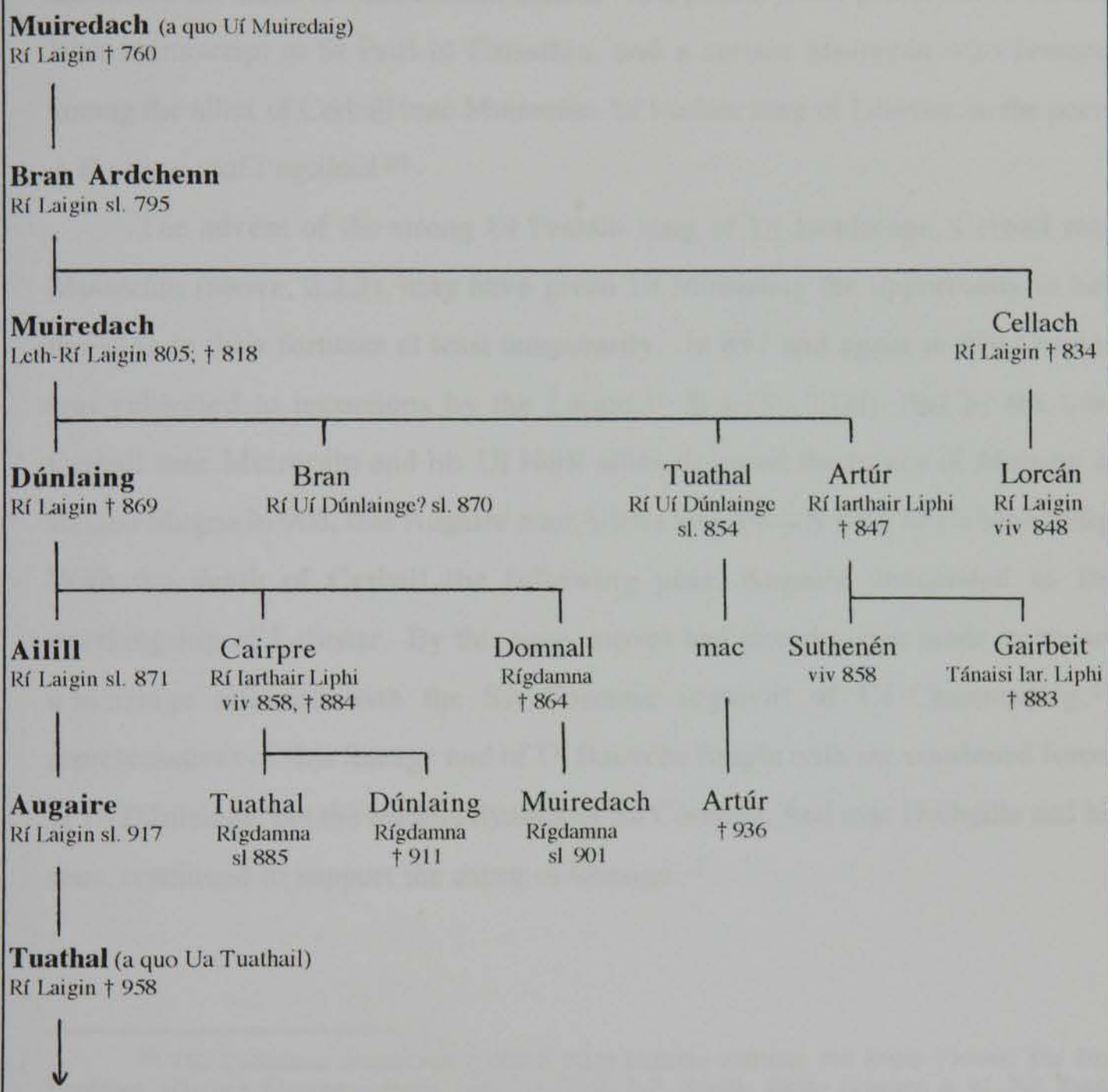
[6] Dúnlaing is titled *Rí Laigen* in A.I. at 869, *Rí debu Laigen* in C.S.; his brother Tuathal alias Mac Máele Brígte is titled *Rex Nepotum Dúnlaingi* in A.U. s.a. 853 (=854).

[7] A.F.M. s.a. 856; Frag.A. § 262. Suthenén may in turn be the father of Dúnchad mac Suthenéin, bishop of Clonmacnois † 941 (A.Clon s.a. 935); see below, Ch. 4.

[8] A.F.M. s.a. 868 (=870).

[9] A.F.M. s.a. 866 (=868), 867 (=869), 869 (=871); See also Frag.A. § 371, 395.

Fig. 3B: Early Generations of Uí Muiredaig



Pedigree of Ua Tuathail from the Pre-Norman genealogies in bold type; Rawlinson B 502, 117 c; LL 337 d; *Corpus Genealogiarum*, p. 12-13; *Book of Leinster*, VI, p. 1480; Additional information from the annals.

somewhat uncertain. Kings of Uí Muiredaig in the late ninth to early tenth century would seem to have included an otherwise unknown Áed mac Diarmata, addressed as 'Lord of Maistiu and Roeríu' in a praise-poem preserved in an Old Irish manuscript at St Paul in Carinthia, and a certain Muirecán who features among the allies of Cerball mac Muirecáin, Uí Fáeláin king of Leinster, in the poem *A Bairgen ataí i ngábud.*[10]

The advent of the strong Uí Fáeláin king of Uí Dúnlainge, Cerball mac Muirecáin (above, 2.2.3), may have given Uí Muiredaig the opportunity to halt the slide in their fortunes at least temporarily. In 897 and again in 906 Osraige was subjected to incursions by the Laigin.[11] It seems likely that by the time Cerball mac Muirecáin and his Uí Néill allies defeated the forces of Munster at Belach Mugna in 908, that Augaire mac Ailella was already king of Uí Muiredaig. With the death of Cerball the following year, Augaire succeeded to the overkingship of Leinster. By this time, moves had already been made to secure a marriage alliance with the Síl Cormaic segment of Uí Chennselaig;[12] representatives of this lineage and of Uí Bairrche fought with the combined forces of Uí Dúnlainge, but the leading dynasts of Síl Cormaic, Áed mac Duibgilla and his sons, continued to support the cause of Osraige.[13]

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[10] The Carinthian manuscript contains other Leinster material; see Robin Flower, *The Irish Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 27-8; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 91; F.J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xx; LL 46 a; *Bk Leinster*, I, p. 223; T.P. O'Nowlan (ed.), "Quarrel about the Loaf", 128.

[11] A.F.M. s.a. 895, records 'crech la Laignib'; it seems reasonable, however, that Uí Muiredaig were involved; A.F.M. s.a. 901 records the fatal wounding 'i ttírib Muman' of Muiredach mac Domnaill *Rigdamna Laigen*, who may be a grandson of Dúnlaing (Fig. 3B).

[12] A.F.M. s.a. 906 (=911), Frag. Annals §§ 436, 441, record Dúnlang mac Coirpre *rígdamna Laigen*, (apparently a cousin of Augaire) and Dianim ingen Duibgilla bancéile Dúnlaing; Joan Radner, (ed). *Fragmentary Annals*, appendix table, p. 208, and index p.217, relates the two as husband and wife.

[13] Frag.A. § 423 includes Indeirge mac Duibgilla and a king of Uí Bairrche among the allies of Uí Dúnlainge; compare A.F.M. s.a. 906 (=911); Frag.A. §§ 431, 443, where Áed mac Duibgilla and later an un-named son are apparently party to internal strife in Osraige. See further A.F.M. s.a 935 (=937), 966 (=968), where Bruatar mac Duibgilla is slain by Uí Muiredaig and his son in turn, Rónán, slain in company with Osraige and Loígis dynasts.

In 917, perhaps on the initiative of the Uí Néill high king Niall Glúndub who was then engaged in a major effort against the Norse, Augaire mac Ailella launched an attack against Sitric of Dublin.[14] The battle of Cenn Fuait (Td. Confey, Par. Leixlip) proved to be a disaster for the Laigin in which Augaire and other notables were slain. A significant point concerning the battle, however, is the combination of dynasties that fought in alliance with Augaire mac Ailella. Along with Uí Fáeláin and Uí Enechglaiss kings, there is mention of Augrán mac Cennétig of Loígis, whose father had been a staunch supporter of Osraige interests.[15] In addition, Maelmoedóc mac Diarmata titled *suí et episcopus Laigen*, abbot of Glenn Uissen, fell in the battle. The latter, whose family represented a minor line of Dál Cormaic Loisc, ruled an ecclesiastical settlement at which an Uí Bairrche interest later became established.[16] Through this Uí Bairrche connection, an important link would in time be formed between Glenn Uissen and Glendalough (see below, esp. 5.2.1).

During the period of Norse ascendancy which followed the Battle of Cenn Fuait, it seems clear that the kingdom of Uí Muiredaig fell under the suzerainty of Dublin. At a time when Norse raids ranged across west Leinster and into Uí Chennselaig, it is scarcely surprising that the Uí Muiredaig patrimony should have been subject to attack. In 922, the Norsemen plundered En Inis in the adjacent Fotharta Tíre; in the years that followed, there was an attack on Cluain an Dobair (probably Cloney, By. Narragh-Reban West) and two raids on Cell Cuilinn, one of which may be commemorated by a panel on a cross fragment.[17] Both of these

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[14] D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 102, attributes the initiative in this attack to the Uí Néill high king Niall Glúndub.

[15] A.U. s.a. 916, A.F.M. s.a.915.

[16] Rawl. B 502, 119 b 10, 121 ac 49; *Corpus*, p. 30, 47; A.F.M., s.a 1024; this point was raised by Edel Bhreathnach, in "Killeshin: A Monastery Surveyed", unpubl. paper presented to Fourth Irish Conference of Medievalists, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, June 1990. (below, 3.1.3).

[17] A.F.M. s.a.a. 920 (=922), 936 (=938), 938 (=940), 944 (=946); L. Price, index to *Calendar Archbishop Alen's Record*, p. 327; see A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 27; Idem, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, p. 24, 89ff, 147-9;

ecclesiastical settlements lay within the *paruchia* of Glendalough (below, 6.2.5). It is clear from the record that there was more involved here than random pillage; there is an annal reference to Norse overlordship extending as far as Áth Truisten (which seems to be in the territory of Uí Muiredaig), while there is archaeological evidence of Scandinavian rural settlement near Dísert Diarmata.[18]

No doubt this disturbance underlies the uncertain succession to the Uí Muiredaig kingship at this time. A solitary obit for 936 commemorates a certain Artúr ua Tuathail, perhaps a grandson of Tuathal mac Muiredaig (alias 'Mac Máele Brígte'), titled *Rex Nepotum Dúnlainge*, whose brother and predecessor in the kingship had been named Artúr (above, Fig. 3B). The Artúr in question may have held the kingship of Uí Muiredaig, but carries no such title in his obit.[19] Although the record for this period is sparse, it is possible that these years also witnessed a reassertion of Osraige ambition under Diarmait mac Cerbaill († 927) and his nephews who succeeded him. The considerably fuller mid-tenth century record includes obits of several Osraige (or 'West Leinster') clerics at ecclesiastical centres in northern Leinster, some of which fell within the Glendalough sphere of influence (below, Ch. 6). By this time, however, Uí Muiredaig fortunes had revived somewhat, with the advent of Tuathal mac Augaire, progenitor of the family of Ua Tuathail.

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[18] A.F.M. s.a.936 (=938) mention Áth na Truisten, located near Athy; E. Hogan, *Onomasticon;* J.T. Lang, "The Castledermot Hogback", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 101 (1971), 154-8; J. Bradley, "Scandinavian Settlement", esp. p. 58.

[19] A.F.M. s.a. 934, Artuir ua Tuathail dég.

3.1.2 : The Assertion of Uí Muiredaig to 1014

Tuathal mac Augaire, who appears in the record from 937, seems to have met with considerable success in restoring the primacy achieved by his father more than two decades earlier. In the course of a reign that spanned twenty years, he established Uí Muiredaig as realistic claimants to the overkingship of Leinster and prepared the ground for the extension of dynastic control over ecclesiastical centres including Glendalough. Tuathal dealt effectively with political opponents, whether from other dynasties or from within the Uí Dúnlainge camp.[20] Ironically, it was the defeat and death of the Uí Fáeláin pretender to the kingship of Leinster Bran mac Máilmórda, at the hands of Donnchad mac Cellaig king of Osraige that opened the way for Tuathal mac Augaire to assert his claim to the provincial kingship.[21] By 952, Tuathal was in a position to take the initiative against Donnchad mac Cellaig and his allies. He first struck at the territories of Loígis and Uí Faircelláin. Then, in association with Amlaíb Cuarán king of Dublin, he attacked Inis Ulad (Church Mt., Par. Donard, By. Talbotstown Lwr.) and Inis Doimle, which may have been associated with Uí Chennselaig interests; a dual abbot is recorded for Inis Doimle and Tech Munnu.[22] Certainly, Tuathal attacked and defeated the king of Uí Chennselaig in 957, the year before he died.[23]

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[20] A.F.M., s.a. 935, 937, Tuathal slew the Síl Cormaic king of Uí Chennselaig Bruatar mac Duibgilla, and subsequently wounded Uí Fáeláin rival Murchad mac Find.

[21] A.U., s.a. 946, A.F.M., s.a. 945. Tuathal's cause was doubtless assisted by the sackings of Dublin carried out by high king Cóngalach mac Máil Mithig.

[22] A.F.M. s.a.a. 950 (=952), 951 (=953); Inis Doimle was identified by O'Donovan (A.F.M., I, p. 380) with Inis Mocholmoc (Td. and Par. Inch, By. Gorey) which, along with Inis Ulad was later included among the properties of Glendalough (below, 6.2.5); A.F.M. s.a. 953 (=955) records dual abbot Dúnlaing ua Dunaccáin.

[23] A.F.M. s.a. 955 (=957).

The sons of Tuathal, Augaire and Dúnlaing, maintained their father's efforts to forestall Osraige ambition. In 974 Uí Muiredaig repulsed a major Osraige invasion of their patrimony, in which Diarmait son of Donnchad mac Cellaig was among those slain.[24] The substantial loss incurred by the dynasty of Osraige in this battle appears to have resulted in some reduction of its power and an abandonment, at least temporarily, of its pretensions in Leinster. The long-standing alliance with the West Leinster rulers also seems to have been broken. From this time onwards, the dynasties of Síl Cormaic, Uí Bairrche and some minor lines of the Loígis increasingly feature in the Uí Muiredaig camp; the allies of Augaire mac Tuathail included Síl Cormaic king of Uí Chennselaig Muiredach mac Riain, and a dynast named Congalach mac Flaind who probably belonged to the Loígis.[25] It is probably no coincidence that this period corresponds with a marked contraction of the above-mentioned 'Barrow Valley' stratum in the Annals of the Four Masters. There are certain indications that the source of these entries was in origin an Osraige chronicle and so reflects the expansion, and ultimately the contraction, of that dynasty's ambitions in the province of Leinster.[26]

Despite the apparent success achieved by Augaire macTuathail against the dynasty of Osraige, his achievement in terms of establishing an effective kingship of Leinster was limited. His failure to deal with Dublin, indeed, led to his downfall. In 976 Augaire mac Tuathail was captured by the Norse of Dublin. Two years later, the Norse defeated the combined forces of the Northern Laigin under Augaire at Bithlann (Td. Belan, Par. Moone, Co. Kildare), the location

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[24] A.U. (s.a. 973) gives a terse notice of this battle and mentions no location. The more elaborate entry in A.F.M. (s.a. 972) locates the engagement in Iarthar Liphi, which suggests that the Osraigi were the aggressors.

[25] A.U., s.a. 977 (=978), A.F.M., C.S., s.a. 976, A.I., s.a. 960, A.Clon., s.a. 971; these dynasts fought at the Battle of Bithlann (see below); Congalach is not traceable in the Loígis genealogies, but is titled Rí Léighe & Rechet.

[26] A.J. Mc Govern [A. S. Mac Shamhráin], "The Leinster Annals", esp. p. 57-8.

suggesting that Amlaíb Cuarán of Dublin was the aggressor. The defeat was a considerable set-back for the Uí Muiredaig dynasty, with Augaire himself among the slain.

Although clearly subject to pressure from Dublin, there are signs (as noted above) of a growing confidence on the part of Uí Muiredaig in ecclesiastical as well as in secular politics throughout this period. It is difficult to ascertain precisely when Uí Muiredaig interests commenced to penetrate the ecclesiastical settlements of the Liffey Plain. There is a distinct possibility that the lineage dominated Maen Colum Cille and perhaps also Dísert Diarmata by the tenth century, even if the Loígis Maic Find continued to hold the abbacy at the former site.[27] Aside from the record of Uí Muiredaig activity in the vicinity it is clear that, by the eleventh century at the latest, both of the above-mentioned sites were brought under the control of Glendalough, which had itself become subject to Uí Muiredaig by that time (see below, 3.1.3, 5.1.1 and 6.3.2). The threat posed by this new departure to the interests of the Uí Dúnchada lineage, struggling to maintain its position within northern Leinster, may help to explain the conflict that now developed between these two branches of Uí Dúnlainge. In the space of a few years, a dynast who perhaps represented Uí Muiredaig interests at Glendalough was blinded by the nominal king of Leinster Domnall Clóen mac Lorcáin, Termann Cóemgin was raided by his nephews, and Domnall mac Tuathail (apparently a brother of Augaire and Dúnlaing) was captured.[28]

Infighting of this nature between the lineages of Uí Dúnlainge doubtless presented an ideal opportunity to the Dál Cais king of Munster, Brian Bóruma, then actively engaged in extending his authority beyond the boundaries of his own province. Having earlier asserted his authority over Osraige, Brian took the

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[27] A.U., 1004, A.F.M. s.a. 1014 (=1015) give the obits of Áed and Colum Ua Flannacáin, the only two abbots recorded for Maen; note Clann Flannacáin i mBairrchiu, see Rawl. B. 502, 127a 30, *Corpus*, p. 91.

[28] A.F.M., s.a. 982, 983, 989; A.U., s.a 982; C.S., [982]; A. Clon., s.a.977, 978; these episodes are discussed in detail below, 5.1.1.

hostages of Leinster in 996 and shattered a Norse-Uí Dúnlainge alliance at Glenn Máma three years later.[29] In 1003, having deposed Donnchad mac Domnaill the Uí Dúnchada pretender to the kingship of Leinster, Brian Bóruma chose as his own nominee the Uí Fáeláin dynast Máelmórda mac Murchada. In the course of the previous decade, Máelmórda had clearly emerged as the strongest figure within Uí Dúnlainge, intervening successfully in the affairs of the Dublin Norse and of his Uí Dúnchada rivals.[30] It may be presumed that Dúnlaing mac Tuathail had little alternative but to accept this arrangement. Nonetheless, when a souring of relationships between Brian Bóruma and Máelmórda mac Murchada led the latter to revolt ten years later, the forces of Uí Muiredaig apparently supported the latter as king of Leinster. The casualties on the Leinster side at the Battle of Clontarf included, according to A.F.M., a certain Tuathal mac Augaire styled *Rígdamna Laigen*, along with a ruler of Uí Garrchon, the petty kingdom within which Glendalough was situated.[31] The Uí Muiredaig dynast referred to may in fact have been a son of Augaire mac Tuathail, who had been slain at Bithlann in 978. He would, in that event, have been a nephew of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail, king of Uí Muiredaig at the time of the Battle of Clontarf.[32]

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[29] Brian Bóruma's progress may be charted in A.U. (s.aa. 983, 995, 998); see also D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 121-123.

[30] A.F.M. s.a. 994, 995, 998, records Máelmórda's intervention in the affairs of the Dublin Norse and of his Uí Dúnchada rivals; he killed Ragnall of Dublin thus facilitating Sitric son of Amlaíb Cuarán in coming to power; then he slew Mathgamain mac Cerbaill, nephew of Domnall Clóen, and (in collusion with Sitric) captured the latter's son Donnchad.

[31] A.F.M. s.a. 1013.

[32] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p.54-6, attributes the role of these kings at Clontarf to Dublin over-lordship; the Norse of Dublin, however, held aloof from the conflict. It seems more reasonable that they were drawn into the revolt by Máelmórda in his capacity as king of Leinster.

3 .1 .3 : Uí Muiredaig Ascendancy 1014 - c.1042

The affairs of Uí Muiredaig in the aftermath of Clontarf have received remarkably little attention. From the record, however, it appears that its rulers were anxious to grasp every available opportunity for political advancement. Within northern Leinster, both of the rival Uí Dúnlainge lineages had been seriously depleted. In the closing years of the tenth century, several leading dynasts of Uí Dúnchada had been slain by the Norse of Dublin; now, the loss of Uí Fáeláin king Máelmórda at Clontarf was followed within a short time by the overthrow of two of his sons.[33] In the south of Leinster, the dynasty of Uí Chennselaig had been in disorder since the slaying of Donnchad mac Diarmata (alias Máel na mbó) in an internal conflict.[34] Granted, there had been a restoration of Uí Néill suzerainty, but even that had worked somewhat to the advantage of Uí Muiredaig. When it became clear that the new Dál Cais king, Donnchad mac Briain, was unable to maintain the extensive overlordship established by his father Brian Bóruma, the Uí Néill high king Máelsechnaill mac Domnaill moved to reassert his authority over Leinster. Early in 1015, Máelsechnaill took the hostages of the Laigin, appointed Uí Muiredaig dynast Donncuan mac Dúnlaing (Ua Tuathail) as provincial king and proceeded to reduce Osraige.[35] Subsequently, Máelsechnaill turned his attentions elsewhere.

In the years that followed, Uí Muiredaig defeated the Norse of Dublin, asserted its authority in Uí Chennselaig, extended its patrimonial kingship eastwards across the territory of Uí Máil and made valiant efforts to secure its claim to the overkingship of Leinster, in the face of strong opposition from

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[33] A.F.M., s.a.1017; A.I., 1018; C.S.; record the blinding of Bran mac Máilmórda by Sitric and the slaying *per dolum* of his brother Cerball. The reduction of Uí Dúnchada is discussed above 2.2.3.

[34] A.U., A.F.M., s.a.1005.

[35] A.U., 1015, C.S.; A.F.M., s.a. 1014, expressly mentions conferring of kingship on Donncuan mac Dúnlainge Uí Tuathail.

Osraige. It appears, indeed, that this period of Uí Muiredaig assertion, which lasted for some three decades, provides the political context for a direct intrusion on the part of this lineage at Glendalough (below, 5.5.1).

Throughout this time, however, the ruling dynasty of Osraige remained a constant thorn in the side of Uí Muiredaig; Donnchad mac Gillapátraicc king of Osraige, who coveted the overkingship of Leinster, pursued a long vendetta against the sons of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail (**Fig. 3C**). In 1016, he slew Donncuan mac Dúnlainge at Lethglenn, and perhaps had some part in the killing of the latter's brother Gilla Cóemgin three years later.[36] Ultimately, Donnchad and his allies were responsible for the deaths of no less than six Uí Muiredaig dynasts. His son Gillapátraicc helped to deliver the final blow to Uí Dúnlainge aspirations regarding provincial overkingship.

Meanwhile, having succeeded his brother Donncuan in the kingship of Uí Muiredaig, Augaire mac Dúnlainge strove to secure the position of his dynasty within northern Leinster. His efforts were no doubt facilitated by the support of the Síl Cormaic lineage of Uí Chennselaig and, even more significantly, by that of Uí Bairrche. Tadc Ua Riain, the Síl Cormaic king of Uí Dróna, had been in the company of Donncuan when both were slain by Donnchad mac Gillapátraicc. Another Síl Cormaic dynast, Dubdáboirenn Ua Riain, was slain the following year shortly after the killing of a Loígis dynast, which could suggest a reprisal.[37] While Síl Mescill, the principal lineage of Loígis, remained loyal to the kings of Osraige, the neighbouring dynasty of Uí Bairrche increasingly gravitated towards the Uí Muiredaig camp and were duly targetted by the Osraige rulers and their allies.

For his part, Augaire mac Dúnlainge proceeded to assert his authority over the Norse kingdom of Dublin. In 1021, he severely defeated Sitric son of Amlaib

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[36] A.U., A.F.M., s.a. 1015, 1018; all other sources including A.I., A.L.C., C.S. and A.Tig. repeat the A.U. contention that Gilla Cóemgin was slain *a suis;* A.F.M. which, as noted earlier, is relaying data from a lost mid-Leinster source, adds that his killers were the Loígis.

[37] A.F.M., s.a. 1016 (=1017); the previous entry records the slaying of Gáethín Ua Morda, a Síl Mescill dynast of Loígis.

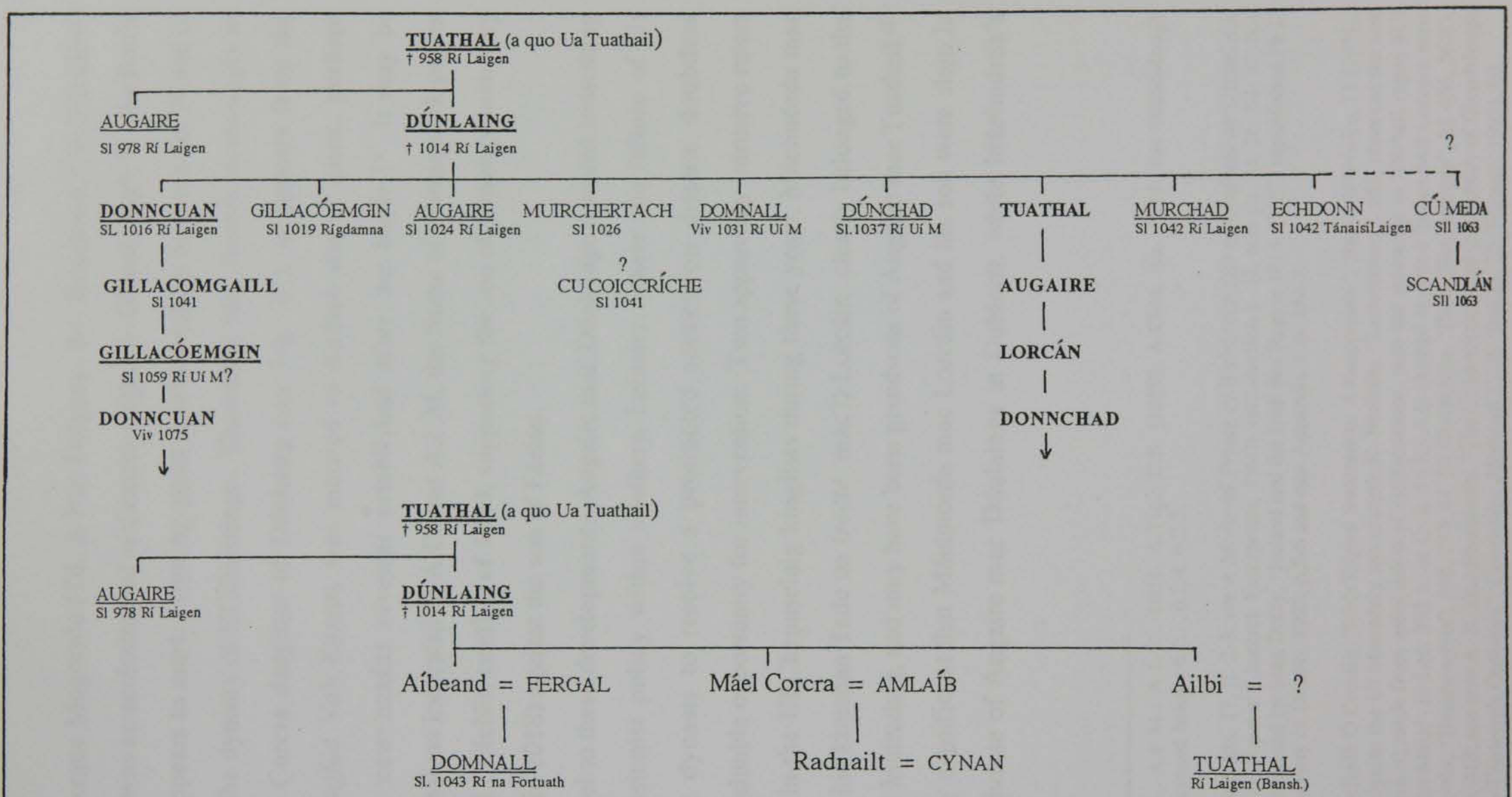


Fig. 3C : DESCENDANTS OF DÚNLAING m TUATHAIL IN THE KINGSHIP OF Uí MUIREDAIG to c.1075
NOTE: Source Rawl. B. 502 117c (highlighted), supplemented by the Annals. Male names in block letters with kings underlined.
Female names in lower case. Marriage conections from Banshenchus.

Cuarán at Dergne Mogorróc (Td. & Par. Delgany, By. Rathdown, Co. Wicklow) where there was an ecclesiastical settlement subject to Glendalough.[38] The Battle of Dergne appears to mark a turning-point in relationships between the Norse of Dublin and the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge. Thereafter, they feature increasingly as allies: Máel Corcra daughter of Dúnlaing (see Fig. 3C), as appears from the *Historia Gruffud Vab Kenan*, was married to Amlaib son of Sitric, perhaps reflecting a new *modus vivendi* established after the battle.[39] It may be significant that, as indicated in A.U. and A.F.M, the Norse of Dublin took part in the internal Uí Fáeláin conflict of 1040, supporting the son of Bróen (whom they had blinded in 1018) against the son of Fáelán.

Parallel to these developments, Augaire mac Dúnlainge pursued something of an expansionist policy within southern Leinster, where the failure of Uí Chennselaig dynasts to resolve a protracted succession dispute doubtless provided a valuable opportunity for intervention. Two apparently intrusive rulers who feature in the Uí Chennselaig kinglists during these years, Máelmórda mac Lorcáin and his kinsman Tadc ua (*recté* mac?) Lorcáin clearly belonged to the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, and may have been grandsons of Augaire mac Tuathail.[40] It is certainly significant that Máelmórda mac Lorcáin and his son were slain in 1024 in the house of Augaire mac Dúnlainge at Dubloch, while Máelmórda's

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[38] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C., 1021; A.Tig.; C.S. [1019]; A.Clon. s.a. 1014; the Glendalough connection is discussed below, 6.2.1, 6.2.4, 6.2.5.

[39] Peniarth Ms. 17, ff. 2-3; see *A Medieval Prince of Wales: the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, ed. D. Simon Evans (Lampeter: Llanerch Enterprises, 1990), introduction p. 12, text pp. 24, 26, 54, 57; this connection is highlighted by Seán Duffy, "Ireland and the Irish Sea Region 1014-1318", unpublished Ph D dissertation, University of Dublin, 1993, p.5-6 and esp. Appendix 1, p. 232-3.

[40] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Regnal Succession: A Reappraisal", *Studia Hibernica*, 11 (1971), 17-8, did not recognise the Uí Muiredaig association; K. Nicholls, "Leinstermen", 553, observed the link but did not explain it; aside from association of circumstance, note the reference to 'Dirbail ingen hUí Lorcáin d'Ib Muireadaig' in Lec. 392 b; in D .2 .1 (R.I.A.), Derbail is called 'ingen hUí Lorcáin meic Ugaire'; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 192, 234; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", §§ 456, 565D, pp. 280, 304, 396, 418; see now A. S. Mac Shamhráin, "The Uí Muiredaig and the Abbacy of Glendalough in the Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 25 (Summer 1993), 60.

successor Tadc died six years later at Glendalough, where Uí Muiredaig interests were already well represented.[41]

It appears likely that the former patrimony of Uí Máil, situated on the western perimeter of the Wicklow Mountains, was subsumed by Uí Muiredaig as early as the tenth century.[42] Uí Muiredaig would then seem to have formed an alliance with the Uí Garrchon lineage of Dál Messin Corb which, having been displaced from richer lands further north (above, 2.1.1, 2.2.2), had carved out a petty kingdom that extended from Wicklow to Glendalough. Excluded from its patrimonial kingship throughout the second half of the tenth century, Uí Garrchon made a return to power *ante* 1014 in the person of Domnall mac Fergaile, who was slain in the Battle of Clontarf.[43] This political re-assertion on the part of Uí Garrchon curiously coincides with the expansion of the Uí Muiredaig overlordship under Dúnlaing mac Tuathail and his sons. The explanation may lie in the record of a marriage between Aibeand, daughter of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail and an Uí Garrchon dynast, perhaps Fergal son of Domnall mac Fergaile.[44] A subsequent king of Fortuatha Laigen, Domnall Ua Fergaile, who actively supported the Uí Muiredaig cause prior to his being slain in 1043, may have been a son of this marriage (see below).

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[41] A.U., A.I., A.F.M., A.L.C., 1024; A.Tig.; C.S.[1022]; Augaire and Máelmórda were slain by Donnsléibe mac Máilmórda king of Uí Fáeláin, whose brother Cerball, styled *Rígdamna Laigen*, had been slain *per dolum* in 1018 (above, n.33); perhaps Uí Muiredaig were involved; A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C., 1030; C.S.[1028]; A.I. s.a. 1013; all record the obit of Tadc.

[42] Rawl B 502 125 a, *Corpus*, p. 76-8, illustrates the breakdown of Uí Máil genealogies by the tenth century.

[43] A.F.M. s.a. 952, 953, 972, 983; records a break in the Uí Garrchon succession; dynasts from obscure Dál Messin Corb lines are followed by Uí Enechglaiss claimants Fínsnechta mac Cinaeda and his son Fiachra mac Fínsnechtae (a quo Ua Fiachrach?); see K.W. Nicholls, "Leinstermen", 544-5; C.S. s.a. 1012 notes Ua Fergaile at Clontarf.

[44] Lec 392a; D. 2. 1 (R.I.A.), 97r b; M.C.Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 189, 228; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 435, p. 275, 392; Ibid., p. 454, opts for Domnall Dub ua Fergaile († 1095) as the son of this marriage because Aibeand was half sister to Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó (sl. 1072); however, Aibeand's other half-brothers die from 1026 onwards and her father Dúnlaing died in 1014 at a good age, which suggests that the Domnall in question could have been born early in the 11th century.

By the 1030s, Uí Muiredaig was exerting pressure on the Uí Máil lineages of Uí Cellaig Cualann and Uí Téig, which ruled small patrimonies further to the north-east. The petty kingdom of Uí Cellaig Cualann, situated in the hill country south of Dublin, was already racked by internal conflict which the rulers of neighbouring Uí Dúnchada shrewdly exploited towards their own ends. The son of Cellach mac Dúnchada, perhaps Gilla Mocholmóc, collaborated with a son of Áed mac Tuathail to kill the latter's cousin, the reigning king of Uí Cellaig Cualann, Cathal mac Amalgada and his wife; the sons of Áed mac Tuathail subsequently slew Cathal's brother and successor, Gillacóemgin.[45] There is no further record of Uí Cellaig Cualann after that, and it seems that Uí Dúnchada appropriated the local kingship. It is possible, however, that the action of Uí Muiredaig king Dúnchad mac Dúnlainge, who plundered the territory of Cualu in 1035, contributed to its final demise.[46]

It appears from the record that close connections between the lineage of Uí Muiredaig and the ecclesiastical settlements of northern and eastern Leinster, including Glendalough, developed in conjunction with this early eleventh century political expansion. Although it is not entirely clear when these links were first established, there are indications (as observed above, 3.1.2) that Uí Muiredaig interest in Glendalough may date from the later tenth century. Certainly, that dynasty's intentions at the site became overt in the reign of Domnall mac Dúnlainge, who intervened directly in the abbatial succession in 1031. Regarding Dísert Diarmata, the eleventh century adoption of the personal name Gilla Comgaill may reflect Uí Muiredaig ambition there; clearly, in the post-

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[45] A.U., 1035; A.F.M. s.a.a. 1034, 1037; A.L.C., s.a.a 1030, 1037; A.Tig.; C.S. [1028], [1035]; see Rawl. B 502, 125 a 16; *Corpus*, p. 76.

[46] A.F.M., s.a. 1035; K. W. Nicholls, "Medieval Leinster Dynasties", 411-12, observes that the family of Ua hAmalgada continued to be of minor importance locally.

Clontarf period, the sons of Dúnlaing had interests at several of these ecclesiastical settlements.[47]

The 1030s proved to be a crucial period for the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, as it sought to contest the overkingship of Leinster with the king of Osraige and his allies. It is quite possible that Uí Muiredaig efforts to assert direct authority over Glendalough, where there were prior Osraige/west Leinster interests, may have been a factor in provoking retaliation from that quarter. The fate of Uí Muiredaig ruler Domnall mac Dúnlainge, who intervened at Glendalough in 1031, is not recorded. However, in 1033, Osraige king Donnchad mac Gillapátraic celebrated the Óenach Carmann, which represented a public claim to the overkingship of Leinster.[48] The latter and his allies, as noted above, had already dispatched several Uí Muiredaig dynasts, and this despite an apparent effort at establishing a marriage alliance; Dúnlaing mac Tuathail had married a sister of Donnchad mac Gillapátraic, Aífe ingen Gillapátraic, mother of his son Echdonn and daughter Aibeand.[49] Control of Leinster now seemed to be within reach for the dynasty of Osraige, the growing confidence of which is reflected in contemporary sources. Ó Cuív dates the triumphalist Osraige poem *Clanna Bresail Bricc Builid* on linguistic and historical grounds to this period, while an Uí Muiredaig perspective may be reflected in the *Banshenchus*, where the mother of Gillapátraic is represented, somewhat improbably, as Doireand the daughter of Dersaid *ríg druith Laigen*.[50] In 1037, Donnchad mac Gillapátraic seized and blinded

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[47] The earliest recorded bearer of the name, Gillacomgaill mac Duinncuan Ua Tuathail, was slain in 1041 (A.F.M.); Rawl. B. 502, 117c 5; LL 337d 2; *Corpus*, p. 12; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 63-5; see below, 5.1.1.

[48] A.U., A.F.M., 1033; A.L.C., sa. 1032; A.Tig., C.S. [1031].

[49] A.F.M. 1026 implicates Osraige forces in the fatal wounding of Muirchertach mac Dúnlainge; it seems the Osraige had a previous role in slaying his brothers Donncuan and Gilla Cóemgin, see above n. 36; For record of the marriage see Lec 392a; M. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 189; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 435, p. 275, 392; Aibeand was in turn the mother of Domnall ua Fergaile (above, n. 44), Echdonn was slain by the Osraige (below, n. 61).

[50] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 163; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 133, on the assertion of Osraige at this time; B. Ó Cuív, "A Middle Irish Poem", esp. 144; the mother of Gilla Pátraic is recorded Lec 392a, D.2.1

Dúnchad mac Dúnlainge (the plunderer of Cualu), brother and successor of the above mentioned Domnall.[51] In the same year, Donnchad captured Uí Muiredaig dynast Ruaidrí son of Tadc mac Lorcáin, titled *tánaisi Ua cCennsealaig;* the deposing of Ruaidrí, however, is significant in that it illustrates a collaboration of interests between the king of Osraige and the Síl nOnchon dynast Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó, then engaged in asserting his authority as king of Uí Chennselaig. It was the latter who blinded Ruaidrí son of Tadc, following his capture.[52]

Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó first came to prominence in 1032 when he slew a dynast from a minor line of Dál Cormaic.[53] It is not clear whether or not that particular action represented an attack on Uí Muiredaig interests, although the geographical proximity of Dál Cormaic to the territory of Uí Muiredaig could suggest some connection. As the decade progressed, however, Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó subordinated Osraige interests to his own ambition. Following the death of Donnchad mac Gillapátraic in 1039, Diarmait launched a major offensive aimed at shaking the Uí Muiredaig hold on North Leinster. In 1040, he struck at Dísert Diarmata, Maen Colum Cille, Mugna Moshenóc and at Cluain Mór Maedóic in Uí Felmeda, settlements at which there would appear to have been an Uí Muiredaig presence by the eleventh century, if not earlier. By this time, an Uí Muiredaig abbacy had been put in place at Cluain Mór Maedóic and, indeed, at Glendalough; in due course all of these Liffey Plain foundations were included among the properties of Glendalough.[54]

97rb; M. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 189, 228; Ibid., where an alternative tradition gives Aífe ingen Fáeláin meic Cormeic of the Déissi; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 433, p. 275, 391.

[51] A.F.M. s.a. 1036, where the victim (as in the other annals) is called Donnchad mac Dúnlaing; in A.F.M. s.a 1037 (repeat) he is called Dúnchad.

[52] Noted in A.F.M. s.a.1036 and twice at 1037, the last account being the fullest; cf A.U., A.L.C., A.Tig., s.a. 1036; D. Ó Corráin, "Career of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó: Part 1", 28.

[53] This was Tadc Ua Guaire, tigerna Uí Chuilind (A.F.M. at 1032), whose line sprang from Dál Cormaic Loisc; Rawl. B. 502, 119bb 11; LL 312bc 40; *Corpus*, p. 31.

[54] C. Doherty, "The Irish Hagiographer", 17-18, places this attack in the context of an internal Síl nOnchon conflict; see below, ch. 5 and ch. 6.

The death of Donnchad mac Gillapátraic, however, was also a cue to Murchad mac Dúnlainge, who had succeeded his brother in the Uí Muiredaig kingship in 1037, to bid for the overkingship of Leinster.[55] Murchad could include among his allies Donnchad mac Áeda, king of Uí Bairrche, who had earlier cleared the 'Fer Muman' - which in this instance may mean Osraige rather than Dál Cais - out of the ecclesiastical settlement of Glenn Uissen.[56] He also had the support of his sister's son, Domnall Ua Fergaile king of Fortuatha Laigen (above, Fig. 3C). In 1039, Domnall Ua Fergaile slew the Uí Fáeláin king Domnall mac Donnchada, a rival of Murchad mac Dúnlainge.[57] The year 1041 witnessed an almost unprecedented level of inter-dynastic slaughter in Leinster. Murchad mac Dúnlainge ruthlessly asserted his authority over the northern part of the province; he killed his nephew Gillacomgaill mac Duinncuan at Kildare and, in collaboration with Donnchad mac Áeda, seized and blinded Fáelán Ua Mórda, king of Loígis.[58] The latter's apparently short-lived successor, a certain Cú Coiccríche Ua Dúnlainge of unknown antecedents, may have been a nominee of Murchad mac Dúnlainge. Cú Coiccríche was slain, along with his wife Calleoc and their son at Tech Mochua.[59] In the same year, the forces of Uí Chennselaig attacked the territory of Uí Bairrche. They were pursued by Murchad mac Dúnlainge, who overtook them at Cell Mo Lappóc and slew Domnall Remur *Rígdamna Uí*

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[55] J. Ryan, "Ancestry of St Laurence", 71-2; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 132-3, chart the career of Murchad.

[56] A.F.M., s.a. 1024, attributes the victory to the miracles of Comhdán, whose cult was apparently introduced to 10thC. Glenn Uissen by Dál Cais (to some extent supplanting that of Uí Bairrche saint Diarmait mac Siabair); LL 351c 10, 352c 1; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1563, 1572; this point was developed by E. Bhreathnach, "Kileshin: A Monastery Surveyed", (above n. 16).

[57] A.U., A.F.M., A.I., A.L.C., 1039; C.S. [1037]; it may be noted, however that an additamentum to LL, facsm. 388 b, links Domnall mac Donnchada to Uí Muiredaig; see K.W. Nicholls, "Leinstermen", 551.

[58] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C, 1041; A.Tig.; C.S.[1039]; see above, 5.1.1.

[59] A.F.M. 1041; A. Tig., C.S., s.a. 1039, Cú Coiccríche and his wife Calleoc were slain by a certain Mac Conáin, in turn slain by Ua Braenáin, perhaps a representative of the minor Uí Brenaind line of Uí Bairrche; Rawl. B. 502, 121b 11, *Corpus*, p. 47.

Chennselaig, a brother of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó. Following up on his advantage, Murchad allied himself with Donnchad mac Briain king of Munster and burned Ferns, Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó's capital. Diarmait's response, perhaps early in 1042, was to ruthlessly sack the Uí Bairrche foundation of Glenn Uissen, in the course of which he broke down the church, slew a hundred people and took several hundred prisoners.[60]

The Uí Chennselaig cause was furthered considerably by the outcome of the Battle of Mag Muilchet (i Laígis) in 1042. In this engagement, Gillapátraic Mac Gillapátraic (son of Donnchad) king of Osraige, whose supporters included Cú Coiccríche Ua Mórda king of Loígis, defeated and slew Murchad mac Dúnlainge, his brother Echdonn, *Tánaisi Laigen*, and their ally Donnchad mac Áeda. The losses sustained at Mag Muilchet, as Ó Corráin points out, not only greatly weakened the lineage of Uí Muiredaig but effectively brought about the eclipse of Uí Dúnlainge as the dominant dynasty of Leinster.[61] Within a year, the remaining allies of Murchad mac Dúnlainge were killed in what could be interpreted as mopping-up operations. Macrait mac Gormáin, successor to Donnchad mac Áeda in the kingship of Uí Bairrche, was slain in Dísert Diarmata along with his wife, who belonged to the lineage of Uí Muiredaig.[62] Then Domnall Ua Fergaile, nephew of Murchad mac Dúnlainge (son of his sister Aibeand, see above Fig. 3C), was killed in the termonland of Cóemgen at Glendalough by an Uí Enechglaiss dynast; the latter, indeed, may have viewed the fall of Uí Muiredaig as an opportunity to reassert the claim of his lineage on the kingship of Fortuatha Laigen.[63] Certainly, the discomfiture of the sons of

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[60] Seven hundred according to A.F.M., s.a 1041; A.Tig., C.S. s.a. 1039. However, the generally more conservative A.U. at 1042 gives four hundred.

[61] A.U., A.I. (abridged), A.F.M. (fullest) at 1042; A.Tig.; C.S. [1040]; see D. Ó Corráin, "Career of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó", Part 1, 29.

[62] A.F.M., s.a. 1042; the identity of Macrait mac Gormáin's wife is discussed below, 5.1.1.

[63] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C 1043; A.Tig.; C.S. [1041]; identify the slayer of Domnall as a son of Tuathal mac Fiachrach, whose grandfather and great-grandfather had held the kingship of Fortuatha Laigen; see above, n. 43.

Dúnlaing and their allies, an objective which ultimately weakened the dynasty of Osraige, left the way clear for Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó to assert his claim as overking of Leinster.

3. 2 : Uí Muiredaig and their Political Masters 1042 to c.1240

3.2.1 : Uí Chennselaig, Ua Briain and Ua Conchobair Overlordship to c.1130

The collapse of Uí Muiredaig in the aftermath of Mag Muilchet ushered in a major political change, whereby the kingship of north Leinster became subordinate firstly to Uí Chennselaig overking Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó and then to Ua Briain as overlord of Leth Moga. Not only did Uí Muiredaig remain weak and divided throughout the remainder of the century, but its hard-won dominance at Glendalough would seem to have been lost. When the lineage managed some degree of political come-back under the Ua Briain kings in the late eleventh to early twelfth century, it was very much on the terms of the overlords, who exploited divisions within Uí Muiredaig to their own advantage.

From the 1040s onwards, Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó proceeded to consolidate his position within Leinster, asserting his power over Dublin and allying himself with Gillapátraic Mac Gillapátraic, king of Osraige.[64] Within Uí Muiredaig, succession to the patrimonial kingship, following the death of Murchad mac Dúnlainge, is uncertain. The *Banshenchus* records Aillbi ingen Dúnlaing (sic) as mother of a certain Tuathal, here styled *Rí Laigen*. The latter, as he was half-brother to Muiredach mac Cárthaig, may have flourished in the mid-eleventh century; however, he is not mentioned in the annals which suggests

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[64] A.F.M., A.L.C., 1048, 1052, 1053, 1056; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 134-5; Seán Duffy, "Irishmen and Islesmen in the Kingdoms of Dublin and Man 1052-1171", *Ériu*, 42 (1992), 94-7, 99-100, discusses Diarmait's unprecedented assumption of the Dublin kingship.

that, if he reigned as king, his effectiveness was probably rather limited.[65] The only Uí Muiredaig dynast documented in the annals during this time is Gilla Cóemgin son of Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail, slain in 1056 by Murchad son of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó. He is not titled king in the annals, but the prominence accorded to him in the later genealogies suggests that he was a figure of some importance.[66] The intense pressure to which their lineage was subjected by Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó is illustrated by the record of Uí Muiredaig dynasts as expatriates during these years. Some found service with Donnchad mac Briain king of Munster against Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó. Cú Meda mac Dúnlainge and Scandlán Ua Dúnlainge (probably a son of the former) were slain in 1063 at the Battle of Eas Móingeláin.[67] The following year, Diarmait Ua Lorcáin *rídamna Laigen* was slain by the Cenél nEógain in Ulster, while the death of an Ua Lorcáin as abbot of Cell Achaid (Killeigh, Co Offaly) may be another reflection of the same diaspora.[68]

With this mid-eleventh century Uí Chennselaig revival came a new dynastic involvement in the ecclesiastical politics of Leinster. Gormlaith, a sister of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó was installed as abbess of Kildare. While there is no indication that Uí Chennselaig exercised any direct influence at Glendalough, the apparent extension of the cult of Máedóc of Ferns into north-east Leinster may represent Uí Chennselaig interests. Allowance must, at the same time, be made for dedications to Máedóc of Uí Dúnlainge.[69] Hence, at some sites, tradition or historical circumstance favour the patron of Ferns; Loughmogue (Par.Dunlavin,

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[65] Lec 393a, 473; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 193; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 473, p. 283, 399; ibid., p. 460, considers that Tuathal is unidentifiable.

[66] A.F.M. at 1056 notes Gilla Cóemgin's death; A.U. s.a 1059; below, 5.1.2.

[67] A.F.M., 1063; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Career of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó, Part 2", 18.

[68] A.U., A.F.M at 1064 note the death of Diarmait Ua Lorcáin; A.F.M. at 1059 has the obit of Abbot Ua Lorcáin, who may not necessarily belong to the lineage of Uí Muiredaig.

[69] M.T. notes Maedóc of Ferns at 31 Jan, and Maedóc of Cluain Mór in Uí Felmeda at 11 April.

By. Talbotstown Lwr.) is near Rathbran which has close associations with the *Boruma* saga, while at Cluain Caín (Td. Clonkeen, Par. Kill, By. Rathdown), reference to St Mogue's Well as "the Briton's Well" may commemorate Máedóc's alleged soujourn in Britain. The dedication of Cluain Caín quite possibly stems from the later grant of that site to the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity by Donnchad mac Domnaill Remair, king of Uí Chennselaig.[70] In contrast at Killough (Par. Kilmacanogue, By. Rathdown), where earlier forms Kylwoagh and Kilvogh[e] seem to suggest Cell Maedóic, there is no tradition of any kind to help illuminate the identity of the patron; even the local "pattern-day" which might have indicated the feast day of the relevant saint, is long forgotten.[71]

From c.1055 onwards, Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó and Mac Gillapátraic collaborated with Toirdelbach Ua Briain, nephew of Donnchad mac Briain, to undermine the position of the latter. This alliance finally achieved its aim in 1063, with the surrender of Donnchad. At this point Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó, already established as the most powerful king in southern Ireland, assumed the role of kingmaker in confirming Toirdelbach Ua Briain as king of Munster. Despite occasional ripples of discontent from within Leinster, Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó remained in control of the province to the end. When Diarmait was slain in 1072 in a conflict with the Southern Uí Néill, the inclusion of Gilla Pátraicc Ua Fergaile king of Fortuatha Laigen among his retinue[72] is perhaps an indication of the extent to which he had dismantled the former Uí Muiredaig alliance.

Following the death of Diarmait, his former ally Toirdelbach Ua Briain seized the opportunity to establish control over the southern half of Ireland, including Leinster and Dublin. In the changed political climate of Toirdelbach's reign, and even more particularly in that of his son Muirchertach, the lineages of

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[70] A. R., MS. A.1, f.148b; *Calendar*, p.28; see Myles Ronan, *Dún Laoghaire agus na Ceanntair Mágcuairt* (Dublin: OFR, 1936), p. 7; E. O'Brien, "Churches of South East Co. Dublin", p. 514.

[71] L. Price, *Placenames*, V, p. 313.

[72] A.F.M. at 1072.

Uí Dúnlainge regained something of their lost status. The kingship of Uí Muiredaig was restored to a position of some significance within northern Leinster and the lineage ultimately resumed a leading role at Glendalough. The subordinate position of Uí Muiredaig within the new political hierarchy would, however, become patently clear. Ua Briain exploited divisions among the emerging Uí Muiredaig family lines of Ua Tuathail and Ua Lorcáin, just as he made calculated use of dynastic divisions elsewhere among the Laigin, promoting Síl nOnchon dynasts Domnall mac Murchada (grandson of Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó) to the kingship of Dublin and Donnchad mac Domnaill Remair to that of Uí Chennselaig.[73] It may well have been Toirdelbach's intention to provide a counterbalance against the Uí Chennselaig lineages by facilitating the re-emergence of a coherent Uí Muiredaig kingship within northern Leinster.

Toirdelbach had a prior association with the line of Ua Lorcáin; Dubcoblaig, the mother of his son Diarmait, was a descendant of one of the mac Lorcáin kings of Uí Chennselaig.[74] He may, on that account, have supported the cause of that line, which emerged as victors against their Ua Tuathail cousins. In any case, contention for the Uí Muiredaig kingship probably served the interests of the Ua Briain overlordship. In 1075, rivalry between the Uí Muiredaig lines gave way to internecine conflict when Donnchad and Gilla Cóemgin, sons of Augaire Ua Lorcáin, were slain 'la mac mic Gilla Comgaill I Tuathail ag cosnam forlámais Ua Murchada (sic) dia n-atair'.[75] It seems clear that, by this time, Augaire was the principal pretender to the kingship. The Ua Tuathail protagonist could feasibly have been Donncuan son of Gilla Cóemgin, in turn the father of

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[73] D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 138, emphasises Toirdelbach Ua Briain's exploitation of dynastic divisions; S. Duffy, "Irishmen and Islesmen", 101-3, discusses his use of Uí Chennselaig sub-rulers; this interference in Laigin affairs may lie behind the reference to 'Tairdelbach Bóruma' in the poem *A Bairgen ataí i ngábud*, LL 46 a, see T.P. O'Nowlan, (ed.), "The Quarrel about the Loaf", 131.

[74] Lec. 393a, 474; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 193; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 474, p. 284, 399.

[75] A.F.M., 1075; presumably the record should read 'forlámas U Muiredaig'.

Gilla Comgaill, who would feature prominently in the early twelfth century. The following year, the adherents of Ua Lorcáin massacred the household of mac Gilla Comgaill near Dísert Diarmata, taking sixty-three heads.[76]

This rather drastic retaliation apparently ended resistance to the Ua Lorcáin kingship for several decades. There is no record of Augaire's death, but he was apparently followed by at least two subsequent Ua Lorcáin kings who feature as allies of Muirchertach Ua Briain. Murchad Ua Lorcáin, king of Uí Muiredaig, was slain in the service of Muirchertach Ua Briain at Mag Cobo, in the disastrous engagement with Mac Lochlainn, king of the Northern Uí Néill.[77] His successor, Augaire Ua Lorcáin, reigned at the time of the Synod of Ráith Bresail, at which Ua Briain was the principal civil power; it is scarcely coincidental in that event that the parameters of the Diocese of Glendalough, as preserved by the seventeenth century scholar Seathrún Céitinn [Geoffrey Keating], included Muirchertach's own kingdom of Dublin and the mórtuath of his protegé Augaire.[78] After this, the succession record for the kingship of Uí Muiredaig is again uncertain (**Fig. 3D**).

The dearth of record for Uí Muiredaig at this point applies to the line of Ua Tuathail as much as to that of Ua Lorcáin. The subsequent career of Donncuan, who fought against Ua Lorcáin in 1075, is unknown and some decades were to pass before the latter's son Gilla Comgaill would come to prominence. It is quite possible, indeed, that a marriage alliance which Donncuan concluded with the Uí Chennselaig line of Domnall Remar played some part in paving the way for an eventual return to power by the Ua Tuathail rulers. Donncuan was married to Sadb, a daughter of Máel Mórda mac Donnchada mic Domnaill, a claimant to the

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[76] A.F.M., 1076.

[77] A.U., A.F.M., 1103; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 147.

[78] Seathrún Céitinn, *Forus Feasa ar Eirinn*, Bk. II, § 28, ed. P. De Barra (Dublin: Foilseacháin Náisiúnta Teo, 1982), vol. II, p. 160; John Mac Erlean, "The Synod of Ráith Breasail", *Archivium Hibernicum*, 3 (1914), 11, 24.

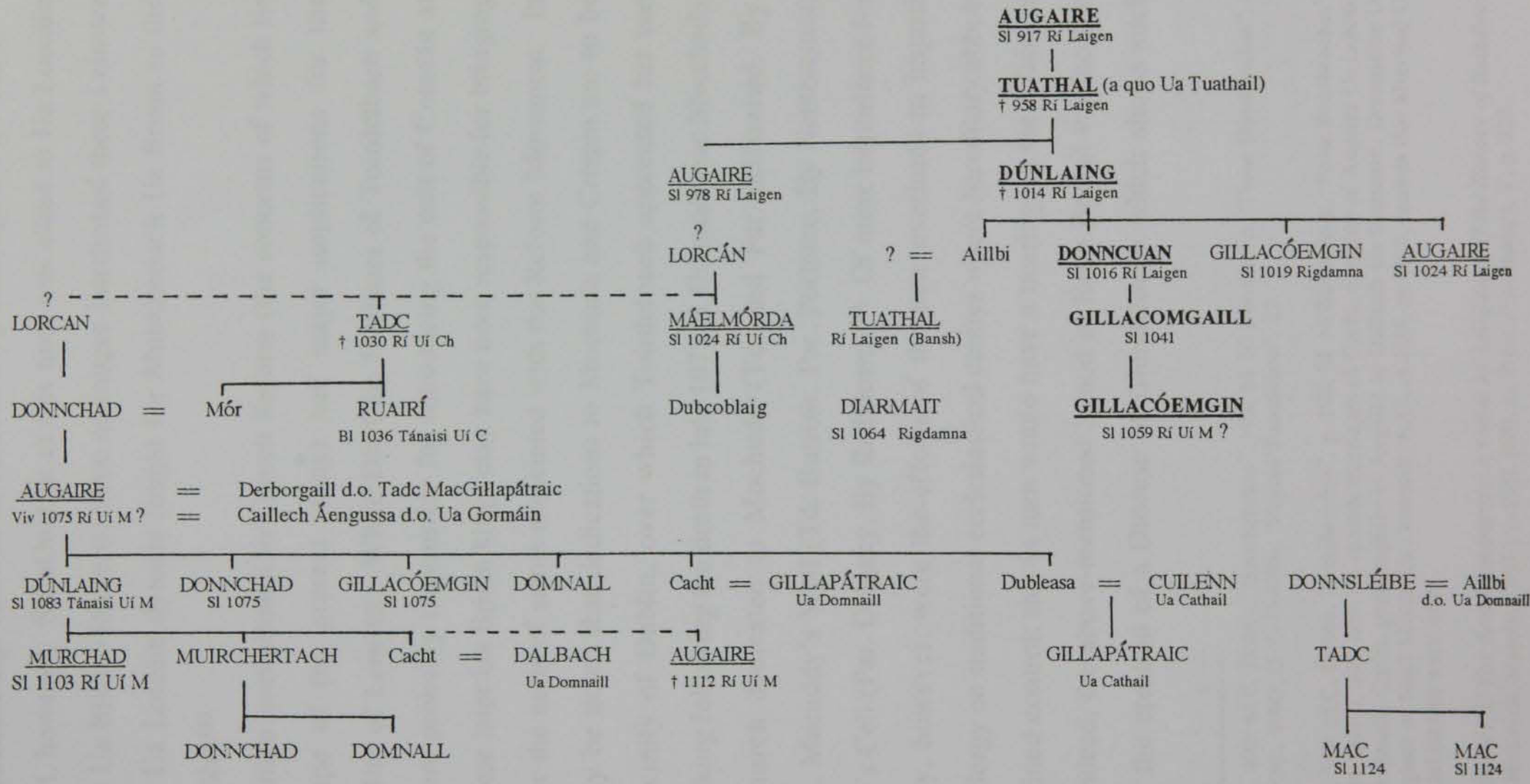


Fig. 3D: Ua Lorcáin and Ua Tuathail Kings of Uí Muiredaig and their Connections to c.1124. Source Rawl. B. 502 (highlighted) Supplemented by Annals and Banshenchus. Males in blockletters (kings underlined), females in lower case.

kingship of Uí Chennselaig, who fell in battle at Mag Lene against Ua Briain.[79] For the most part, however, Síl nOnchon at this time was allied to Ua Lorcáin (and therefore to Ua Briain) interests; three marriages interlinked these Leinster lines, while two Ua Lorcáin dynasts fought for Muirchertach Ua Briain in the Battle of Mag Cobo.[80]

The Ua Briain commitment to Church Reform (the concerns of which lie outside the scope of the present study) had major implications for the ecclesiastical polity of Leinster. While Dál Cais forebears of Toirdelbach and Muirchertach were probably responsible for introducing the cult of Comdán at Glenn Uissen, these later Ua Briain kings may have been responsible for bringing to North Leinster the cults of saints associated with the Reform Movement. In particular, it may be noted that dedications to Mochuda and Crispin are to be found in the vicinity of Dublin, over which Toirdelbach appointed his son Muirchertach as king following the death in late 1075 of Domnall mac Murchada. There was a church dedicated to Mochuda (Td. and Par. Kilmacud, By. Rathdown), a St. Macuddy's Well (Td. Burrow, Par. Portrane, By Nethercross) and a St. Crispin's Cell (Par. Delgany, By Rathdown).[81] Of more importance for the present study, however, were the efforts of the new overlords to impose reform-minded clergy on traditional ecclesiastical centres where hereditary abbots had hitherto retained control; this in turn would have a bearing on the affairs of Glendalough. Indeed, the above-mentioned Synod of Ráith Bresail was no less significant, with the creation of a Diocese of Glendalough which shows such

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[79] Lec. 393b, 492; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 195; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 498, p. 289, 404; A.F.M., 1090; D. Ó Corráin, "Regnal Succession", 22.

[80] Lec. 394a, 529; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", p. 198; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 478, 524, 529, p. 284, 294-5, 400, 409-10; records marriages of Cacht, daughter of Augaire Ua Lorcáin to Gilla Pátraic Ua Domnaill; Cacht, grandaughter of Augaire to Dalbach Ua Domnaill; Donnsléibe Ua Lorcáin to Aillbi, daughter of Máel Mórda Ua Domnaill; A.U., A.F.M. at 1103, records that Murchad Ua Lorcáin and an un-named brother were slain.

[81] Kathleen Turner, *If You Seek Monuments: A Guide to Antiquities of the Barony of Rathdown* (Dublin: Rathmichael Historical Society, 1983), p. [52], [68]; L. Price, *Placenames*, V, p. 323.

clear indications of Ua Briain design.[82] Given Muirchertach Ua Briain's patronage of Church Reform and his dynasty's support for the Ua Lorcáin line, it may seem strange that he apparently tolerated Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail as abbot of Glendalough; but to do so may have made political sense as will be examined later (below, 5.1.2).

In 1114, however, Muirchertach Ua Briain fell seriously ill and the overlordship he had maintained, which was largely one of a personal nature, rapidly fell apart.[83] There followed two decades of political instability, as Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, king of Connacht, sought to extend his authority over Leth Moga. Within Leinster, the re-emergence of dynastic rivalries provided him with an opportunity to achieve his aims. Before the end of 1114, Muirchertach Ua Briain's protegé Máel Mórda Ua Domnaill was deposed from the kingship of Uí Chennselaig by Donnchad mac Murchada, whose line would retain that dignity thereafter. When Enna mac Donnchada mic Murchada succeeded his father, Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair intervened and appointed him king of Dublin in 1118, following the expulsion of Domnall Ua Briain.[84]

The situation among the north Leinster dynasties is even more confused. There is no record of who succeeded to the kingship of Uí Muiredaig in 1112 on the death of Augaire Ua Lorcáin.[85] It appears, however, that the state of near-anarchy that prevailed at provincial level was mirrored locally by renewed in-fighting within the lineage of Uí Muiredaig. Two sons of Tadc Ua Lorcáin, described as 'dá tánaisi Ua Muiredaig' were slain by one of their own kinsmen in 1124. Three years later Gilla Comgaill son of Donn Cuan Ua Tuathail, abbot of

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[82] Aubrey Gwynn, "The Twelfth Century Reform", in *The History of Irish Catholicism* 2 (i), ed. P. J. Corish (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1968), p. 29, 34-5; Idem †, *The Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, ed. G. O'Brien (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), p. 113-4, 183-6.

[83] D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 148-9.

[84] A. Tig. [1114]; D. Ó Corráin, *Normans*, p. 152.

[85] Lec. 393 a, refers to a certain Gilla Comgaill mac Dúnlainge, half-brother to Diarmait Ua Briain († 1118) as Rí Laigen; perhaps he is a son of Dúnlaing Ua Lorcáin, Tánaisi of Uí Muiredaig (sl. 1083), and hence a brother of Murchad king of Uí Muiredaig (sl. 1103); M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 193.

Glendalough, was slain by 'Na Fortuathaib'; it is not clear whether the culprits belonged to the lineage of Uí Garrchon which, as already noted, was drawn into an alliance by Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó, or to Uí Enechglaiss which held the kingship of Fortuatha Laigen in the tenth century and would later feature as enemies of the Ua Tuathail line.[86] The prominence accorded to Gilla Comgaill at the head of the Uí Muiredaig pedigree in Rawlinson B 502 prompted Byrne to suggest that the latter may also have held the patrimonial kingship by this time.[87] Another likely candidate for the kingship of Uí Muiredaig at this period is Augaire Ua Tuathail, a descendant of Tuathal son of Dúnlaing and a distant cousin of Gilla Comgaill. Augaire, who is titled *Rigdamna Laigen* at his death in 1134, had a daughter Cacht married to a certain Domnall Ua Briain, who may be identified either with a son or with a nephew of Muirchertach Ua Briain.[88]

Meanwhile, on the death of Enna Mac Murchada in 1126, Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair appointed his son Conchobar as king of Dublin and Leinster. This intervention proved unsuccessful. Nonetheless, when the latter was expelled in 1127, Toirdelbach appointed an Uí Fáeláin dynast, Domnall Mac Fáeláin, as king. Clearly, the aim was to continue exploiting dynastic divisions within the province. Up to this point, attempts to reject Ua Conchobair's suzerainty over Leinster remained unco-ordinated. This would change soon after 1132 with the emergence of a new Uí Chennselaig king, Diarmait Mac Murchada.

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[86] A.F.M. at 1124, 1127; see above, nn. 43, 72; below, 5.2.1, 5.2.2.

[87] Rawl. B 502, 117 c 1; *Corpus*, p. 12; F.J. Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 24.

[88] Lec 394 b; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 200; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 553, p. 301, 415; A.L.C. 1134; A.F.M., 1107; Misc. Ir. A., s.a. 1114=1115; see Anthony Candon, "Muirchertach Ua Briain, Politics and Naval Activity in the Irish Sea 1075 to 1119", in *Keimelia: Papers in Memory of Tom Delaney*, ed. G. Mac Niocaill and P.F. Wallace (Galway: University Press, 1988), p. 401, 404-5.

3. 2. 2 : The Ascendancy of Diarmait Mac Murchada 1132-1171

While the career of Diarmait Mac Murchada has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, mainly in relation to the latter's quest for over-kingship and the Norman intervention in Ireland, little attention has focused on his relationship with individual dynasties in Leinster, including Uí Muiredaig and its allies. Certain issues with local implications (such as Diarmait's dealings with the family of Archbishop Lorcán) have indeed been noted in the analysis of provincial and inter-provincial matters. The picture of local polity which may be gleaned from these studies, however, is far from comprehensive.

Having acceded in 1132 to an Uí Chennselaig kingship that had been racked with dissension since the premature death of his elder brother Enna six years earlier, Diarmait was faced with the task of re-establishing the authority of his dynasty. It seems clear from the record that, from the commencement of his career, he followed the example of his predecessors and sought to exploit divisions within the ruling lineages of north Leinster. Within Uí Muiredaig, the line of Ua Tuathail had finally displaced that of Ua Lorcáin. However, the emergence of rival Ua Tuathail families meant that opportunities for political manipulation were still available. The king of Uí Muiredaig at this time was apparently Augaire Ua Tuathail, who had earlier established a marriage alliance with the dynasty of Ua Briain. Augaire had the political astuteness to realise the potential of Diarmait Mac Murchada even at this early date, and to redirect the allegiance of his lineage accordingly. It appears that Augaire Ua Tuathail was actively supporting Diarmait Mac Murchada by 1133, if not earlier. In that year he slew Maelsechnaill Mac Murchada, leader of a rival segment of Síl nOnchon, along with one of his adherents, Eochaid Ua Nualláin king of Fothairt; the

following year, Augaire was himself slain while accompanying Diarmait Mac Murchada on an expedition into Osraige.[89]

The extension of a rigid form of overkingship throughout the province by Diarmait Mac Murchada provoked reaction in many quarters, leading to a souring of relationships between Diarmait and several of his sub-kings. It may indeed have been his failure to defeat the Connacht-Bréifne alliance in 1138 that prompted widespread revolt against Mac Murchada's rule.[90] Violent counter-action by Diarmait Mac Murchada in 1141 resulted in the killing or blinding of no fewer than seventeen kings of the Laigin, in what has been called 'the year of the long knives'.[91] Murchad Ua Tuathail king of Uí Muiredaig, whose lineage is not traceable but who may have belonged to Augaire's branch of the family, was among those who perished.

It seems likely that many of the segmental or dynastic changes introduced by Mac Murchada within the political framework of Leinster, took place in the aftermath of this 1141 purge. The kingship of Uí Muiredaig was given to a dynast from a rival segment within the line of Ua Tuathail, Muirchertach son of Gilla Comgaill, whose young son Lorcán (the future St. Laurence) was taken as hostage (below, 5.2.2). It also may have been around this time that, by an exercise in dynastic displacement, the kingship of Uí Felmeda Tuaid was bestowed upon Dalbach Ua Domnaill, a kinsman of Máel Mórda who had been deposed in 1114 as king of Uí Chennselaig. It has been suggested by Flanagan that the line of Ua Gairbid, at the expense of which this move was made, was probably compensated with alternative lands or offices.[92] No doubt the fact that Diarmait's mother perhaps belonged to the dispossessed line was an important

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[89] A.F.M., 1133; A.L.C., 1134; F.X. Martin, O.S.A., *No Hero in the House*, p. 11.

[90] Ibid., p. 12.

[91] A.F.M., 1141; J. Ryan, "Ancestry of St Laurence", 74.

[92] Marie-Therese Flanagan, "Mac Dalbaig: A Leinster Chieftain", *J.R.S.A.I,*. 111 (1981), 7-8; as Awelaf Ocarvi (fl. 1173) was a supporter of Strongbow, his line probably held office under Mac Murchada.

consideration in this regard.[93] Another instance of Mac Murchada's political engineering was the installation of the redundant Uí Muiredaig line of Ua Lorcáin as petty rulers of Fothairt in Chairn, in the Barony of Forth, Co. Wexford.[94]

The choice of Muirchertach Ua Tuathail as king of Uí Muiredaig may have been expedient at the time, but there is little to indicate that Mac Murchada had much confidence in his new sub-king. Indeed, the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Cistercian house at Baltinglass in 1148 might suggest the opposite. It is clear that Baltinglass, originally in the territory of Uí Máil, was well within the Uí Muiredaig lordship by the eleventh century; its location, as Byrne points out, was such that the grant effectively split the old patrimony of Uí Muiredaig from their subsequently acquired mountain territories.[95] If partition of his sub-king's realm was in fact on Mac Murchada's mind, it is ironic indeed that he should have been honoured by none other than St. Bernard himself.[96]

Within the following decade, however, Diarmait Mac Murchada had apparently come to terms with Muirchertach Ua Tuathail. Perhaps there was a certain urgency to reach an accommodation with some of the more influential Leinster sub-kings, as Mac Murchada came under increasing pressure following his abduction of Derbforgaill, queen of Bréifne in 1152. It has been suggested that Mac Murchada's marriage to Mór, daughter of Muirchertach Ua Tuathail, may reflect such a *modus vivendi*, achieved perhaps in 1153 when Lorcán Ua

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[93] D.2.1, 97 v, gives Uchdelb, ingen Cernacháin Uí Gairbid as mother of Diarmait Mac Murchada and his sister, Sadb; compare Lec. 392 b, which has Órlaith, ingen Meic Braenáin; M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 191, 231; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 533, p. 297, 411; Ibid. notes, p. 470, makes no comment on this apparent contradiction.

[94] F.J. Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 25, 28; J. Carney, ed. *Topographical Poems*, ll. 1093-6, p. 41, locates Ó Lorcáin at Fothairt in Chairn.

[95] L. Price. *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xviii; F.J. Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 23.

[96] M. T. Flanagan, "Monastic Charters", p. 87-9, 91; Eadem, *Irish Society, Anglo Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 102, n. 75, notes record of the foundation of Baltinglass in the Cistercian Tabulae. F.X. Martin, *No Hero in the House*, p. 19; Idem, "Diarmait Mac Murchada and the Coming of the Anglo Normans", in *A New History of Ireland*, II, ed. Art Cosgrove (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 48, notes the grant to Diarmait of confraternity with the Cistercians.

Tuathail son of Muirchertach was appointed to the abbacy of Glendalough.[97] However, terms between Mac Murchada and Ua Tuathail may have been concluded somewhat earlier, if the re-definition of the Diocese of Glendalough at the 1152 Synod of Kells is viewed as a reflection of Uí Muiredaig interests (below, 5.2.2, 6.3.2). Having secured a marriage alliance with the provincial overking, and with his son directing one of the largest ecclesiastical federations in Leinster, Muirchertach Ua Tuathail may well have considered himself as above the level of ordinary sub-king. It is possible, indeed, that Mac Murchada made some concessions to him as *primus inter pares* among the rulers of *mórthuatha*. Nonetheless, the heading of Ua Tuathail's pedigree with 'Genelach Ríg Lagen' in the rather partisan *Book of Leinster* need hardly be taken literally.[98]

The death of Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair in 1156 lost Mac Murchada an ally of sorts, but ultimately left him freer to extend his power over Dublin. It is considered by Ó Corráin that Mac Murchada's alliance with the Uí Néill high king Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn, with whose assistance he subjected Dublin in 1162, marks the high tide of Mac Murchada's career; by the same token, the fall of Mac Lochlainn in 1166 was the cue for a concerted attack by his enemies against Mac Murchada.[99] Muirchertach Ua Tuathail had died in 1164 (A.F.M.), and his son and successor, Gilla Comgaill, did not prove himself an invaluable ally when Mac Murchada was driven from his kingship. It must be conceded, however, that for two years after his return to Ireland in August 1167, Mac Murchada was confined by Ua Conchobair to the realm of Uí Chennselaig. In the interest of their own survival, Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail and the other north

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[97] M. F. Roche, "Lives of St Laurence", p. 8; M.T. Flanagan, *Irish Society*, p. 101.

[98] LL 337 d1, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1480; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", esp. 68-9.

[99] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Diarmait Mac Murrough and the Coming of the Anglo-French", in *Worsted in the Game*, ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1989), p. 27-8; Katharine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Boydell Press, 1987), p. 13, points to how the annexation of Dublin by Ruaidrí diminished Diarmait's power.

Leinster kings had to make what terms they could with Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, who had assumed the mantle of his father Toirdelbach as pretender to the High Kingship of Ireland. Even when Mac Murchada, with the aid of his Norman mercenaries, succeeded in re-establishing himself as overking of Leinster in 1169, his reign was of short duration; he died at Ferns in May 1171.

3. 2. 3 : Relations with the Normans 1171 to c. 1240

Analysis of the succession to the Leinster kingship of the Norman leader Richard Fitz Gilbert (or Strongbow), who married Aífe daughter of Diarmait Mac Murchada, lies outside the scope of the present study. With the death of Diarmait, however, Uí Chennselaig provincial rule was eclipsed and his remaining son, the illegitimate Domnall Caemánach, restricted to the patrimonial kingship. There was widespread revolt in Leinster against Strongbow, with many of the sub-kings flocking to the cause of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair. Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail, king of Uí Muiredaig, was among those who joined Murchad Mac Murchada in supporting Ua Conchobair's blockade of Dublin. Giraldus names 'Othuetheli' (Ua Tuathail) as one of those who was put to flight.[100]

On the arrival of King Henry II in Ireland, Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail visited Dublin in the winter of 1171-2, where he made formal submission.[101] Nonetheless, in contrast to Mac Gilla Mocholmóc of Uí Dúnchada, who accepted English rule and retained extensive lands by feudal tenure, the line of Ua Tuathail resisted the extension of Henry's writ into the heartland of Leinster. Following the death of Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail in 1176 (the same year as Strongbow), his brother and successor Dúnlaing, who appears to have been even less

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[100] *Expugnatio Hibernica by Giraldus Cambrensis*, edited by A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Oxford, 1978), p. 85, 306 n.115; M.T. Flanagan, *Irish Society*, p.310.

[101] *Expugnatio*, p. 95; *Annals of Thady Dowling*, ed. R. Butler (Dublin, 1849), p.11.

compromising, ardently defended his patrimony against the exiled Uí Fáeláin dynast Máel Mórda Mac Fáeláin.[102] In 1178 Robert Poer, Custodian of Waterford on behalf of King Henry II, ravaged the territory of Uí Muiredaig with the men of Wexford and slew Dúnlaing Ua Tuathail. The campaign, which also cost the life of Robert Poer, was nonetheless successful in its aim. The Ua Tuathail rulers were dislodged from their ancient patrimony and driven into the mountains. It thus became possible for a prior grant of the Uí Muiredaig patrimony by Strongbow to Walter de Ridelsford to be given effect, and the way was cleared for the incastellation of 'Omuredhi'.[103]

There is considerable merit in the suggestion of Price that dispossessed Ua Tuathail dynasts fled to the sanctuary of Glendalough monastic estates where, it would appear, their kinsmen within the Church were only too willing to facilitate them.[104] The political void that faced survivors of the Ua Tuathail line following expulsion from their patrimony is reflected by the breakdown in the record of succession after the death of Dúnlaing in 1178. Later genealogies purportedly record several lines of cousins, the closest of whom would appear to be Gilla Cóemgin son of Ualtar son of Gilla Cóemgin.[105]

Meanwhile, the sub-infeudation of Leinster had been proceeding apace. It was envisaged that Henry II's grant to Strongbow in the Winter of 1171 should include the entire province, with the exception of coastal towns and castles and perhaps the patrimonial kingdom of Uí Fáeláin, which were retained under

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[102] A.Tig., 1176, 1177.

[103] A. Tig. 1178; cf A.F.M. vol 2, p.53-4 n. E; *Expugnatio*, p. 326, n. 262, 339 n. 363; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 71; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xxxvii-viii; Omuredhi was incastellated during Hugh de Lacy's governorship.

[104] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xl, xliv, comments on Archbishop Lorcán's endowment of Glendalough in 1179 and on the alleged harbouring of "robbers" at the settlement.

[105] *Leabhar Ginealaigh Lughaidh Uí Chleirigh*, ed. Seamus Pender, *Analecta Hibernica* No. 18 (Dublin, 1951), §§ 1744-5, p.130; F.J. Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 16, expresses scepticism in relation to post-Norman Irish genealogies; D. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies", p. 81, on 'invention' of pedigrees to confer legitimacy on rulers who emerge in traumatic times.

Henry's control.[106] Significantly, the grant of Leinster as confirmed to Strongbow by Henry in 1173 included the territories of Wicklow and Arklow where Glendalough, still under Uí Muiredaig dominance, held extensive properties. It seems clear that by 1178 English control had already extended, or was in the process of extending, over the land of Wicklow. From the appointment of John Count of Moretain, son of King Henry II, as Lord of Ireland in 1177, several waves of settlers had arrived in the English Lordship.[107] Outside of ecclesiastical lands, Anglo-Norman and Welsh settlement was already extensive in the region by the 1180s.

Some indication of the rapidity with which English control extended into the land of Wicklow might be gleaned from grants of ecclesiastical sites (in many cases former properties of Glendalough) by Norman nobility.[108] The early and seemingly effective sub-infeudation of the province and the organisation of the colonised lands on a manorial basis, a process which was well advanced by c. 1200, provides further testimony to the pervasiveness of English authority within the region.[109] This manorialisation in turn introduced a marked change in the settlement pattern, as towns were built on both sides of the Leinster mountain chain, and fortified manor houses became the focal points of local settlement.[110]

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[106] *Expugnatio*, p. 88-9; Marie-Therese Flanagan, "Henry II and the Kingdom of Uí Fáeláin", in *Settlement and Society*, ed. John Bradley (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), p. 229, 234.

[107] Brian Eagar, "The Cambro Normans and the Lordship of Leinster", in *Settlement and Society*, ed. John Bradley (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), 197-8, 201.

[108] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xxix, xxxv; Meyler Fitz Henry, later justiciar, made a grant c.1186 of several former Glendalough properties to the Priory of Llanthony ; Glenealy, formerly a dependency of Glendalough, by this time the centre of a parish, was granted c.1209 to a descendant of Mac Gilla Mocholmóg (whose line was loyal to the English Lordship) in exchange for his ancestral seat of Liamain.

[109] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xxxvi; notes a sequence of manors extending southwards along the coast through Obrun, Othee and Rathdown to Wicklow and beyond; K. Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 13, comments on speed of conquest and sub-infeudation.

[110] T. B. Barry, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*, (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 72, 84-5; Idem, "The People of the Country ... Dwell Scattered: The Pattern of Rural Settlement in Ireland in the Later Middle Ages", in *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland: Studies Presented to F.X. Martin O.S.A.*, ed. J. Bradley (Kilkenny: Boethius Press, 1988), p. 348-9.

The authority of the Lordship was extended following the death of King John, when William Marshal the elder was head of a regency government; further advances in settlement and encastellation took place throughout the province (**Fig. 3E**) after the younger William Marshal succeeded to the Lordship of Leinster.[111]

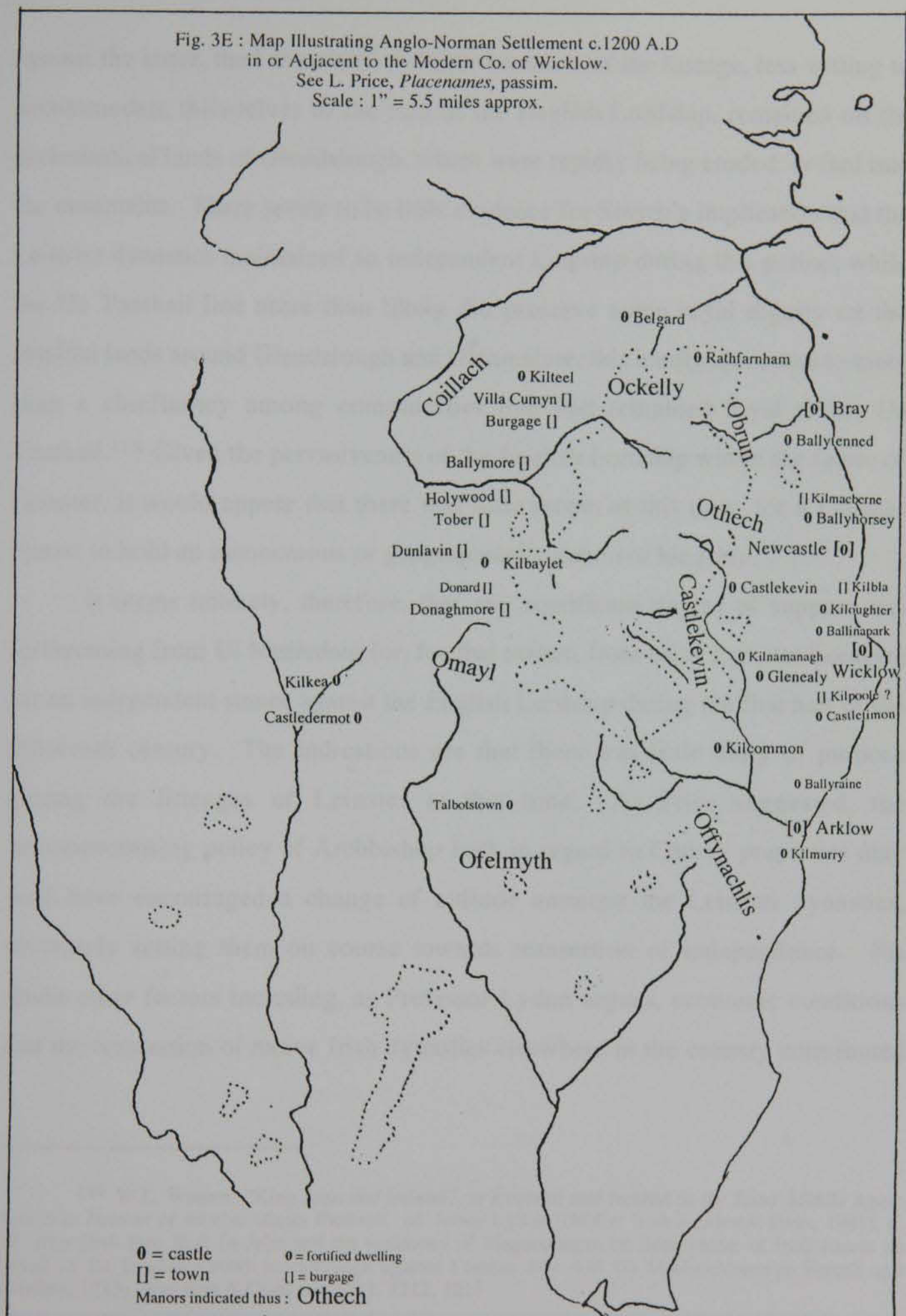
Already, by the early thirteenth century, the Ua Tuathail line would appear to have become geographically scattered and politically divided. Some were living as tenants, especially in the manors of Omayl and Castlekevin, where they came within the sphere of English law, married into Anglo-Norman families and adopted certain customs of the settlers.[112] The case of Lorcán Ua Tuathail, slain in 1214, provides a curious illustration of how one branch of the lineage combined loyalty to the English Crown with retention of dignity in the Gaelic order. The dynast in question, apparently styled *rígdamna Laigen*, would seem to be identical with Laurentius, father of Meyler, who was confirmed in possession of an extensive holding by Archbishop Luke.[113] On that account, in spite of grandiose pretensions, Lorcán's position within the English system was probably that of tenant-in-chief in the Manor of Castlekevin. The circumstances of his death, slain in Fercall by Maelsechlainn Óg Ua Maelsechlainn, would suggest that he was leading Irish forces in the service of the English Crown

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111 James F. Lydon, "The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony 1215-54", in *A New History of Ireland*, vol. II, *Medieval Ireland 1169-1534*, ed. Art Cosgrove (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 157-8, 166-7.

112 *Calendar*, p. 110-11, 121, 128, 136, 141; A.S.Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 73 n. 67, observes the roles of Symon, Elias, Bortan, Duciessa, Ricardus and Muirchertach Ua Tuathail within the manorial system and the use of Anglo-Norman personal names; Calendar of Justice Rolls, p. 271, records a grant of English law in 1209 by William Marshal to Gilla Pátraic Ua Tuathail; see James F. Lydon, "Medieval Wicklow: A Land of War", in *Wicklow: History and Society*, ed. Ken Hannigan and W. Nolan, forthcoming.

113 A. Clon. s.a. 1214., as rendered by MacGeoghegan, reads 'Lorcan O'Twahall young prince of Leinster and next successor in the superiority of that province', which seems to paraphrase the title *rígdamna Laigen*.. A.R. 141b, *Calendar*, p. 81-2, records grant of Archbishop Luke to Meyler son of Laurentius post 1228.


Fig. 3E : Map Illustrating Anglo-Norman Settlement c.1200 A.D
in or Adjacent to the Modern Co. of Wicklow.
See L. Price, *Placenames*, passim.
Scale : 1" = 5.5 miles approx.
0 Belgard
0 Rathfarnham
Coillach
0 Kilteel
Villa Cumyn []
Burgage []
Ockelly
Obrun
[0] Bray
0 Ballyenned
Ballymore []
Holywood []
Tober []
[] Kilmacberne
0 Ballyhorsey
Othech
Newcastle [0]
Dunlavin []
0 Kilbaylet
Donard []
Donaghmore []
0 Castlekevin
[] Kilbla
0 Kiloughter
0 Ballinapark
[0]
Castlekevin
0 Kilnamanagh
0 Glenealy
Wicklow
[] Kilpoole ?
0 Castletimon
Omayl
Kilkea 0
Castledermot 0
0 Kilcommon
0 Ballyraine
Talbotstown 0
[0] Arklow
0 Kilmurry
Ofelmyth
Offynachlis
0 = castle
[] = town
Manors indicated thus : Othech
0 = fortified dwelling
[] = burgage

against the latter, then in revolt.[114] Other branches of the lineage, less willing to accommodate themselves to the rule of the English Lordship, remained on the ecclesiastical lands of Glendalough, which were rapidly being eroded, or fled into the mountains. There seems to be little evidence for Smyth's implication that the Leinster dynasties maintained an independent kingship during this period; while the Ua Tuathail line more than likely did preserve some royal dignity on the abbatial lands around Glendalough and Glenmalure, this hardly amounted to more than a chieftaincy among communities that had remained loyal to the Ua Tuathail.[115] Given the pervasiveness of the English Lordship within the fabric of Leinster, it would appear that there was little scope, at this time, for a Leinster dynast to hold an autonomous or geographically cohesive kingship.

It seems unlikely, therefore, that any significant degree of support was forthcoming from Uí Muiredaig (or, for that matter, from other Leinster lineages) for an independent stance against the English Lordship during the first half of the thirteenth century. The indications are that there was little unity of purpose among the lineages of Leinster at this time. As Price suggested, the uncompromising policy of Archbishop Fulk in regard to Church properties may well have encouraged a change of attitude amongst the Leinster dynasties, ultimately setting them on course towards reassertion of independence. No doubt other factors including, as Professor Lydon argues, economic conditions and the reassertion of native Irish dynasties elsewhere in the country contributed

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[114] W.L. Warren, "King John and Ireland", in *England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Otway Ruthven*, ed. James Lydon (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981), p. 31, cites Irish Pipe Roll 14 John and the testimony of Mageoghegan on deployment of Irish forces on behalf of the English Crown in campaign against Cormac mac Airt Ua Maelsechlainn in Fercall and Dealbna, 1213; note also A.Clon. s.a. 1211, 1212, 1213.

[115] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 105; cf. K.W. Nicholls, "Land of the Leinstermen", 540-1; perhaps a parallel might be drawn with the position of the aithech-thuatha of pre-Norman Ireland as presented by F.J. Byrne, "Senchas", p. 142; these survived "not as a coherent grouping but intermingled with neighbours (=ruling class?) perhaps on poorer land"; it was not uncommon for such aithech-thuatha to have their own chieftain, who represented them as a people rather than as a territorial unit.

political shift.[116] Nonetheless, the dismantling of Glendalough lands from c. 1256 onwards and consequent "regularisation" of tenancies could indeed have led to resistance on the part of the Ua Tuathail leadership. The threat of losing the last shred of their dignity, along with a valued protection from Feudal dues, may have been sufficient to motivate Uí Muiredaig and other Leinster lineages towards supporting those who offered armed opposition to the Anglo-Norman Lordship. The concern of the present study, however, is not with the later reassertion of independence by Uí Muiredaig and other Leinster dynasties. The fact remains that in the second third of the thirteenth century, when the Glendalough abbacy was finally suppressed, the dispossessed Ua Tuathail dynasts who occupied abbatial lands could not intervene politically to preserve the monastic status of those lands.

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[116] *Crede Mihi*, no XIII, CXXII; A.R., 119; *Calendar*, p. 97; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xlix; Fulk, for his part, was faced with a situation in which adherents of Ua Tuathail had, by the mid thirteenth century, settled on the lands of All Hallows around Rathdrum and had commenced to expand into neighbouring manors; J. F. Lydon, "Medieval Wicklow", forthcoming, points to the failure of Archbishop Fulk's policy in settling the "loyal" Muirchertach Ua Tuathail at Glenmalure and the harsh climatic conditions and poor agricultural yields c.1270.

Chapter 4: The Community and Abbacy at Glendalough up to the Tenth Century

4.1 : The Composition of the Early Community

4.1.1: The Testimony of the Seventh Century Annals

Having sketched the polity of the Laigin overkingdom, in the process outlining the political fortunes of the dynasties most closely connected with Glendalough over the span of some five centuries, the focus of the study now centres on the ecclesiastical settlement itself. Such evidence as survives would suggest that the monastic community was first established in the late sixth century. For almost two hundred years after its foundation, however, there is very little available in the way of an historical record for Glendalough. Contemporary annalistic coverage was slow to extend into Leinster and, as discussed above (1.1.1), there is no evidence of an internal chronicle prior to the late eighth century. In relation to seventh century Glendalough, four terse notices are preserved in the compilations of annals. The first of these is the obit of the patron saint, Cóemgen, followed after a gap of some four decades by record of three senior ecclesiastics - presumably heads of the community.

The obit of **Cóemgen** is clearly a calculation and, as noted earlier, is a rather unsteady one at that; the founder's death is entered twice in the record (see above p. 4, n. 9) and, while variation of dating by one year in the main compilations is probably due to slippage in the course of transcription, it seems reasonable that duplication of this kind should be the product of uncertainty in computation. The remaining three entries assigned to the seventh century could, if it were feasible to associate them with an early Ulster chronicle, be viewed as

contemporary external documentation of Glendalough. All three notices, however, are equally laconic and consist merely of simple obits.

Fig. 4A : Seventh Century Annals relating to Glendalough

618 : Cóemgen Glindi dá Lacha ... in Christo quievit.
622 : Vel in hoc anno quies Cóemgin.
660 : Colmán Glinne dá Loca quievit.
678 : Daircell mac huí Rite epscop Glinne dá Lacha ... [pausit].
687 : Quies Dochuma Chonóc ab [sic] Glinde dá Locha.

One of the first points to note is that there is no reference whatsoever in these seventh century notices (nor indeed, as will be seen presently, elsewhere in the later Glendalough record) to Dál Messin Corb, the alleged ancestral lineage of the founder, Cóemgen. The tradition regarding the ancestry of the Glendalough patron is evidently early, established well before the advent of the dynastic interests that would later dominate the settlement, and is consistently related in all versions of the saint's life and pedigree (above, 1.2.3). It could well, on that account, be correct. Yet the annals do not indicate that Dál Messin Corb retained the abbacy according to the provisions of *Córus Béscnai*, even if the latter tract tended merely to justify retrospectively the claims of families which actually enjoyed the abbatial succession and so insisted that the founding saint belonged to their lineage. The fact remains, however, that the annal coverage is scant in the extreme; there is not even a complete succession record. As noted above, there is a chronological gap of approximately forty years from the obit of the founder to that of the next recorded ecclesiastic, assuming that he in fact held the abbacy. Most of the following century (as will be examined later) is undocumented. An

argument to the effect that Dál Messin Corb did not hold the abbacy at some point in the seventh (or early eighth) century can therefore only be made *ex silencio*.[1]

The first of the three clerics whose obits are listed for the latter part of the seventh century, **Colmán**, who is accorded the soubriquet *Cerbb* (the keen or the sharp) in the Annals of Inisfallen, is not titled *abb* in any of the surviving sources; however, as Byrne in fact infers, the very fact of his inclusion in the annals at this early date may well suggest that he was head of the church.[2] The next recorded cleric, **Dairchell**, is titled *epscop* in all the annals but *ab* [sic] in the Irish Litany, where he is included among the *familia* of Cóemgen (see below 4.1.2). He is the only individual whose lineage may be identified from the annals. Curiously, the most authentic version would seem to be that in the Annals of Tigernach, which preserves the early moccu formula. Here, the cleric's name is rendered as Dairchell mac hUí Rite, apparently designating the Ulster Erainn dynasty of Dál Riata. If this dynastic association is in fact correct, it may well point to a Glendalough link with East Ulster.[3] It also raises the question of a contemporary external notice from Bangor.

The last individual included here is listed in A.U. as **Do Chuma Chonóc**, and given the title *Abbas Vallis da Locho*.[4] His personal name, in hypochoristic form, is coupled with a soubriquet apparently fashioned from adjectival use of

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[1] Later hagiographical traditions enshrine what appear to be spurious claims of Dál Messin Corb kinship on the part of Mo Libbo and other alleged members of the Glendalough community; this point will be developed below, 4.1.2.

[2] A.U. s.a. 659; A.I. s.a. 657; A.F.M. s.a. 659; C.S. s.a. 656; A.Tig. [660]; A. Clon. s.a. 656; A.Rosc. f. 159; F.J. Byrne, "Heads of Churches to c.1200 AD", in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 9 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.255; Colmán is commemorated at 12 Dec., M.T., F.G., M. Don.

[3] A.U. s.a. 677; C.S. s.a. 674; A.F.M. s.a. 676; A. Rosc. f.143; A. Clon. s.a. 674, record the obit with such name variants as mac Curetai etc., apparently mistaking the Old Irish *moccu* formula for a patronymic; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 81; see now A. P. Smyth, "Kings, Saints and Sagas", forthcoming; the *dormitatio* of Dairchell is recorded at 3 May, M.T., F.G., M.Don.

[4] A.U. s.a. 686; A.Rosc. f.148; Frag. § 93, has *Quies Do Chumai Conoc;* cf A.F.M. s.a. 685; A.Tig. [687] which appear to garble the entry: *Docummaiconog ... decc*, and *Quies do Chumaighanocc*.

the name Con[n]óc; hence Con[n]óc's Do Chumae. He is perhaps identical with Mo Chummae Chon[n]óc of the tract *Comainmnigud Nóem Hérend*, where the context seems to indicate discipleship.[5] If, therefore, the intention is to designate Do Chumae as a [former] student or 'spiritual son' of the earlier Mo Chonnóc, the possibility arises that the latter in fact had some historical association with Glendalough.

Mo Chonnóc, whose alleged British origins will be discussed presently (below, 4.1.3), features in hagiographical tradition as a member of the *familia Coemgeni*, and Kilmacanogue Co. Wicklow features among the later properties of Glendalough (below, 6.2.3 and 6.2.5). Perhaps it is merely this medieval role of Kilmacanogue within the *paruchia* of Glendalough that is reflected in the curious folk tradition collected in that parish, which relates how St. Mo Chonnóc went to visit St. Cóemgen when the latter was ill, and never returned.[6] Given the known trends in the transmission of oral data, it is by no means essential that this folk story should represent a genuine recollection of Mo Chonnóc having held any office at Glendalough.[7] In view of the likelihood, however, that a disciple of his later occupied the abbacy, the possibility that Mo Chonnóc was abbot at one time, or at least was a member of the community cannot be entirely discounted.

It is clearly the case, as observed above, that the available evidence is insufficient to facilitate reconstruction of the succession record for the first two centuries at Glendalough. Some indication can be obtained, however, of the

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[5] LL 368 b 49, 53, 55; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1669 where the list includes Mo Chummae Setnai, Mo Chummae Chuarain, Mo Chummae Chonóc. This repeated use of other saints' names in an adjectival manner seems to suggest discipleship.

[6] Lámhscribhínní na Scol, vol. 946, p. 57-8. Consulted by permission of An Roinn Béaloideasa, UCD. The story referred to here was collected in 1938 by T. Ó Síoda from Denis Doyle, an elderly resident of the parish; see A.S.Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 81.

[7] The notion of "historical gossip" not strictly part of historical consciousness and therefore not subject to the "floating" syndrome of origin tales as explained by J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition*, esp. p. 17-18, has already been discussed; see above 1.3.4.

composition of the early community, reflected in the various cults of saints that were commemorated at the settlement. Towards this end, the hagiographical and genealogical traditions of Glendalough will now be considered.

4.1.2: The Testimony of Hagiography and Genealogy

The hagiographical and genealogical heritage of Glendalough is extensive, but it is also diverse and was composed over a wide span of time with different purposes in mind. Consequently, there are problems of interpretation, some of which have already been raised (above, 1.2). Quite apart from the *Vitae Sanctorum*, other hagiographical sources such as the tract on the mothers of the saints are composite products made up of strata of varying date while the martyrologies contain numerous visible accretions. There are difficulties, therefore, with chronology and with isolating anachronisms. In addition, it is not necessarily clear whether the association of certain ecclesiastical figures should be accepted as historical or viewed merely as indications of later cult dissemination. Moreover, it seems probable that much of this material has been deliberately manipulated; it is necessary, on that account, to view it in the light of documented ecclesiastical links and known dynastic ambitions. The importance of a political context means that, even though most of the clerics named in the hagiographical data are not recorded in the annals, these retain a key role as a controlling source.

It could perhaps be argued that the Litany of Irish Saints, which Hughes considered to date from c.800 (above 1.1.7), presents us with what is ultimately the fullest guide to the composition of the early Glendalough community. The Litany, as discussed in the chapter on sources, includes a tract on the *familia Coemgeni*, possibly derived as Byrne suggested from a *Liber Confraternitatis*. The tract lists twenty five individuals who are alleged to have been companions of Cóemgen. Most of these clerics are associated in the first instance with

foundations other than Glendalough, which seems to suggest that a primary purpose of the compilers may have been to catalogue ecclesiastical settlements, represented here by their founder-patrons, that were subject to Glendalough. The value of this particular source in reconstructing the probable extent of the monastic federation will be examined later (below, 6.2.1). In regard to assessing the probable composition of the Glendalough community, however, it may be noted that while none of the individuals listed are expressly associated here with the *civitas Coemgeni*, no less than ten are assigned to it by a range of other sources of mainly Middle Irish date.

At least one of the clerics included in the Litany can be placed at Glendalough in a definite role and chronological context; this is **Dairchell** Ab (sic), almost certainly identical with the already discussed bishop-abbot Dairchell mac hUí Rite whose obit is entered at 677 (=678) in the Annals of Ulster (above, n. 3). A further three members of the Litany are associated with Glendalough in the late eighth century M.T., and in each case there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that the link may be genuine. For **Cellach**, whose *dormitatio* is recorded at 7 October where he is described as a *diaconus* and is located *in nGlind dá Locha*, there is a strong tradition to support the role here ascribed to him. A Middle-Irish gloss in F.O. places him at Dísert Cellaig, which Price identified with a site called Monastery in Knockrath Parish (By. Ballincor Nth), not far from Glendalough.[8] Cellach is also the subject of an episode in the Irish Life of Cóemgen in which the saint, irritated by the former's wordly attitude during lenten meditations, dispatches him to his own hermitage.[9] **Sil[l]án** Epscop of the Litany is almost certainly the Sillán 'epscop Glinne dá Locha' of M.T. at 10 February. He would seem to be associated with a small church which, it has been

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[8] LL 373 b 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1698, C. Plummer (ed.), *Irish Litanies*, p. 56, where Cellach features in the Litany. See M.T., F.O. at 7 Oct.; Price, *Placenames*, I., p. 16, 44; Dísert Cellaig was included among the later properties of Glendalough, see below 6.2.5.

[9] *Betha Caoimhgin*, I, § 31; II, § 16; III, § 27; see *B.N.E.*, I, p. 129, 149-50, 162-3; II, p. 125, 145-6, 157-8.

suggested, lay in the vicinity of Bray and he is possibly the subject of an otherwise un-anchored obit at 603 in the Annals of Inisfallen.[10] The third cleric from the Litany to find a parallel in M.T. is **Rufín** anchorita, commemorated as Rufín Glinni dá Locha at 22 April.[11] It seems likely that he was the holder of a dual episcopate, which will be discussed presently (below, 4.1.3).

Another ecclesiastic not included in the Litany, but associated with Glendalough in M.T. where his *dormitatio* is given at 11 January is **Anfudán**, who seems also to have been a bishop. Presumably, he is the individual so named in the tract *De Episcopis*, but little else appears to be known about him. Although he is commemorated in the later martyrologies which title him 'epscop Glinne dá Locha', there seems to be no supporting hagiographical tradition or local dedication linking him to the site. It seems reasonable, however, that he was a Leinsterman; his personal name is rare and is attested only in the genealogy of Uí Bairrche.[12]

Three other saints of the Litany are linked with Glendalough in the tract *Comainmnigud Nóem Herenn* which, as observed earlier (above 1.1.7), contains material of probable Old Irish date but appears to have been assembled in its present form in the ninth or tenth century. The individuals concerned are Mo Choe, Mo Ríóc and Máel Anbis. In the Irish Litany, both **Mo Choe** and **Mo Ríóc** are expressly associated with other more distant foundations, which would seem to suggest that their inclusion in the *familia Coemgeni* really means that their successors had agreed to be part of a Glendalough federation.[13] By linking them

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[10] LL 373 b 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1698; A.I. s.a 603: 'Quies Silláin Epscoip' seems too early for any of the three better known clerics so named, who are all accorded later obits elsewhere; A.S. MacShamhráin, "Prosopographica", 89; his church is discussed below 6.2.5.

[11] LL 373 b 48; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1699; M.T. 22 April.

[12] Rawl B. 502, 122 a 25; Lec 88 Rb; BB 126 b; *Corpus*, p.51; LL 314 a 2, 365 f 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1342, 1651; A.S. MacShamhráin, "Prosopographica", 89.

[13] LL 368 e 48, 368 f 39; cf 373 b 44, 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1671, 1672, 1698; Mo Choe is associated with Araide and Mo Ríóc with Inis Bó Finne, see below, 6.2.1.

to Glendalough in the *Comainmnigud*, the compiler may have intended simply to underline the dependancy of their foundations upon the *Civitas Coemgeni*. **Máel Anbis**, placed 'i nGlinn dá Locha' by *Comainmnigud Nóem Hérenn* is not explicitly associated with any other site in surviving sources. It may be significant that the personal name of Máel Anbis is rare and, as in the case of Anfudán discussed above, is recorded only for the Leinster lineage of Uí Bairrche.[14]

Two other ecclesiastics included in the *Comainmnigud* tract, neither of whom find mention in the Litany, are worthy of mention here. One is **Mo Chuanóc** Glinne dá Locha. While it is possible, as Ó Riain seems to imply, that this particular record is merely an error for Mo Chonnóc, the present writer is now less convinced by such an explanation.[15] The intention may instead have been to commemorate another individual whose genealogical associations will be examined later (below, 4.1.3). Then there is the case of a certain **Mo Chua** (or Crónán) who, although not expressly linked with Glendalough, is described in the *Comainmnigud* as 'mac Cóemloga', which seems to imply that he was a brother or half-brother of Cóemgen. One recalls an episode in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* in which a monk named Crónán, who seeks the saint's advice, is granted the rare concession of a feastday in common with his spiritual father.[16] It is quite possible that the two Crónáns are identical. Nonetheless, one is left with the impression that these traditions are probably not an authentic record of a Dál

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[14] LL 368 f 11; Rawl B. 502, 122 ab 17; Lec 88 Rc; BB 127 a; *Corpus*, p.52; LL 314 a 22; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1343, 1671; A.S. MacShamhráin, "Prosopographica", 94.

[15] LL 368 b 13; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1668; P. Ó Riain, index to *CGSH*, p. 257-8; note variants Mo Chonóc and Mo Conno in the R and BB mss; D.J. Brosnan (ed), "Comainm-nigud Nóem Hérenn", *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1 (1912), 339 n. 13; cf "Prosopographica", 81, where the writer accepted the equation.

[16] LL 367 g 19: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1666;*Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 43; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 254-5; M. Don. 3 June; whether the alleged relationship of the *Comainmnigud* followed the claim of joint commemoration or vice versa is unclear; see below, 6.2.4.

Messin Corb kinsman of the founder at Glendalough, but rather a reflection of cult amalgamation.

A further three clerics from the Litany, whose association with Glendalough appears to depend on later sources or on tradition of uncertain date, remain to be considered. The most prominent of these is **Mo Libbo**, perhaps to be identified with a bishop of that name in the tract *De Episcopis*.[17] A gloss in F.G. (incorporated into the text of M.Don.) at 8 January describes Mo Libbo as 'espoc ó Ghlionn dá Locha'. Certainly, there was a church dedicated to him in the vicinity of Wicklow, which later featured among the properties of Glendalough (below, 6.2.5). Leaving aside his alleged association with the *Civitas Coemgeni*, it seems likely that Mo Libbo, in spite of confusion (or perhaps obfuscation) surrounding his ancestry, was not of Leinster origin. The Litany, probably the earliest source in which he is featured, designates Mo Libbo as m. Araide, which presumably is intended to mean *moccu* Araide. The testimony of a note in M.T. and that of the tract *De Matris*, where an attempt is made to link Mo Libbo to Dál Messin Corb by making him a nephew of Cóemgen, is not only later (perhaps tenth century; above, 1.1.5), but is inconsistent. The note in M.T. at 8 January describes him as 'son of Colmad', while *De Matris* appears undecided on the identity of his mother; her name is first given as Caeltigern (allegedly a sister of Cóemgen), but an alternative version calls her Cóemóc. In the second version, Mo Libbo is clearly described as 'm. Araide de Dál Araide'.[18] More than likely, it was this confusion of traditions which caused a Middle Irish glossator in M.T. at 18 February to hesitate on placing Mo Libbo 'in Uib Eachach Ulad no i nUib Garrchon'. Apparently Ó Riain considers that the association with north-east

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[17] LL 365 f 53, 373 b 48: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1651, 1699; see A. S. MacShamhráin, "Prosopographica", 89.

[18] LL 372 c 53, 373 a 60; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1695, 1697; Colmad is also represented as the father of three other saints, Dagán, Menóc and Mo Boe; the Dál Messin Corb lineage thus implied is discussed below, 6.2.3.

Ulster was secondary and gave rise to the moccu Araide appelation.[19] The dating sequence of the sources, however, is of key importance here; he is called m. Araide in the Litany which, as remarked above, is understood to have been composed c.800. It is surely significant here that the *Vita S. Cainnici*, the earliest version of which in common with the general corpus of Latin Lives probably dates to the end of the eighth century (above 1.1.2), features a certain Liber filius Aradii to whom Cainnech entrusts his foundation of Leth Dumae in Leinster. It seems reasonable that the former, presumably identical in turn with Liber Achad Bó Chainnig whose obit is placed at 618 in A.U., should be identified with the Mo Libbo here considered.[20] If this equation is acceptable, the earliest tradition would therefore be that which traced the lineage of Mo Libbo to Dál nAraide and associated him with the *familia* of Cainnech. There is some suggestion (which will be examined below 6.2.4) that Glendalough made gains at the expense of Achad Bó; such a development could have been responsible for bringing the cult of Mo Libbo to Glendalough. It could, of course, still be argued that equally authentic traditions of like-named Dál nAraide/Achad Bó and Dál Messin Corb clerics had become confused; but given what we know of the tendency to alter hagiographical data and the factors which motivated such alteration (above, 1.1.5), this consideration appears unnecessary. If, therefore, the association of Mo Libbo with the family of Cóemgen and with Glendalough (as distinct from the absorption of his foundation into the *Paruchia Coemgeni)* are fabrications of Middle Irish date, the folk tradition related by Ronan, which represents Mo Libbo as Cóemgen's nephew and successor in the abbacy, may represent a late and rather unlikely version of events.[21]

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[19] P. Ó Riain, "Irish Section of Calendar of Saints", 85.

[20] *Vita S. Cainnici*, § 15; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 158; the separate commemoration of Liber Lethdummi in M.T. at 30 March need not preclude such an identification.

[21] Myles V Ronan, "The Ancient Churches of the Deanery of Wicklow", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 58 (1928), 132, cites a vague tradition to this effect.

In regard to **Áedán** frater Cóemáin of the Litany, evidence linking him to Glendalough would also seem to be late and inconclusive. He may be identical with Áedán mac Maine, a cleric who is closely associated with Dál Messin Corb and with *familia Coemgeni*.[22] Áedán mac Maine was apparently the patron of more than one church within the *Paruchia Coemgeni* (below, 6.2.3, 6.2.5). However, he is featured expressly as bishop of Glendalough only in the *Boruma* saga which, quite apart from its late date (twelfth century in its present form), is primarily a work of literature in which historical accuracy was not a real priority.[23] Finally, a brief mention might be made of **Affinus** the Frank; there is no explicit reference to the latter, included in the Litany as a member of the *familia Coemgeni*, ever having been part of the Glendalough community. It so happens that there was a church dedicated to him in the townland of Laragh adjacent to Glendalough; this Cill Aifféin is featured in the "Cellach episode" of *Betha Caoimghín*, but it is difficult to know what significance one should attach to this.[24] Clearly, there are issues relating to acceptance of the surviving testimony at face-value in an attempt to reconstruct the probable composition of the early community. Further steps will need to be taken in interpreting the data.

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[22] The genealogies make Áedán son of Maine son of Fergus Láebderc: LL 350 a 64; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554; *CG.SH*, p. 31; *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Paul Walsh (Maynooth, 1918), § 20 .4, p. 85; cf M.C. Dobbs (ed.), *Banshenchus*, 218. Note also Áedán of Uí Garrchon and of Cluain Dartada: LL 366 e 33, 43: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1659; *CGSH*, p. 140.

[23] LL 301 a 29-30; *Bk Leinster*, V, p. 1291; *Silva Gadelica*, ed. Standish H. O'Grady, 2 vols. (London, 1892), I, p. 372-8; II, p. 410-14; the Áedán episode involves the common literary motif of the saint's curse in connection with a battle that itself forms part of Leinster's saga heritage; in a prelude to the Battle of Dun Bolcc, the bishop offers to mediate between Aed mac Ainmirech king of Tara and Brandub, Uí Chennselaig king of Leinster; Áed's rejection of the saint's overtures earns him a curse.

[24] LL 373 b 52: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1699; L.Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 36, observes the extinct location name Killafeen; Affinus is also patron of a site in the Clonmacnois area, see below 4.3.2, 6.2.6.

Fig. 4B : Early Ecclesiastics associated with Glendalough according to the Sources

	[Litany]	Martyr.	Comainmnigud	Lives	Annals
Mo Choe	*		*		
Máel Anbis	*		*		
Mo Ríóc	*		*		
Cellach Sax	*			*	
Mo Chonnóc	*				
Rufin	*	*			
Sillán	*	*			
Darchell	*				*
Mo Libbo	*	*			
Guaire	*			*	
Áedán	*				
Anfudán		*			
Mo Chuanóc		*			
Crónán		*		*	
Berchán				*	

Fig. 4B: Pedigree of Cóemgen LL 351 e 18

Mess Corb*

Crinfed*

Cóemfed*

Cóemlug* = ***Cóemell*** LL 372 a 40

Cóemgen LL 350 a 44; 372 a 43 — ***Cóemoc*** — **Cóemán** LL 372 a 40 — **Nad Cóem** LL 372 a 40 — ***Caeltigern [Cóemóc]*** LL 372 c 50; 373 a 59 — ***Mella*** LL 352 a 65

Dagán — **Molibba** — **Mo Boe** — **Menóc**

Abbán

4.1.3: Early Glendalough: Interpreting the Composite Picture

Any assessment of early Glendalough must surely take account of the probability that, at the time of the initial foundation in the late sixth century, the polity of Leinster (as argued above in Chapter 2) had not yet assumed the shape it was to have in the Classical period. Even as the fledgling ecclesiastical settlement first began to spread its wings in the seventh century, the extensive Laigin over-lordship of the midlands and of north-east Munster, discernible in the "proto-historic" annals and still reflected in the eighth century genealogies, was as yet not far in the past. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the political heritage of early Glendalough should have facilitated the establishment of a network of contacts with other ecclesiastical centres in Munster, in east Ulster and in northern Britain.

Perhaps it is in this context that the alleged association with Glendalough of many of the above-discussed ecclesiastics needs to be viewed. The abbot Dairchell, whose obit is entered in A.U., is probably the only figure from the Litany whose place in the community can be ascertained with any degree of confidence. Bishop Sillán's placement at Glendalough may also be historically correct and one could argue a case for certain others including Cellach the deacon. Most of the group however, as already observed, clearly owe their inclusion in the Litany to the fact that their foundations were absorbed into the *Paruchia Coemgeni*. Where a personal association with Glendalough was alleged, as in the case of Mo Ríóc and Mo Libbo, this would seem to reflect cult diffusion rather than an historical role. Nonetheless, the extension of a monastic *familia* and the diffusion of saints' cults in all probability involved mobility of personnel. Therefore, placement of the cults in question within a politico-geographical context may to some degree indicate the composition of the community and so bring to light the dynastic interests involved.

In the case of Bishop Sillán, identification with Sillán son of Fáilbe of the Corco Loígde was tentatively suggested by Ó Cléirigh.[25] On the basis of available evidence, a Corco Loígde origin for Mo Ríóc also seems distinctly possible. Certainly, there is a Mo Ríóc m.h. (moccu) Laigde mentioned in the *Comainmnigud* tract, while in the Second Litany of Irish Saints a gloss above the invocation 'Dá fher déc la M'Ríóc dar muir, per Iesum' gives Mo Ríóc's lineage as M[ac] h[Uí] Loegde.[26]

Regardless of whether the alleged association of these ecclesiastics with Glendalough was historical or not, given the slow contraction of Leinster overlordship in Munster, which had been supported by Corco Loígde rulers perhaps as late as the seventh century (see above 2.1.2), a link between this dynasty and Glendalough is not inherently improbable. Dedications to Munster saints are plentiful in north and east Leinster, and include Cell Ingen Léinín (Td and Par Killiney), Cell Gobbáin (Td. and Par. Kilgobbin) and Tech Mo Locé (Td. Templeogue, Par. Tallaght), later brought within the *familia Coemgeni*.[27] Whether this represents paruchial expansion or merely cult dissemination is not at issue. In either case, it almost certainly involved some input from Munster. Indeed, there are clear indications that Glendalough in turn established its own interests in Munster; this extension of the *Paruchia Coemgeni* will be examined in due course (below, Ch. 6).

Indications towards a connection with the north-east are considerably stronger. As noted earlier, the abbot Dairchell would appear on the evidence of

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[25] *Gen Reg.* § 38, p.128; at the end of the relevant pedigree Ó Cléirigh adds 'S. episcopus Lismorensis 21 Dec; S. episcopus Glenndálachensis 10 Februarj'.

[26] LL 368 f 37, 39, 373 d 58; *CGSH*, p. 152; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1672, 1701, where the gloss is unclear; Anne O'Sullivan suggests Mac h. [nD]ega, but admits that the first two letters are doubtful; C. Plummer, *Ir Lit.*, p.66 n.10, acknowledges that LL is unclear, but LB, Uí M and Ad Ms 30512 (Br Mus) all read M h Loegde, with Laegde in H.1. 11 (TCD).

[27] Mo Locé may represent a localisation of Mo Laga mac Duibdligid, who would appear to be of Fer Maige Féne origin; See LL 350 g 60, 351 a 6, 351 c 33; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1560, 1563; *CGSH*, p. 36; see below, 6.2.5.

his obit to have belonged to the Ulster lineage of Dál Riata. The genealogical tradition linking Mo Libbo with Dál nAraide has also been discussed at length. Again, the historicity of the latter's personal association with Glendalough is not at issue. The ruling dynasty of Dál nAraide was prominent in the politics of Ulster well into the seventh century and had major stake in the ecclesiastical settlement of Bangor; the patron saint Comgall and several of the early abbots were traced to this lineage.[28] Given an apparently late survival of Ulster over-lordship as far south as the Boyne and genealogical indicators for the retention of Laigin links via the east midlands with the north-east (above, 2.1.3, 2.1.4), ecclesiastical connections between the overkingdoms of Ulster and Leinster would be a perfectly logical development.

For the *familia Comgalli,* the seventh century brought marked change; after the Battle of Mag Roth in 637, Dál nAraide lost out politically to Dál Fiatach and that dynasty commenced to exert influence at Bangor.[29] The changed political climate may have motivated clerics of the Cruthin lineages to move elsewhere. There is ample evidence for the establishment of Bangor interests in Leinster at a relatively early date. The Life of St. Comgall places the latter's education at Cluain Ednech, alleges that Uí Bairrche king Cormac mac Diarmata gave grants of lands around Cetharlach and claims that Fiachra of Iraird, having brought the last sacrament to Comgall, surrendered his foundation; such prior connections seem to have underlain Diarmait ua hÁedo Róin's later foundation of Dísert Diarmata.[30]

It is clear that cult diffusion on a considerable scale extended in both directions between east Ulster and northern Leinster. Several saints with north

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[28] LL 348 d 33; *Bk Leinster,* VI, p. 1540; F.J. Byrne, *Kings,* p. 108-9, 119.

[29] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.111-112, 119, discusses how Dál nAraide gave way to Dál Fiatach in political and ecclesiastical terms; he points out, however, that Bangor did not entirely become a Dál Fiatach 'royal monastery'.

[30] *Vita S. Comgalli,* §§ 3-4, 9-10, 42, 57-8;*V.S.H.,* II, p. 4, 6, 16-17, 20-1; see also F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p.145-6.

eastern associations are found within the *familia Coemgeni;* these include Murdebur, whose lineage is traced to Dál nAraide but who more likely belonged to the Sogain, and also Tua, who was related to the Airthir of Co. Armagh.[31] By the same token, there is evidence to suggest that saints' cults from Glendalough became established in the north east. There is reference to Mo Chóemóc Bennchuir in *Comainmnigud Nóem Hérenn*, while at least two ecclesiastical placenames in that vicinity seem to preserve dedications to Cóemgen.[32] The tract on homonymous saints seems to indicate that other cults from the *familia Coemgeni* gravitated northwards; hence we find Liber i nInbiur Latharnai and Mo Boe ó Bendchur.[33] The same source testifies to a Mo Chummae moccu Chéin who may (in view of the tendency to confuse such hypochoristic variants) be identical to Mo Chonna of Inis Pátraic (off the coast of Skerries) and to Mo Chummae moccu Gaili. This seems to suggest that the cult of Mo Chonnóc was carried northward through the land of the Ciannachta into east Ulster.[34]

With on-going contact between east Ulster and Glendalough reflected in hagiographical sources and in the diffusion of saints' cults, a gloss in F.G. at 22 April, which credits Rufín Glinne dá Locha of the Litany and of M.T. with a dual episcopate, may merit some consideration. The gloss, which is necessarily of post-twelfth century date although the language suggests an Old Irish Source, describes him as 'epscop Glinne dá Locha ocus Bennchoir'.[35] Indeed the

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[31] LL 347 g 13, 348 e 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1533, 1542; foundations associated with Ulster saints including Murdebur and with Tua are recorded among the possessions of Glendalough; see below, 6.2.1, 6.2.5.

[32] LL 368 d 6; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1670; note Tullykevin (Par. Greyabbey, By. Ards Lwr.) and Tullykevan (Par. Clonfeacle, By. Armagh); see also below, 6.2.6.

[33] LL 367 f 28, 368 e 11; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1666, 1670.

[34] LL 368 b 30, b 56, c 19; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1668-9; note the name Gilla Mochonna among Síl nÁedo Sláine of Brega, LL 335 e 1; Rawl B 502, 144 b 34; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1466; *Corpus*, p. 161; note a branch of the Ciannachta to the north-west of Dál nAraide, and Gailraige among the *forsluinte* of Uí Echdach; see Rawl B 502 .157; Laud 610 .331; LL 331 a 25:*Corpus*, p.278: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1444.

[35] F.G. 22 April; there is no obit for Rufín, but if identified with the *Anchorita* of the Irish Litany; LL 373 b 48: *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1699; a seventh century floruit would be in order.

apparently strong case for interaction between these two ecclesiastical centres lends credence to the even later testimony of Míchél Ó Cléirigh. The latter, who incorporated the Rufín gloss into the text of his Martyrology of Donegal, preserves a genealogical tradition which accords a Cruthin origin to Colmán Cerbb of Glendalough. The latter is traced to the Ulster hero Celtchar mac Uithechair, whose alleged descendants include the Rosraige and Corccraige, *forsluinte* of Cruthin lineage Uí Echach Cobo.[36] Given the cumulative weight of the evidence for Ulster-Leinster contacts, the tradition may be authentic; moreover, it appears that Ó Cléirigh had access to Ulster genealogical data now lost. Finally, in view of the above-outlined convergence of circumstance, it is tempting to identify the Cuana mac Taláin, for whom Ó Cléirigh also gives a Cruthin pedigree, with the above-discussed Mo Chuanóc of Glendalough. The Cuana in question is traced to a certain Sodain Salbuide, an alleged son of the eponymous Fiachu Araide, which likely represents a population group of the Sogain settled in the realm of Dál nAraide.[37] It must be acknowledged that genealogical data preserved only in late sources may represent late traditions or may have been conventionalized; however, in view of the various indicators of earlier date already discussed, it would seem reasonable that these traditions should be authentic. That in itself need not imply that historical personal connections are attested here; in all probability, the collective corpus of evidence simply reflects cult-diffusion. That in turn, however, the present writer would argue, probably involved exchange of personnel between Glendalough and Bangor. It may also help to explain the record (perhaps in a Bangor chronicle) of obits for seventh century Glendalough ecclesiastics.

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[36] M. Don. 22 Apr., 12 Dec.; see Rawl B 502 .157; Laud 610 .331; LL 331 a : *Corpus*, p. 278; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1444; however, saints pedigrees traced to Ulaid hero-figures may represent politically motivated alterations; see P. Byrne, "Ancestry of St Finnian", esp. 30, 35.

[37] P. Walsh (ed.), *Gen Reg*, § 23, p. 99.

It seems reasonable, indeed, as Leinster dynastic interests extended via north-east Ulster into northern Britain (above, 2.1.4, 2.1.5) that Glendalough, perhaps availing of an association with Bangor, should have pursued ecclesiastical links across the Irish Sea. Evidence for transmission of the cult of Cóemgen overseas is limited; he is patron of a parish in the Isle of Man, while other Glendalough saints commemorated in Britain belong to a specific group which merits separate consideration (below, 4.2.1). Attention here will focus on saints' cults which seem to have been imported from southern Britain and re-exported to the north. The cults of saints Petróc and Mo Chonnóc, who (as noted above 4.1.1) feature prominently in the hagiography of Glendalough, are closely associated by tradition with Wales and Cornwall.

The origins of **Mo Chonnóc**, as then understood, can be traced in Glendalough hagiographical tracts of ninth to tenth century date. He is clearly identical to Colmán Brit, the patron of Gallen (By. Garrycastle, Co. Offaly), is represented as a brother of Mogorróc of Deirgne (both allegedly sons of Dina, the daughter of a Saxon king, and Brachan, king of Brychyniog) and is included among the *familia Coemgeni*.[38] This genealogical tradition may have formed the basis for a folk story referred to by Price, which represents Mo Chon[n]óc and Mo Gorróc as nephews of St David; not necessarily genealogically correct, it may reflect some memory of a connection between Glendalough and South Wales. Colmán Brit or Mo Chonnóc is probably in turn to be identified with Conóc or Mo Canóc, who is associated in British hagiography with Broconnoc, in Cornwall.[39] As previously noted, there is evidence to suggest that the cult of Mo Chonnóc was carried via the east midlands into east Ulster; on the basis of Nicholaisen's argument on the formation of ecclesiastical placenames with the element Cell (above, 1.3.3), there are indications that the cult was relayed from

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[38] LL 367 b 39, 372 d 42, 373 b 47; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1663, 1696, 1699.

[39] *The Lives of the British Saints*, ed. J.R. Fisher and Sabine Baring-Gould, 2 vols. (London, 1909) II, p.169-70; L. Price, *Placenames*, V, p.323-4.

there into northern Britain. The obsolete placename Kilmachonock (recorded in the Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, at 1664), apparently near North Knapdale, Argyll and perhaps also the commemoration of Mo Chonnóc at Inverkeilor, Forfar, seem to indicate diffusion from Ireland.[40]

The other cult considered here, that of **Petróc**, may also have been inherited from southern Britain. This saint is almost certainly to be identified with Petróc of Padstow in Cornwall, in turn perhaps identical with Petróc son of Glywys. The latter in a medieval life by John of Tynemouth, was represented as a fellow student with Cóemgen under Bishop Eógan and later as teacher of Daccán of Inber Daeile, another alleged Dál Messin Corb saint. Having become closely identified with Glendalough interests, Petróc was accorded a spurious Dál Messin Corb origin.[41] Again, his cult seems to have travelled to southern Scotland, where the placename Kilfedder is recorded.[42] There are indications that other British saints' cults, aside from those associated with Glendalough, were re-exported from Ireland to northern Britain. Bishop Sanctán, to whom a church in Glenasmole (Par. Tallaght, By. Uppercross, Co. Dublin) is dedicated, may be a case in point; he is also commemorated in the Parish of Santon, Isle of Man.[43] Pián of Cell Phiáin in Osraige allegedly a companion of Mo Chonnóc, seems to be commemorated at two sites called Keeil Vian, both in the Parish of Lonan, Sheading of Garff, Isle of Man.[44]

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[40] William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Placenames of Scotland*, orig. publ. Edinburgh 1926, reissued (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), p. 282.

[41] Rawl B. 502, 120 b 30; LL 350 a 6, for Dál Messin Corb origin of Petrán of Cell Lainni (Petra in B.B); see *Corpus*, p. 41; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554; note Petar commemorated at 4 June M.T.; he is perhaps patron of the several Kilpedders in the vicinity of Glendalough; below, 6.2.6.

[42] W.F. Nicholaisen, "Gaelic Placenames", 24, notes Kilfedder in Galloway, the placename suggesting re-importation from Ireland ante c.800; A. Mac Donald, "Gaelic *Cill*", 9, notes Kilpheder in South Uist, which he associates with St. Peter the Apostle.

[43] LL 353 b 5, makes Sanctán a son of Canton, Rí Bretan; cf 372 c 70, where he is son of Deichter, daughter of a king of Ulster and one Samuel Cendisil; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1580, 1695.

[44] L. Price, *Placenames*, II, p. 76-7; P.M.C. Kermode, *Manx Archaeological Survey*, IV, p. 37.

The process was, of course, two way. The cult of the Northumbrian saint Cuthbert was clearly brought from Lindisfarne to Cluain Dolcáin, itself a major centre of the *paruchia Coemgeni,* where it is commemorated in the placename Cell Mochudric.[45] The extinct placename Kilbla (Par.Killiskey, By. Newcastle, Co Wicklow) may refer to Bláán of Dunblane, and so represent an import from northern Britain.[46] Questions may be raised as to whether the ample evidence for dissemination of saints cults discussed here actually implies that mobility of ecclesiastical personnel took place between Glendalough and Britain at an early period. There are indications that, at least in some cases, it may reflect such a development. Just as Strathclyde placenames coined with the element *Cell* are suggestive of pre-Norse Irish settlement (above, 2.1.4), there are ecclesiastical placenames in northern Leinster which seem to indicate British communities of uncertain date. Tech Bretan (Td. Tibradden, Par. Cruach) and Kilbritton, which features among the later possessions of Glendalough and would appear to represent Cell na mBretan, are two examples.[47]

The indications appear to be, therefore, that the early Glendalough community had wide-ranging contacts and included elements from Munster, east-Ulster and perhaps from Britain. Evidence for a presence on the part of Dál Messin Corb, the alleged kindred of Cóemgen, remains to be considered. As discussed above (4.1.1), there is nothing in the surviving annals to suggest that the lineage concerned retained the abbacy, but available evidence is simply insufficient. It does appear that efforts to appropriate various saintly founders whose communities were absorbed into the *familia Coemgeni*, and attach them

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[45] *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey*, ed. John T. Gilbert, 2 vols. (London: Rolls Series, 1884), I, p. 173, where a marginal note identifies Kilmacudrick (Td. and Par. Kilmacudrick, later Par. Clondalkin) as one of the properties of Clondalkin transferred by Master Osbert to Leonard, abbot of St. Mary's, c. 1185; note also dedication of Kirkudbright; C.A. Raleigh Radford, "The Early Church in Strathclyde and Galloway", *Medieval Archaeology*, 11 (1967), 122.

[46] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 409.

[47] A.R. f. 21 b, 20 b; *Calendar*, p. 2, 21; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 444, suggests that Cell Britton was in Td. Ballinameesda, Par Ennisboyne, Co Wicklow; below, 6.1.5.

to the Dál Messin Corb genealogies appear late and contrived (below, 6.2.3). There is nothing, therefore, in the early record to suggest that the patron's kindred provided an abbot at Glendalough or, indeed, played any prominent role at the site. This does not preclude the possibility that discard segments of Dál Messin Corb retained a vested interest in the affairs of Glendalough and its *paruchia*. There are indications that *forsluinte* of that lineage, including Uí Bissi, Uí Alldae and Uí Lonáin established a presence at several ecclesiastical settlements in the region (perhaps including Glendalough itself) and may have risen, on occasion, to provide an *aircinnech* at one of the lesser churches. It seems likely that the herdsman blessed by the youthful Cóemgen at his hermitage was represented as a member of Uí Bissi, which may suggest some role for that segment at Glendalough.[48] Record of a *forsloinne* called Uí Alldae may reflect some connection with Mo Boe m.h. All[d]ae of Cluain dá an Dobair.[49] At a later date, the family of Ua Lonáin supplied a hereditary *airchinnech* at Cell Rannairech, while an occasional descendant of Cóemgen's lineage apparently aspired to higher ecclesiastical office at other sites.[50] It may, in fact, have been this very capacity on the part of Dál Messin Corb clerics to infiltrate the Glendalough network that helped to preserve the genealogical tradition of Cóemgen and to foster traditions of other alleged Dál Messin Corb saints associated with the foundation. Ultimately, such a resilient substratum could well have prompted later dynastic interests to accept the Dál Messin Corb as a "flag of convenience" for paruchial expansion, as outlined above (1.1.5).

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[48] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 7; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 237, "pastor quidam cuiusdam patris familias qui dicebatur Bi"; note Uí Bissi, Rawl. B. 502, 120 bb 15; LL 384 b; *Corpus*, p. 40.

[49] LL 372 a 50, 373 b 47, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1693, 1699; A.R., f. 1b; *Calendar*, p. 5, cf ibid., index p. 327, where Cluain dá an Dobair is tentatively identified with Cloney, By. Narragh Reban, Co. Kildare; see also below, ch. 6.

[50] Ua Lonáin features as *airchinnech* of Cell Rannairech (Kilranelagh, Co Wicklow) in the *Boruma* saga: LL 301 a 25, *Bk Leinster*, V, p. 1291; Ua Garbháin, bishop of Kilcullen †1030 A.F.M. may relate to the Dál Messin Corb segment of Uí Nastair: see Rawl. B 502, 120 ab 19; LL 312 cb 50 ; BB 123 b; Lec 86 ra: *Corpus*, p. 36.

4.2 : Dynastic Intervention at Glendalough Eighth to Tenth Century

4.2.1: The Dominance of Uí Máil

The scant and largely retrospective annals for the seventh to early eighth century may not provide the sharply focused picture of the Leinster polity that we would prefer to have; however, there is sufficient evidence to show a Laigin overkingship dominated (if not entirely monopolised) by the dynasty of Uí Máil throughout most of this period. Even when the rival Uí Dúnlainge lineages managed to displace Uí Máil from the overkingship, it seems clear that the latter dynasty retained considerable influence in north-eastern Leinster up to the end of the eighth century. The economic and strategic advantages that ruling dynasties stood to gain by securing their interests at expanding ecclesiastical settlements are well understood; moreover, there is ample evidence to suggest that emerging *civitates* such as Kildare had already succumbed to dynastic ambitions as early as the mid seventh century (above, 2.2.1). From the foregoing discussion, it appears that the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough had probably expanded to some degree by this time, and certainly had established a network of contacts which extended well beyond the boundaries of the Laigin overkingdom. On that account, it is scarcely a surprise that hagiographical tradition should reflect a significant Uí Máil involvement at Glendalough.

The annals for this period, such as they are, have nothing to say about an Uí Máil presence at Glendalough or about the dynasty intervening in ecclesiastical affairs. However, as already observed, the record is neither contemporary nor continuous. In fact with the exception of a single obit for the year 712 (that of the abbot Dubgualai, who is discussed below), the annals are silent about the *Civitas Coemgeni* for most of the eighth century. The virtual absence of a chronological framework for Glendalough throughout this period poses difficulties of interpretation in regard to the hagiographical data. The Latin

Life of Cóemgen attributes a role to Uí Máil in the construction of the saint's *civitas;* the Irish Life is even more explicit in claiming rights to succession in the abbacy. The composite character of these sources has already been discussed. The difficulty, therefore, lies in whether to accept such episodes as testimony to the period of original composition, perhaps around the end of the eighth century, or to view them as products of later redaction. Supporting evidence is needed to confirm the implication that Uí Máil was already associated with Glendalough by the eighth century.

The political development of northern and eastern Leinster in the early eighth century, as charted in the annals, clearly involved quite intensive activity on the part of Uí Máil in that region. Several of the sons of Cellach Cualann were slain in the mountain heartland; in 710, Fiachra and Fianamail fell in the *Bellum Selggae* not far from Glendalough (above, 2.1.4). An indication that Uí Máil more than likely had established an involvement with the ecclesiastical settlement at an early date comes from the genealogies. The occurrence of the personal name Máel Cóemgin at a ninth century level among the descendants of Crimthann Cualann, thus marking devotion to St. Cóemgen, suggests that the dynasty had developed a Glendalough orientation by that time if not earlier.[51] The significance of such naming practices has been discussed above (1.2.2). Even if it may not be precisely datable, it is surely significant that a gloss in F.O. locates Glendalough in the territory of Uí Máil.[52] From available evidence, therefore, Uí Máil emerges as the dominant force in local politics throughout the period concerned and would seem to have become involved in the affairs of the ecclesiastical settlement by the ninth century at least.

It seems reasonable that the Lives of the Saints should be viewed in the context of the above-outlined dynastic background. The *Vita S. Coemgeni*

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[51] Rawl. B 502, 125 a 43; *Corpus*, p. 78; B. Ó Cuív, "Personal Names", p. 80-1.

[52] F.O. at 7 Oct ; incorporated in text of M.G.; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 28, 52.

includes an episode in which Cóemgen is assisted in moving to his place of resurrection by a certain 'vir bonus de nobili genere Laginensium', whose name is given as Dymma filius Fiagni.[53] Clearly, the move involved is in fact the re-establishment of the community in the lower valley. The role accorded to this Dimma, a prominent ancestral figure in the early Uí Máil genealogies from whom several lines with ecclesiastical associations claimed descent, amounts to a claim that the dynasty facilitated a major relocation at Glendalough.[54] Given the political presence of Uí Máil in the region throughout the period concerned, this is not at all improbable; a dynast of its ruling line, in his capacity as mesne king of Cualu, could indeed have approved the relevant land grant.[55] Moreover, the implication here is that the move to the lower valley was effected in the eighth century. This would fit with the composition date of c.800 proposed by Sharpe, on the assumption that the primary concerns of a hagiographer are likely to have been with developments that were still within recall, and so were deemed to be of relevance, at the time of writing.

The comparatively later date of the Irish Lives raises questions about the value of their testimony in relation to the early period. *Betha Caoimghin*, the original version of which probably dates to the Middle Irish period, aside from repeating the story of Dimma's role in re-establishing the community, is quite explicit in asserting the right of Uí Máil to the abbacy; out of gratitude to Dimma, the saint agrees that his descendants should not only be part of the community, but should supply the airchinnech.[56] Again, the Irish Lives are likely to represent

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[53] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 25, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 247.

[54] LL 316 m. inf., 316 b 10, 317 c 51, 351 f 55; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1357, 1360, 1367, 1567; has Dimma as the father of Berchán Domnaig Sinchill, and his sister Lassi married to Óengus of Uí Téig Cométa (from Killecovat /Cell Cométa? Kilquade, Par. Kilcoole); L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 386-7; note Uí Siláin < Dimma located in Uí Garrchon (above 4.1.1).

[55] C. Doherty, "Aspects of Hagiography", 313, stresses the role of the overking as *dominus terrae* in the confirmation of land grants to ecclesiastical settlements.

[56] *Betha Caoimghin*, I, § 19; II, § 8; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 127, 139-40; II, p. 123, 135-6.

composite products and it is difficult to ascertain whether this claim on the abbatial succession relates to the period considered here (i.e. to the eighth, or even ninth, century) or to a later era. It emerges that an ecclesiastical family of Uí Máil descent provided abbots in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as will be discussed later (5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1).

The Irish Life of Adamnán, which in its present form dates to the tenth century (above, 1.1.2), represents Abbot Dubgualai of Glendalough as a political pawn of Cellach Cualann, Uí Máil king of Leinster, who died in 715. In the so-called Leinster episode of *Betha Adamnáin*, the saintly abbot of Iona is required to defend the Loígis community of Telach Bregmann, apparently a minor ecclesiastical settlement in the west of the province, against the claims of Glendalough. According to the hagiographer, Cellach and Dubgualai along with the rest of the Leinster delegation, displayed an arrogant attitude and would not rise to greet Adamnán. Only Murchad mac Brain, a young dynast of Uí Dúnlainge, showed proper courtesy. As a result, an unfitting death is foretold for Dubgualai, while Cellach (and likewise High King Congal Cendmagair who oppressed Uí Dúnlainge) is condemned to political obscurity. In contrast, Murchad mac Brain is rewarded with a promise of the kingship of Leinster.[57]

Professors Ó Riain and Herbert are no doubt correct in identifying various anachronisms in the account of the meeting at Telach Bregmann, and in highlighting the message that the episode presumably carried for mid-tenth century dynasts who opposed the interests of Kells.[58] However, while Ó Riain seems convinced that the account has no relevance for eighth century history, Herbert points out that the personages named actually were contemporary with Adamnán; recasting clearly took place, but historical data was used. More to the point, her argument that the variant account of Adamnán in the Breviary of

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[57] *Betha Adamnáin*, § 10, p. 52-4.

[58] Ibid., Introd., esp. p. 17; Caoimhín Breatnach, "Review of *Betha Adamnáin*", *Éigse*, 26 (1992), 179-80, demonstrates that the homily does have import for a tenth century situation.

Aberdeen points to a common original for *Betha Adamnáin*, which was probably composed c. 800, has major implications for the value of this Life as a source for eighth century history.[59]

Indeed, examination of the dynastic relationships represented in the Life, when account is taken of the politico-ecclesiastical dimension, reveals an alignment of interests that make sense within an eighth century context. It is clear from the annals, genealogies and hagiographical sources that a coincidence of interests existed between Clann Cholmáin and the Columban federation and between Uí Dúnlainge and Kildare.[60] There are also indications that these two dynasties had found common cause by the eighth century; the so-called *Vita Prima* of Brigit, probably an eighth century product, depicts the Southern Uí Neill as being co-operative with Brigit, whereby they receive her blessing; certainly, Domnall Midi appears to have been very tolerant of Uí Dúnlainge.[61] Moreover, it seems clear that what might be described as a Clann Cholmáin/ Uí Dúnlainge politico-ecclesiastical alliance faced open hostility from Cellach Cualann. The latter, who had previously featured as a signatory to the *Cáin Adomnáin*, appears to have turned against Columban interests.[62] In 704, the year in which Adomnán and the High King Loingsech mac Óengusso both died, Cellach slew Bodbcath Midi (an uncle of Domnall Midi), whose dynasty's growing connection with the Columban Church would shortly become manifest.

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[59] M. Herbert, "Beathaí na Naomh", p. 13; Eadem, *Iona, Kells*, p. 162-3, 171-3, contends that the common original would need to have reached Kells in late 9th/ early 10th century, which suggests a composition date of c.800; see also C. Breatnach, "Review", 181-2.

[60] A.U. s.a. 726, records a renewal of *Cáin Adomnáin* by Cilléne mac Droichtech, a Southern Uí Néill abbot of Iona; ibid. s.a.762, for the death of Domnall Midi of Clann Cholmáin at Durrow; A.U., A.F.M. s.a. 792, for obit of Condal abbess of Kildare, daughter of Murchad mac Brain; earlier Uí Dúnlainge connections with Kildare are discussed above (2.2.2).

[61] *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*, § 64-5, ed. Seán Connolly, *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Irl.*, 119 (1989), 6-7, 31-2; F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 156; earlier Clann Cholmáin support for Uí Dúnlainge has been discussed (above, 2.2.2).

[62] M. Ní Dhonnchadha, "Guarantor List", 194, for record of Cellach as a signatory to *Cáin Adomnáin;* M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells*, p. 159-60, notes that the later preface to the *Cáin* accuses Cellach of having rejected Adomnán's Law.

Some years later, sons of Murchad mac Brain slew two sons of Cellach Cualann.[63] Against this background, there is nothing at all improbable about Uí Máil support for Glendalough ambitions in west Leinster, prompting Columban and Kildare interests to find common cause in resisting such efforts.

The inference of *Betha Adamnáin*, therefore, that Dubgualai was an appointee of Cellach Cualann, or at least was directed by him, may not be without substance. It is interesting to note that A.U. records this abbot's death using the formula 'periit' suggesting that he died violently, perhaps the victim of political aggression.[64] Indicators towards a more orthodox ecclesiastical involvement on the part of Cellach's family line are not wanting. As Paul Byrne initially suggested, it is distinctly possible that Fianamail mac Gerthide, abbot of Clonard, was a brother of Cellach; his attainment of abbacy some years after the latter's death suggesting either a prior term as secnap or a "compensatory" appointment.[65] Account should also be taken of the later religious careers of a daughter and grandson of Cellach; the latter, indeed, was commemorated at Glendalough (a point which will be developed presently; see below, **Fig. 4C**). Available evidence, therefore, appears to substantiate the picture presented by the Lives of the Saints; that the dynasty of Uí Máil, which in any event remained a major political power in the region throughout the eighth century, intervened at Glendalough from the time of Cellach Cualann or from shortly thereafter. Prior dynastic involvement in the affairs of the ecclesiastical settlement would therefore provide the context for the apparent role of Uí Máil in sponsoring the move to the lower valley.

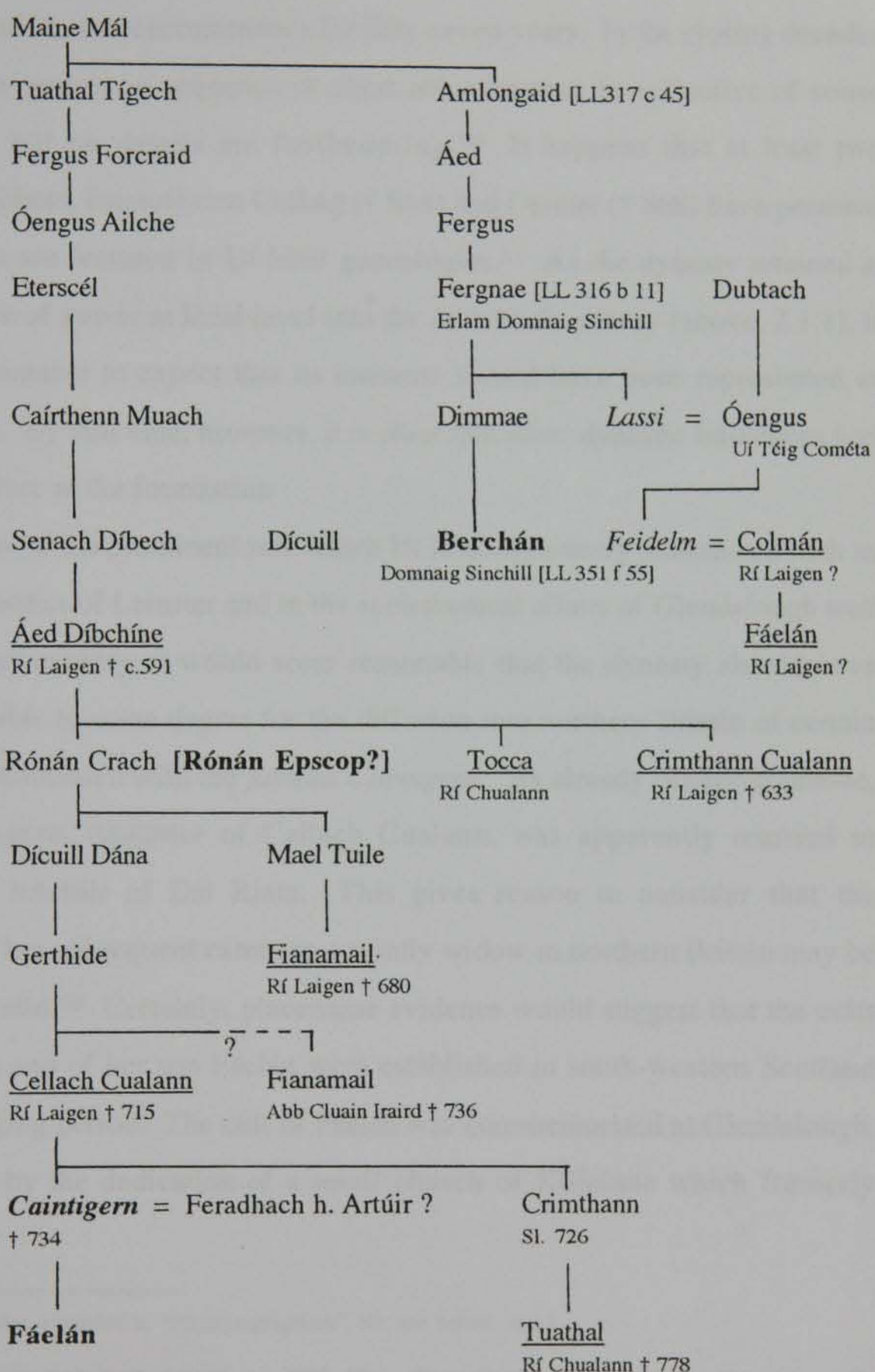
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[63] A.U. s.a.a. 703, 725, 726; A.F.M. s.a.a. 702; 721; see above, 2.2.1.

[64] A.U. s.a 711; as an ecclesiastical obit it is certainly unconventional.

[65] A.U. s.a. 735; A.F.M. s.a. 731; P. Byrne, "Monastery of Clonard", p. 81-2; Idem, "Community of Clonard: Sixth to Twelfth Centuries", *Peritia*, 4 (1985), 161, seems to reject the identification (originally made by W. M. Hennessy; A.U., I, p. 192-3, n. 6); however, Uí Máil is the only Leinster dynasty for which the personal name Fianamail is recorded; see Rawl. B. 502, 125 a 6, 23; *Corpus*, p. 76, 77; for "compensatory abbacy", see below 5.2.1.

Fig. 4C : Saints of the Uí Máil



Rawl B 502 125 a ; LL 351 h

It is unfortunate that the record of abbatial succession breaks off after the obit of Dubgualai and does not recommence for fifty-seven years. In the closing decades of the eighth century, a sequence of short abbacies may be reflective of some disturbance, but no details are forthcoming.[66] It happens that at least two subsequent abbots, Etarscél mac Cellaig († 814) and Dainiél († 868) have personal names which are featured in Uí Máil genealogies.[67] As the dynasty retained a certain degree of power at local level into the mid-ninth century (above, 2.1.1), it is not unreasonable to expect that its interests should have been represented at Glendalough. By that time, however, it is clear that other dynastic influences had come to the fore at the foundation.

In view of the prominent role which Uí Máil apparently maintained both in the secular politics of Leinster and in the ecclesiastical affairs of Glendalough well into the eighth century, it would seem reasonable that the dynasty should have been responsible to some degree for the diffusion into northern Britain of certain saints' cults associated with the *familia Coemgeni*. As already observed (above, 2.1.4) Caintigern, daughter of Cellach Cualann, was apparently married to Feradach ua hArtúir of Dál Riata. This gives reason to consider that the placement of her subsequent career as a saintly widow in northern Britain may be historically valid.[68] Certainly, placename evidence would suggest that the cults of Caintigern and of her son Fáelán were established in south-western Scotland in the pre-Viking period. The cult of Fáelán was commemorated at Glendalough, as is attested by the dedication of a small church of Killelane which formerly

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[66] A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 82; see below, 4.2.2.

[67] A.U. s.a. 813, 867; A.F.M. s.a. 809, 866; Rawl B. 502, 125 a 18-19; *Corpus*, p. 77; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 82-3; see also below, 4.2.2.

[68] F.O. at 20 Jan records Fáelán of Ráith hErenn; Breviary of Aberdeen associates Caintigern, Fáelán and Congan in various combinations with Turriff, Inchcailloch, Siracht and Strathfillan; see A.O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, I, p. 231; note also Kilchintorn, south of Loch Duich; W.J. Watson, *Celtic Placenames of Scotland*, p. 301-02; Kilfillan in Ayreshire, and Kilellan in Lanark; W.F. Nicholaisen, "Gaelic Placenames", 24-5.

stood near the site of St. Saviour's.[69] Commemoration of Fáelán in Fer Tulach and the occurrence of another Killalane in the territory of the Ciannachta (Par. Skerries, By. Balrothery East) may represent intermediary stages in the diffusion of his cult.[70]

It is probably significant that several other church founders, including Rónán and Berchán (perhaps identical with a Glendalough saint of that name) whose cults are transmitted to northern Britain, are also traced to Uí Máil lineages. Within the home territories of north Leinster, Rónán was associated with a site in Uí Chellaig Cualann and Berchán with the old foundation of Domnach Sinchill, which had apparently been appropriated by Uí Máil; a certain Fergnae mac Fergusa of Uí Máil is described in the genealogies as 'in sechtmad érlam Domnaig Sinc[h]ill'.[71] An Uí Máil connection may therefore explain the Glendalough dedication Reccles an dá Sinchell although, as is so often the case, the date of this church is unknown.[72]

4.2.2 : The Dominance of Uí Dúnlainge

The dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge, having achieved political dominance in Leinster when Murchad mac Brain succeeded Cellach Cualann in 715, continued to consolidate its position throughout the eighth century (above, 2.2.1). As with their Uí Máil rivals, the Uí Dúnlainge kings had already established close contacts

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[69] L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 36, notes the obsolete placename Killelane, recorded in the Hearth Money Rolls at 1668, in Td. Laragh; the site was beside the already-mentioned Killafeen, which commemorated Affinus the Frank; see above, n. 24.

[70] M.T. at 9 Jan. and at 26 Aug. commemorates Fáelán of Cluain Moescna, which a gloss locates in Fer Tulach; significantly, Dál Messin Corb saints Scoth and Mengán are also placed here; LL 353 b 61; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1581.

[71] LL 316 b 10, 351 f 65, h 29; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1357,1567, 1569; K.W. Nicholls, "Medieval Leinster Dynasties", 410, locates Raith Rónáin in the Glenasmole area; M.C. Dobbs, "Women of Uí Dúnlainge", 198.

[72] LL 352 a 8, 19, preserves the pedigrees of Sensinchell and Ócsinchell; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1569; A.F.M. records that this church at Glendalough, the site of which is unknown, was burned in 1163.

with the ecclesiastical settlements of the region. The dynasty was not without its saints, most of whom characteristically are traced to the less prestigious lineages.[73] However, it was the line of Fáelán mac Colmáin, *a quo* the Uí Dúnlainge kings of the historical period, which dominated Kildare (above, 2.2.2). Fínsnechta Cetharderc, who reigned as overking of Leinster from 795 to 808, won for his own lineage of Uí Dúnchada a near monopoly of the abbacy of Kildare which lasted throughout the ninth century. Available evidence would seem to suggest that the establishment of Uí Dúnlainge interests at Glendalough may also date from this period.

From the late eighth century annal-record, it may be inferred that the Uí Dúnchada lineage of Uí Dúnlainge expanded eastwards at the expense of other north Leinster dynasties, notably Uí Máil and Uí Garrchon, into what is now south Co. Dublin (above, 2.2.2). Mc Cone has observed a correlation between Uí Dúnchada expansion and the assertion of Kildare claims in northern Leinster.[74] Dedications to Brigit, for the most part undocumented and undatable, extend throughout the region; however, Tulach na nEpscop (Td. Lehaunstown, Par.Tully, By. Rathdown, Co Dublin) is the subject of a gloss in F.O., which tells of seven bishops who travelled to Kildare.[75] Presumably, this reflects the surrender of Tully to the *paruchia* of Brigit which may, in that event, have taken place in the ninth century, arising from the political assertion of Uí Dúnchada.

It would appear that this Kildare expansionism involved a clash of interests with Glendalough where, hitherto, the dynasty of Uí Máil had been dominant. Friction between these two ecclesiastical centres may well have found expression in the conflicting traditions surrounding such sites as Clondalkin, which features

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[73] For instance M'Áedóc of Cluain Mór is traced to Síl mBruidge and Berchán of Druim Dothe to Uí Áedo Cróin; LL 351 f 43, 352 a 40; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1567, 1570.

[74] Kim R. Mc Cone, "Bríd Chill Dara", in *Na Mná sa Litríocht*, Léachtaí Cholm Cille XII, ed. P. Ó Fiannachta (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1982), p. 40.

[75] F.O. at 1 Feb.; the church at Tully would seem to have carried a dedication to Brigit in late medieval times, note marginal comment in A.R. 2, f. 432; *Calendar*, p. 79.

prominently in Glendalough hagiography but is surrounded by Brigidine dedications and folk associations. There is a St Brigit's well at Clondalkin and the name of the adjacent townland of Brideswell Commons may point to another; the next parish to the west is Kilbride, taking its name from an apparently early site, while Ó Danachair cites a folk tradition that the patroness of Kildare baptised pagans at Clondalkin.[76] Again, these indicators are not possible to date. Presumably the joint *comotatio* of the relics of Cóemgen and Mochua in 790, during the abbacy of Cethernach, was intended as a statement in support of the status quo.[77] It is difficult to gauge, however, exactly what significance should be attached to the enshrinement at Kildare in 800 of the relics of Conláed; this bishop, who features as an associate of St. Brigit in the seventh century Life by Cogitosus, is elsewhere represented as a saint of Dál Messin Corb.[78]

The picture which emerges, therefore, is one of an Uí Dúnlainge overkingship which steadily increases its influence over both the secular and ecclesiastical politics of Leinster in the course of the eighth century. Apparently this enlarged ascendancy was achieved, at least to some extent, at the expense of a heretofore Uí Máil dominated Glendalough. On that account, it seems reasonable that Uí Dúnlainge should have sought to assert its authority over the *Civitas Coemgeni*. It has long been recognised that Uí Dúnlainge were successful in establishing a presence at Glendalough, achieving ecclesiastical dominance at the expense of earlier dynasties which they had already displaced in the political sphere.[79] If the annal record, still terse at this early date, falls short

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[76] Mochua of Clondalkin is among *familia Coemgeni*, LL 373 b 45; accepts the rule of Cóemgen, *Vita S. Coemgeni* § 1; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1698; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 24; below, 6.2.1, 6.2.4; see Caoimhín Ó Danachair, "The Holy Wells of Co Dublin", *Reportorium Novum*, 2 no. 1 (1958), 70.

[77] A.U. s.a. 789.

[78] A.U. s.a. 799; Fáelán mac Cellaig († 804), apparently a brother of King Fínsnechta Cetharderc, was abbot at the time; *Vita S. Brigitae* § 28; "Cogitosus: Life of St Brigit", 23; cf genealogy in LL 350 a 60, 351 e 34; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554, 1566; see below, 6.2.3.

[79] F. Ó Briain, "Hagiography of Leinster", p. 454, 460-1, observed a parallel between dynastic change and abbatial change more than fifty years ago.

of furnishing conclusive evidence of Uí Dúnlainge intervention at Glendalough, it nonetheless provides indications that such a development probably in fact occurred. The burning of Glendalough in 775 could mark an early stage in this process, although it is by no means clear from the record that this particular incident was deliberate.[80] As already observed, the abbatial record at the turn of the ninth century seems to reflect some disturbance (see above, p. 190). Following the death of the abbot Cethernach in 799, it appears that his successor Mimtenach may have met a violent end within a year.[81] Three abbots died in quick succession between 809 and 810; there is nothing in the surviving record pointing to foul play, but short tenures of office and an apparent uncertainty of sequence is not suggestive of stability.[82]

If only because of the political dominance of Uí Dúnlainge at this time, Smyth's suggestion that the abbot Etarscél mac Cellaig († 814) may have belonged to that dynasty merits some consideration.[83] The personal name Etarscél, as noted earlier, is featured prominently in the genealogies of Uí Máil and is not found in those of Uí Dúnlainge; as against that, however, there are indications of intermarriage between the two dynasties (above, 2.2.2, 4.2.1). The father of Fínsnechta Cetharderc, it will be recalled, was named Cellach. Smyth also associates, not implausibly, the gathering pace of Uí Néill aggression against northern Leinster with the extension of Uí Dúnlainge ambition towards

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[80] A.U. s.a. 774; A.F.M. s.a. 770; the burning of Glendalough is recorded along with that of Armagh, Kildare and Inis Baethín (Td. Inisboheen, Par. Dunganstown, By. Arklow), a site which seems to have formed part of the *paruchia* of Glendalough; below, ch. 6.

[81] A.U. s.a 799 includes Mimtenach in a group obituary terminating with the formula 'perierunt'; A.F.M. and A.I. do not suggest that Mimtenach died violently; it is not clear that an 'editorial policy' was followed by the compilers of A.I., but the tendency of the Four Masters to suppress unedifying data relating to ecclesiastical affairs is widely recognised. They do not record a violent end for the earlier Dubgualai; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 82.

[82] A.F.M. s.a. 804; C.S. [809], alone preserve the obit of Áed; A.I. 809 alone records Echtbrann; A.U. s.a. 809, in addition to the other annals, records Guaire; in view of the apparently inconsistent character of the record, it may be prudent to return an open verdict on the fate of abbots Áed and Echtbrann; see A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 82.

[83] A.P. Smyth, "Kings, Saints and Sagas", forthcoming.

Glendalough; he draws attention to the campaign of 819 in which the High King Áed Oirdnide devastated Cualu as far as Glendalough.[84]

In view of the indications outlined above that Uí Dúnlainge achieved political mastery over Glendalough around the turn of the ninth century, it seems reasonable that the Fáelán mac Colmáin episodes in the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, widely accepted as a reflection of Uí Dúnlainge supremacy at Glendalough, should relate to this period. These epiosodes, in which the patron Cóemgen acts as foster-father to Fáelán and brings him to Mo Chonna who prophesies the young dynast's future greatness, were once accepted by Dobbs as testimony to a seventh century situation.[85] A similar line was adopted in more recent years by Smyth; the latter, however, has changed his position in the light of on-going re-evaluations of hagiography, which stress the tendency of saints' lives to reflect the period of their composition or redaction.[86]

Sharpe's seemingly plausible argument for placing the composition of the Latin Lives around the late eighth or early ninth century (above, 1.1.2), makes it appear likely that the Fáelán episodes (like the story of the transfer to the lower valley) formed part of the original *Vita S. Coemgeni*. Establishment of Uí Dúnlainge authority in the recent past at the time of writing could well explain the hagiographer's motive in having Mo Chonna (probably to be identified with Mo Chonnóc) prophesy Fáelán's future greatness. Association of the Fáelán episodes with late eighth century developments would seem to find support from a narrative in the Uí Dúnlainge genealogies, probably composed around the same

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[84] Ibid.; A.U. s.a. 818.

[85] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 31, 33-6;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 250-2; see M.C. Dobbs, "Women of Uí Dúnlainge", 206;

[86] A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 52, 131 n.15; cf Idem, "Kings, Saints and Sagas", forthcoming; see above, 1.1.2, 2.2.1.

time as the *Vita*, in which Fáelán is referred to as 'dalta Cóemgin Glinni dá Locha'.[87]

A late eighth century 'arrival' of Uí Dúnlainge at Glendalough may also be reflected in the late addition to that dynasty's genealogies in the Book of Leinster. This credits Cellach mac Dúnchada († 776), father of Fínsnechta Cetharderc, with having granted the site of Tallaght to Maeluain and twenty-five ringforts to Cóemgen; the account continues on to praise Fínsnechta for general benefactions to the Church.[88] Indeed, the patronage role here ascribed to Uí Dúnlainge is not at all improbable; it is, moreover, quite reasonable that new masters should seek a material upgrading of a site. The suggestion once made by Leask of a ninth century date for some of the church buildings at Glendalough may, on that account, merit reconsideration; although the dating which Leask ascribed to his typology has been questioned by later scholars, it is conceded that single cell structures with antae (such as the original cathedral of Glendalough) may be early.[89] The fact remains that, in the absence of excavation evidence, it is difficult to assign a stone building (ecclesiastical or otherwise) to a particular period with confidence.

There are certain indications that an Uí Dúnlainge supremacy at Glendalough lasted at least into the early years of the tenth century. Two ninth century abbots, Suibne Ua Temnén or Ua Temneáin († 842) and Dúngal mac Báethine († 904) apparently belonged to lineages of Uí Enechglaiss.[90] This

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[87] Rawl. B 502, 124 b 35; *Corpus*, p. 74; the narrative concludes by relating the achievements of Cellach mac meic Cind Fáelad, conqueror of Uí Gabla Roírend, who probably flourished in the early eighth century; see above, 2.2.1.

[88] LL 245 in T.C.D., H. 2. 18; John T. Gilbert, *History of the City of Dublin*, 2 vols. orig. publ. 1854, reissued (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), I, p. 403-08.

[89] Harold G. Leask, *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings*, 2 vols., orig. publ. 1955, 2nd ed. (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1977), I, p. 34-5; Ann Hamlin, *Modern Traveller*, p. 57; Eadem, "The Archaeology of the Irish Church in the Eighth Century", *Peritia*, 4 (1985), 284; Peter Harbison, "Early Irish Churches", in *Die Iren und Europa im fruheren Mittelalter*, 2 vols, ed. Heinz Lowe (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), p. 620, 622.

[90] Rawl B. 502, 123 f 4, 49; LL 315 b 2, bb 6; *Corpus*, p. 67; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1352; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 83.

particular dynasty is accorded the privilege of a central place in the genealogical schema, with its ancestry traced to an alleged son of Cathaír Már, and is featured prominently in the *Timna*. Such honourable mention seems to imply that its rulers had found common cause with Uí Dúnlainge (above, 2.2.2). Occupancy of the abbatial office by the afore-mentioned individuals, therefore, could well represent the interests of their overkings. By this time, however, the politics of north Leinster were in a state of flux. Increasing pressure from the Norsemen, especially after the foundation of Dublin, had already commenced to undermine the long established Uí Dúnlainge dominance at Kildare.[91] In the new political environment of the tenth century, Glendalough would find itself a target for dynastic ambitions from outside Leinster.

4.3 : Glendalough Under External Pressures

4.3.1: Political Intervention from West Leinster

While Norse aggression was intensified in the years following the Battle of Cenn Fuait in 917 with serious consequences for Kildare in particular,[92] there is ample cause to consider, as Byrne has argued, that eastward expansion by the kings of Osraige was ultimately more damaging for north Leinster. Diarmait son of Cerball mac Dúngaile had celebrated the Óenach Carmann at the turn of the tenth century, thereby staking a claim to the overkingship of Leinster, and his successors ensured that Osraige ambition was kept alive into the following

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[91] A.U. s.a. 835; A. Clon. s.a. 870; A.F.M. s.a. 835, 883, 887, 895, 915; C.S. [836], [886], [891], [900], [916], record Norse attacks on Kildare; thereafter the site was targetted at regular intervals from Dublin and Waterford. Cuilén mac Cellaig and Muiredach mac Fáeláin would appear to be the last Uí Dúnlainge abbots of Kildare; see A.F.M. s.a. 953 (= 955) and 965 (=967).

[92] Between the battles of Cenn Fuait (917) and Tara (980) Kildare was attacked by the Norse no less than seven times; A.U. s.a. 963, 977; A.F.M. s.a. 916, 924, 926, 927, 940, 963, 977; C.S. [917], [925], [927], [962], [978]; A.Clon. s.a. 921, 923, 958, 972; A.I. s.a. 964. Glendalough escaped lightly with only one recorded raid during this period (A.F.M. s.a. 977).

century to see down the overkingship aspirations of Uí Dúnlainge (above, 2.2.3). Notwithstanding the endeavours of the Uí Fáeláin king Cerball mac Muirecáin († 909) to stem the erosion of Uí Dúnlainge power, north Leinster was seriously weakened; following the death of Augaire mac Ailella at Cenn Fuait, it appears that the Uí Muiredaig lineage suffered temporary political eclipse, with the succession record for the local kingship appearing uncertain (above, 3.1.1).

Against such a background of political decline, one might expect to find that the dominant position previously held by Uí Dúnlainge within the ecclesiastical sphere had been lost to their opponents. At Glendalough, the abbatial record for the tenth century includes several clerics who, on the basis of their names, would seem to have belonged to Osraige or "west Leinster" lineages. In regard to Corbmac mac Fitbrain († 927), it might be remarked with some fairness that his name does not seem typical of the Laigin; it has not proved possible, however, to associate him with any of the lineages which are documented in the published genealogies. The case of the abbot Flann ua hÁeduccáin († 957), in contrast, is more clearly defined. His own personal name and that of his grandfather both occur frequently in the Osraige genealogies. Perhaps it is significant that, during this man's term of office, an abbot of the Osraige foundation of Saigir died on pilgrimage at Glendalough.[93] It may further be noted that the personal name of Abbot Crundmael († 972), while it does occur in the genealogies of Uí Chennselaig, is also found among the Osraige.[94]

An even more pointed indicator, however, could well lie in the obit of Dublitir mac Selbaig. This man, who died in 932 as *fer leginn* of Glendalough and who seems to have had a brother installed at Castledermot (also part of the *Paruchia Coemgeni)*, was abbot of Tech Moling in the Barrow Valley.[95]

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[93] A.F.M. s.a. 951 (= 953); Franciscan Library Killiney, MS. A 13, f. 382 v.

[94] A.U. s.a. 971; A.F.M. s.a. 970; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84; *Corpus*, index s.v. Crundmael.

[95] A.F.M. s.a. 930 (= 932); Franciscan Library Killiney, M.S. A 13, f. 371 v; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 93, notes the personal name Selbach among the genealogies of Osraige and

Doherty's observation of dual abbacies linking Ferns, Tech Moling and Tallaght during this period, while the *familia* of Moling apparently established a new foundation adjacent to Maen Coluim Cille (probably by this time part of the Glendalough *paruchia;* below, 5.1.1), may be of further significance here.[96] The association of these west Leinster clerics with the *familia Coemgeni* provides a reasonable explanation for the otherwise curious episode in the *Vita Sancti Moling* which claims that the patron of St. Mullins succeeded to the abbacy of Glendalough.[97] Significantly, Price indicates that an ecclesiastical site in the Parish of Derrylossery (adjacent to which there is a St. Kevin's Well) was known as Glaisne Moling.[98]

It is understandable that sustained pressure from Osraige and its allies, directed against the political and ecclesiastical independence of north Leinster, should have prompted some reaction from the establishment at Glendalough. The record shows that, in similar circumstances, ecclesiastical settlements have deliberately sought to redirect their political alignment. Instances have been observed in which foundations, when threatened by dynastic interests close to home, sought to strengthen their position through affiliation with more benign establishments elsewhere. This, in essence, is the phenomenon for which Mc Cone has coined the term "Sletty syndrome"; the voluntary surrender of a foundation to a suitably distant centre.[99]

Uí Dróna; Guaire mac Selbaig, † 945 (A.F.M. s.a. 943), was abbot of Castledermot, which was part of *Paruchia Coemgeni* as discussed below, 5.1.1, 6.2.5.

[96] C. Doherty, "St. Máedóc of Ferns", p. 77-80, 81, 83, notes the obit of Laidcnén († 939) abbot of Ferna and Tamlacht and of his son Cairpre († 966) abbot of Ferna and Tech Moling; the new foundation was at Td and Par. Timolin, By. Narragh-Reban.

[97] *Vita S. Moling*, § 6, *V.S.H.*, II, p. 192.

[98] L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 50 (Td. Glasnamullen, Par. Derrylossery).

[99] K. R. Mc Cone, "Clones and Her Neighbours", esp. 314, 323, discusses forms of alliance between ecclesiastical foundations, pointing to a "Sletty syndrome", whereby foundations reach an accommodation with a far away centre to avoid unwelcome political pressures.

There is, indeed, some suggestion in the record that the *familia Coemgeni* may have reached some such arrangement with Clonmacnois. An ecclesiastic from this foundation, one Ferdomnach ua Maenaig († 952), is credited in A.F.M. with having held a dual abbacy with Glendalough. The notice as reported in A.F.M. reads: 'Ferdomnac abb Ua Maonaig, abb Cluana m Nóis & Gline dá Locha do Corca Moga a cenél'.[100] The Four Masters supply details in this obit which are absent not just from A.U., but which appear to have been unavailable to Mageoghegan when he translated his Annals of Clonmacnois or to Mac Firbisigh in compiling the Chronicon Scotorum.[101] The additional information linking this abbot to an obscure subject population of the Connachta seems quite in order for a midland ecclesiastic.[102] The most important issue here, however, relates to the association with Glendalough, and there may be a certain understandable hesitation in accepting the sole testimony of a seventeenth century source which is demonstrably not without its share of inaccuracies.[103] However, while other compilations including the Annals of Ulster, generally viewed as the most reliable, include only occasional obits for Glendalough ecclesiastics, it is clear that A.F.M. preserve the most complete record.[104] Moreover, while the surviving Clonmacnois compilations have no reference to a dual abbacy with Glendalough nor to any interaction between the sites, the Four Masters do carry further entries

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[100] A.F.M., s.a. 950; Franciscan Library Killiney, M.S. A 13, f. 382 r; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "The Unity of Cóemgen and Ciarán: a Covenant between Glendalough and Clonmacnois in the Tenth to Eleventh Centuries", in *Wicklow: History and Society*, ed. Ken Hannigan and William Nolan, forthcoming.

[101] Mageoghegan in A. Clon., s.a. 947 (=952) simply records 'Ffeardownagh O'Mooney abbot of Clonvickenos died'; C.S., s.a. 951 has 'Ferdomnach h. Maonaig abb Cluana Muc Nois quievit i. i nGlinn dá Locha motuus [sic] i. do Corca Moga'; however, this is a gloss in Mac Firbisigh's autograph manuscript (T.C.D. H. 1. 18) and was incorporated into the text (and transposed) by Fr. John Conry, who was responsible for the mid-eighteenth century copy of C.S. (R.I.A. P. 23. 5); see W.M. Hennessy in C.S., p. 210-11, n. 4.

[102] O'Donovan locates Corco Moga in the district of Corcamoe, Par. Kilkerrin, By. Killian, Co. Galway; A.F.M., I, p. 667, note n; followed by E. Hogan, *Onomasticon* , p. 295.

[103] A.F.M. s.a 781, 785 duplicates the obit of Maelcombair (giving Maelconchubhair the second time), omits Ceithernach s.a. 794 (=799) through homoeoteleuton, while at 1031 Cathasach Ua Cathail is mistakenly called Comarba Fingin (=Cóemgin).

[104] A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", passim.

linking the two foundations at points where lacunae occur in the other annals, which would suggest that they are relaying data from a lost Clonmacnois source.[105]

The background to this joint abbacy may perhaps be sought in the record of a Clonmacnois bishop Dúnchad mac Suthenéin († 942), whose name would appear to associate him with Uí Dúnlainge.[106] He was probably, in fact, a son of Uí Muiredaig dynast Suthenén mac Artúir, the sole recorded bearer of that particular personal name. The latter had been taken hostage by Cerball mac Dúngaile of Osraige in 858, most likely when still a youth.[107] The increasing pressure to which Uí Dúnlainge was subjected in the early tenth century, as outlined above, could well have prompted ecclesiastics from that kingdom to betake themselves to Clonmacnois, a foundation which had long retained a tradition of freedom from dynastic control.[108]

The annals further suggest that some form of relationship between Glendalough and Clonmacnois continued well beyond the apparently limited duration of the only recorded dual abbacy. It is recorded that Flann Ua Cellaig abbot of Glendalough died on pilgrimage at Clonmacnois in 1030, while almost a generation later in 1056, Daigre Ua Dubatáin *anmcara Cluana* died at

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[105] A.F.M. 1030, 1056; Franciscan Library Killiney, M.S. A 13, ff. 415a r, 433 r; these entries will be discussed presently; lacunae occur in A. Clon. in the 10th-11th centuries.

[106] A.U. s.a. 941; A.F.M. s.a. 940, Franciscan Library Killiney, M.S. A 13, f. 376 v; at least four Uí Dúnlainge dynasts were called Dúnchad; including Dúnchad mac Murchada († 728; A.U. s.a. 727) and Dúnchad mac Lorcáin, late 10th C.; Rawl. B. 502, 117 c 28, d 31, d 38; *Corpus*, p. 13-14; also Lorcán mac Dúnchada viv. 913 (A.F.M. s.a. 909) and Dúnchad mac Dúnlainge put to death 1037 (A.F.M.; Donnchad in the other annals).

[107] As a guide to Suthenén's probable age at the time of capture (A.F.M. s.a. 856), his cousin Cairpre lived until 884 while his brother Gairbeit, died as *Tánaisi Iarthair Liphi* in 883; (A.F.M. s.a. 881); see above, p. 123, n. 7.

[108] J. Ryan, "Abbatial Succession", passim, indicates the extent to which Clonmacnois had avoided dynastic control in the pre-Viking era; there are indications that, by the early tenth century at least, the site had come under Uí Néill patronage if not control; Francoise Henry, "Around an Inscription: The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 110 (1980), esp. 37, 45.

Glendalough.[109] Thereafter, there is no further record of contact between the two foundations.

4.3.2 : An *Óentad* with Clonmacnois: the Evidence of Hagiography

The sparse record of a dual abbacy and of other subsequent contacts between Glendalough and Clonmacnois, as outlined above, does little to illuminate the relationship that presumably existed between the two foundations. The record does, however, provide a context for the otherwise strange hagiographical tradition which hints at a covenant between Glendalough and Clonmacnois. The inference of the hagiographers, that the agreement followed an approach from the *familia Coemgeni*, may not be without substance in the light of the circumstances previously discussed. The hagiographers, however, seem concerned to convey the message that surrender was not involved, but rather a form of voluntary relationship. Presumably it was intended that the foundations should share in each others' prayers and merits and, perhaps on a more practical level, support each other when their rights were endangered.[110] In the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, the patron of Glendalough is made to visit Clonmacnois. Here he engages in formal dialogue with Ciarán, miraculously restored to life for the occasion, and the two agree to exchange vestments as a sign of everlasting friendship.[111] Leaving aside the miraculous content, the episode does seem to suggest that an arrangement was made between the two foundations, involving not a surrender but a mutual agreement. The key motif is clearly that of an

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[109] A.F.M. 1030, 1056; see above n. 104.

[110] J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism*, p. 326, points to various forms of voluntary union including *Fraternitas*, *Óentad* and *Cotach*, all of which apparently involved mutual support.

[111] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 28;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 248-9; The *Vita S. Ciarani*, § 32, *V.S.H.*, I, p. 215, provides a four line synopsis of the Cóemgen visit and adds "Hoc iam diligenter longa sententia in vita ipsius Coemhgeni narratur", clearly the comment of one who was in a position to make comparisons; above p. 12-13, reference is made to Sharpe's discussion of editorial comments by the thirteenth century redactor of the Dublin compilation of the Latin Lives.

exchange of habits; nothing is bestowed by one saint on the other and the pledge made is one of friendship, not obedience.

However, the account related in the Irish Life of Ciarán from the Book of Lismore, presumably told from the Clonmacnois perspective, is somewhat more explicit. The language of the *Betha Ciaráin* contained in this fifteenth century compilation betrays many modernising features, yet preserves enough older forms to suggest original composition in the Middle Irish period. In this version, as in the Latin Life, the saints converse in the mortuary chapel and exchange garbs. This source, however, expressly uses the term *óentad* to describe their agreement. The account continues with the claim that Cóemgen administered communion to Ciarán, who in turn presented his visitor with a bell. The hagiographer hastens to add that this gift was given "i comurtha a n-óentad & i screpul a chomnae"; nonetheless, one is left with the impression that the community of Glendalough was in some way beholden to Clonmacnois.[112] It seems clear, as observed above, that the dual abbacy involved a successor of Ciarán taking office at Glendalough. There is nothing to suggest that an equivalent move in the opposite direction was ever made.

A question arises, however, in regard to mobility of clergy of other ranks, that perhaps escaped notice in the record. Church dedications in the two areas concerned may well point to some interchange of personnel. It seems reasonable, for instance, that a church at Glendalough known as Cró Ciaráin should have commemorated Ciarán mac int saír.[113] By the same token, the occurrence in the Clonmacnois area of dedications to saints with Glendalough or Dál Messin Corb associations is worthy of note.[114]

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[112] *Betha Ciaráin*, ll. 4459-71; *Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore*, ed. Whitley Stokes (Oxford, 1890), p. 132-3; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Unity of Cóemgen and Ciarán", forthcoming.

[113] A.F.M. at 1163; H. G. Leask, *Irish Churches*, I, p. 77-8, discusses the site of St. Ciaran's at Glendalough.

[114] *Index to Townlands*, p. 249, 255, records Cloniffeen, Par. Clonmacnois, By. Garrycastle, Co. Offaly and Clonahenoge, Par. Lusmagh in same barony; these sites appear to commemorate Affinus of Glendalough and Dál Messin corb saint Mo-shenóc; see below, 6.2.6.

In the latter part of the tenth century the fortunes of Uí Dúnlainge, in particular of the Uí Muiredaig lineage, were revived to some degree by Tuathal mac Augaire († 958) and his son in turn Augaire (sl. 978); during the reign of the latter, Osraige ambitions suffered a marked reversal (above, 3.1.3). These developments are paralleled by the emergence at Glendalough of a prominent group of clergy, whose family line of Ua Mancháin was probably related to an Uí Bairrche lineage already established at Glenn Uissen. Obits are recorded in the second half of the tenth century for Artacán Ua Mancháin the lector and for his kinsman Dubscuile the anchorite; a later kinsman, Dúnchad, died in 1003 as abbot.[115] It is not entirely certain what dynastic interests are represented here, but there are indications in the record that, in the course of the tenth century, Uí Bairrche gravitated towards an alliance with Uí Muiredaig (above, 3.1.1, 3.1.2). If Uí Muiredaig was by this time in the ascendant, there is nothing to indicate that the lineage had yet achieved any significant degree of control over Glendalough. The ecclesiastical settlement was subjected to several raids by the Dublin Norse in the late tenth century and there was some violent intervention by the lineage of Uí Dúnchada.[116] During this time of political unrest, another ecclesiastical segment of seemingly local origin asserted its position at Glendalough; the anchorite Cairpre mac Cathail and the later abbot Cathasach ua Cathail may have belonged to a lineage of Uí Máil.[117] In marked contrast to the Ua Mancháin clerics, the line of Ua Cathail would feature as opponents of Uí Muiredaig designs in regard to the abbacy.

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[115] A.F.M. s.a 964, 965; see also A.U., A.F.M. s.a. 1002; C.S. [1001]; A.I. 1003; these may have belonged to Síl Mancháin of Uí Bairrche, Rawl. B 502, 121 b, bb; LL 313 bb, cb; *Corpus*, p. 47, 49; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1341; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84, 93, 95; below, 5.1.1.

[116] A.U., A.F.M. s.a. 977, 982, 984, 985; Michael Dolley, "A Hoard of Twenty Century Anglo Saxon Coins from Glendalough", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 90 (1960), 47, suggests a link between these raids and the deposit of a coin hoard at Glendalough.

[117] A.U., 1031; A.F.M. s.a 1013, 1031; A. Clon. s.a 1007; Rawl. B 502, 125 a; *Corpus*, p. 76; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 85, 95; Pádraig Lionard, "Early Irish Grave Slabs", *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 61 C (1961), 132, fig. 23.1, discusses the grave stone of Cairpre mac Cathail.

Chapter 5 : The Later Community at Glendalough Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries

5.1 Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough to c. 1072

5.1.1 Uí Muiredaig in Ascendancy to 1042

From the tenth century onwards, both the secular and ecclesiastical affairs of northern Leinster are increasingly better documented in the annals. The surviving record is particularly extensive in A.F.M., and includes much data not found in A.U. Some of this is clearly of Clonmacnois provenance (perhaps reflecting the covenant discussed in the preceding section), while certain entries may in fact relate to a hypothetical Barrow Valley Chronicle of tenth to eleventh century date (see above, 1.1.1). Together with genealogical, hagiographical and charter evidence, the combined record is sufficiently comprehensive to illustrate the context in which the dynasty of Uí Muiredaig first established a presence at Glendalough, and subsequently strove to retain its position against a background of changing political and economic circumstances.

The clear potential of *Civitas Coemgeni* as a socio-economic resource, apparently first exploited by the rulers of Uí Máil as early as the eighth century (above, 4.2.1), can hardly have escaped the notice of an ambitious dynasty in the tenth. The ecclesiastical settlement, by this time well established in the lower valley, already constituted a centre of population with possibilities for military recruitment and strategic defence, quite apart from its potential as a generator of revenue. It was formerly suggested on the basis of architectural evidence that both the upper lake and lower lake settlements were further developed in the tenth century; there are, as already observed (above, p. 196 n. 89) difficulties in relation to Leask's chronology which would assign two churches within the

Glendalough complex, Reefert and Trinity (Tds of Lugduff and Brockagh, Par. Derrylossery), to this period.[1] Nonetheless, in view of the clear evidence for renewed dynastic interest at Glendalough around this time, it would not be unreasonable to expect that some development took place.

The latter part of the tenth century was, as outlined above (3.1.2), a time of political ferment in Leinster. With Uí Dúnchada struggling against constant pressure from the Norse of Dublin, the Uí Muiredaig lineage increasingly came to the fore within the Uí Dúnlainge overkingship. The sons of Tuathal mac Augaire apparently secured some degree of success against Osraige forces. The prolonged endeavour of the Osraige kings to subjugate Leinster was at least temporarily reversed by a signal defeat on the Plain of the Liffey in 974. Uí Muiredaig may have seized this opportunity to dislodge the above-discussed "West-Leinster" dominance at Glendalough. The abbot Dúnchad ua Mancháin, who took office in that year, probably belonged to a segment of Uí Bairrche, but it is not clear if Osraige or Uí Muiredaig dynasts played any part in his appointment or even, indeed, if he represented any political interests.[2]

There are indications, however, that the lineage of Uí Muiredaig may have begun to direct its attention towards Glendalough from the latter part of the tenth century, parallel to its efforts to secure the overkingship of Leinster. It seems reasonable that there was already an Uí Muiredaig presence at the ecclesiastical settlement by 1014 when, according to the Book of Leinster, Dúnlaing mac Tuathail died there on pilgrimage.[3] Certainly, the lineage had established an indisputable supremacy by c.1030 as will be examined presently. Prior to this

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[1] H.G. Leask, *Irish Churches*, I, p. 75-6; see above, 4.2.2.

[2] Rawl B 502, 121 bb 43; LL 313 cb 25; *Corpus*, p. 49; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1341; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84; the apparently divided allegiances of Uí Bairrche in this period, some participating in battle with Uí Dúnlainge others forming marriage-alliances with the rulers of Osraige, have already been discussed (above, 2.2.3, 3.1.1).

[3] LL 39 c 35; *Bk. Leinster*, I, p. 183; the Leinster kinglist credits Dúnlaing with holding the overkingship for one month after the Battle of Clontarf and adds 'a éc i nGlind dá Locha'.

time, however, the naming practice of Uí Muiredaig is suggestive of a Glendalough orientation; the name Gilla Cóemgin was borne by a son of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail who, as noted above (3.1.3), was slain in 1019 by the Loígis, allies of the kings of Osraige.[4] There may be some significance in the fact that burnings of Glendalough are recorded for both the year before and the year after this man's death, although no agent is named.[5] In view of the apparent link between Uí Muiredaig nomenclature and ambitions towards Glendalough, the possibility arises that the seizure and blinding of an earlier Gilla Cóemgin in 982 by Uí Dúnchada ruler Domnall Clóen mac Lorcáin, nominally overking of the province, may have represented a strike against Uí Muiredaig aspirations.[6] In any event, it seems clear that the lineage of Uí Dúnchada, struggling at the time to retain some credibility for their claim to the overkingship of northern Leinster, were seeking to impose their authority at Glendalough at the expense of other interests. Reference has already been made (above, 3.1.2) to the ravaging of Termann Cóemgin in 984 by the sons of Cerball mac Lorcáin, apparently nephews of Domnall Clóen. The culprits were overtaken and slain, but unfortunately the record does not reveal who the agents of vengeance were.

However, from 1030 onwards the record shows clearly that the rulers of Uí Muiredaig, dominant within Uí Dúnlainge since Clontarf, were intervening directly in the affairs of the *Civitas Coemgeni*. That was the year in which Tadc Ua Lorcáin had died at Glendalough; it may not be entirely coincidental that Abbot Flann Ua Cellaig, of probable Uí Bairrche descent, died shortly afterwards as a pilgrim at Clonmacnois, a centre which had earlier featured as a politico-

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[4] A.F.M. s.a. 1018 titles Gilla Cóemgin *rígdamna Laigen;* The correlation between Mael/ Gilla compound names and the holding of ecclesiastical office as noted by Ó Cuív, "Personal Names", 80-1, has already been discussed (above, 1.2.2)

[5] A.U. s.a. 1017, 1019; the first reads 'Glend dá Locha do loscad ex maiore parte'.

[6] A.F.M. s.a. 982; C.S. s.a. [981]; A.Clon. s.a. 977; A.Tig. [983]. The combined genealogical and annalistic record associates the name Gilla Cóemgin with Glendalough and particularly with Uí Muiredaig; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Abbacy of Glendalough", 60-1, n. 10.

ecclesiastical ally of Glendalough in times of strife.[7] Flann's successor in the abbacy, Conaincc Ua Cerbaill, died the following year. His acclaim in the record as 'Cenn crabaid na nGaoidel', combined with a short tenure of office, may suggest a venerable cleric chosen as a compromise candidate to appease rival factions.[8]

It is at this point, as outlined in section 3.1.3, that the intentions of Uí Muiredaig towards Glendalough become overt. The fate of Cathasach Ua Cathail, who succeeded in turn to Conaincc Ua Cerbaill, would suggest that efforts on the community's part to preserve independence may have motivated an increasingly frustrated ruling lineage to opt for direct (and violent) political intervention. Cathasach, who probably belonged to an ecclesiastical family of Uí Máil lineage long established at Glendalough, was apprehended shortly after taking office and blinded by Domnall mac Dúnlainge, king of Uí Muiredaig.[9] It is not expressly stated that the blinding of Abbot Cathasach resulted in his formal resignation; all the annals title him 'Comarba Cóemgin' at his death in 1045. This, however, need only represent a courtesy. It is possible that he continued as spiritual head of the ecclesiastical community, but the blinding would certainly have excluded him from effective control of *paruchial* affairs.[10] Even if the next abbot, Cináed son of Muiredach, postponed the formality of taking office until after his predecessor's death, he may in the interval have acted as administrator of

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[7] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C. s.a. 1030; C.S. s.a. [1028]; A.I. s.a. 1013 (misplaced); Uí Bairrche associations for Flann are suggested by LL 313 cb 25, 316 a 34; *Bk. Leinster,* p. 1341, 1356; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84; idem, "Abbacy of Glendalough", 61; see above, 4.3.2.

[8] A.F.M. s.a. 1031; see A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 84; idem, "Abbacy of Glendalough", 62.

[9] A. U. s.a. 1031; A.F.M. s.a. 1031; C.S. s.a. [1029]; Rawl B 502, 125 a 4; *Corpus,* p. 76, traces a lineage of Ua Cathail to Uí Máil.

[10] A.S. MacShamhráin, "Prosopographica', 85; idem, "Abbacy of Glendalough", 62; Liam Mac Mathúna, "On the Expression and Concept of Blindness", *Studia Hibernica,* 19 (1979), 50, 55, notes the rise of the practice of punishment blinding especially from the eleventh century and comments on its social and legal consequences.

the ecclesiastical settlement and its *paruchia*. In any event, the record suggests that Cináed held the abbacy for twenty-three years.

The key issue, however, is that Abbot Cináed was almost certainly an Uí Muiredaig nominee, and his appointment would seem to coincide with moves by that lineage to secure control of other ecclesiastical settlements within the Glendalough federation. The likelihood is, indeed, that Cináed was himself a member of the ruling dynasty of Uí Muiredaig. He appears to have been a brother of the closely contemporary Artúr son of Muiredach who died in 1052 as abbot of Cluain Mór in Uí Felmeda. The latter's Uí Muiredaig pedigree is implied by a note in the *Banshenchus*, which records the marriage to Uí Bairrche king Macrait mac Gormáin of Doireand,[11] daughter of one Artúr Clérech of Uí Muiredaig. In all probability, this Artúr is identical with the abbot of Cluain Mór;[12] the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, indeed, had a marriage alliance with the ruling family of Uí Felmeda, within whose territory the foundation lay.[13]

The political context of this forceful intrusion by Uí Muiredaig at Glendalough (and occupation of the abbacy at Cluain Mór) is revealed by the pattern of dynastic intervention at a number of ecclesiastical settlements in northern Leinster in the early-to-mid eleventh century, parallel to that lineage's efforts to secure the overkingship. The surviving record of ecclesiastical obits for most of the sites concerned is extremely sparse and preserves no indication of dynastic influence.[14] In the case of Kildare, for which a comprehensive record is

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[11] M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 193; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 477, p. 284, 400; it appears from A.F.M. at 1042 that she was slain at Dísert Diarmata along with her husband; (above, p. 141 n. 62 and below, n. 16).

[12] M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", p.461, hesitates on the identification of Artúr Clérech and Artúr m. Muiredaig.

[13] M.C. Dobbs, "Banshenchus", 195; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 498, p. 289, 404; Sadb, daughter of Mael Morda Ua Domnaill, king of Uí Felmeda († 1090), was the mother of Gilla Comgaill, abbot of Glendalough and of his brother Gilla Cóemgin.

[14] Tuathal Ua Garbáin, bishop of Cell Cuilinn, apparently descended from the Uí Nastáir lineage of Dál Messin Corb may have represented a Glendalough interest ; A.F.M. s.a. 1030; Uí Garbáin descended from Amlongaid son of Cainnech; *Corpus*, p. 36; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1337.

available, no senior office holders can be traced to Uí Muiredaig or to other lineages associated with Glendalough. However, when Kildare was raided by an Uí Fáeláin party in 1024, an Uí Muiredaig force took up the pursuit; in a subsequent internecine conflict, Gilla Comgaill mac Duinnchuan was captured and slain at Kildare by his uncle Murchad mac Dúnlainge, Uí Muiredaig king of Leinster.[15] When the same Murchad, in alliance with the king of Munster, defeated an Uí Chennselaig force and sacked Ferns, Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó retaliated by sacking Glenn Uissen;[16] a connection between this Uí Bairrche centre and Glendalough through the ecclesiastical kindred of Ua Mancháin has already been referred to (above, 1.1.4, 4.3.2). Prior to that, in 1036, Ruaidrí son of Tadc Ua Lorcáin, one of the Uí Muiredaig 'intruders' in the kingship of Uí Chennselaig, was captured at Cell Cuilinn.[17] Subsequently, Dísert Diarmata was the location for the capture and blinding of Dúnchad mac Dúnlainge and for the slaying in 1042 of the above-mentioned Uí Bairrche king Macrait mac Gormáin and his wife Doireand, daughter of Artúr Clérech.[18]

Given the marcher position of these establishments on the north-south Leinster divide, it is quite understandable that Uí Muiredaig rulers should have sought to secure them; when this may have been achieved, however, is far from clear. There are indications that their Uí Dúnlainge forbears had extended some degree of control over the territory of Uí Gabla Roírend as early as the eighth

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[15] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C., 1024, 1041.

[16] A.U., 1042; A.F.M. s.a. 1041; C.S. s.a. [1039].

[17] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C., A.Tig., s.a. 1036; C. S., s.a. [1034] record the blinding of Ruaidrí mac Taidg by Diarmait mac Máil na mBó; in A.F.M. s.a. 1037, a separate notice records the capture of Ruaidrí, prior to the blinding, at *damliacc* Chill Cuilinn; a possible connection between this foundation and Glendalough has already been observed (above, n. 14).

[18] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C. and A.Tig., s.a. 1036; A.I., A. Clon., s.a. 1037; C.S., s.a. [1034], all record the blinding of Donnchad (sic) mac Dúnlainge by Donnchad mac Gillapátraicc and his death therefrom. A.F.M. s.a. 1037, 1042, 1076, gives Dísert Diarmata as the location for the blinding of Dúnchad (sic) mac Dúnlainge, the slaying of Macraith mac Gormáin and a slaughter of Ua Tuathail's followers by Ua Lorcáin. (above, p. 141, n. 62).

century; yet, as Ó Riain points out, the tenth century *Vita Tripartita* seems to reflect political change in the locality around that time.[19] Cluain Mór and Dísert Diarmata re-enter the annal record from c.920, while a generation later Uí Muiredaig king Tuathal mac Augaire was active in the area, his targets including at least one ecclesiastical foundation which was subsequently subject to Glendalough.[20] The adoption of the personal name Gilla Comgaill within the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, which would appear to date from the late tenth century, may be another indicator. As St. Comgall of Bangor was also patron of Dísert Diarmata, this naming practice probably reflects an aspiration on the part of the lineage to unite its interests with those of the foundation.[21] An Uí Muiredaig presence at Dísert and elsewhere in south Kildare may have been well established, therefore, before these sites became targets of Osraige-Uí Chennselaig aggression in the 1041 campaign of Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó (above, 3.1.3).

Politico-ecclesiastical change, therefore, is clearly discernible in south Co. Kildare from the latter part of the tenth century, parallel to the reassertion of Uí Muiredaig power in that area. It seems reasonable, in that event, to suggest that this lineage, which had a demonstrable interest in Glendalough, may have been responsible for the incorporation of these ecclesiastical centres into the Glendalough *paruchia*. Certainly, three of the settlements discussed here, Cell Cuilinn, Cluain Mór, and Dísert Diarmata, along with lesser foundations in the same vicinity including Maen Colum Cille and Mugna Mosenoc, feature among the later properties of Glendalough.[22] Such paruchial expansion was probably

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[19] *Bethu Phátraic*, Pars Tertia, ll. 2199-201, p. 114, refers to the provision of a *flaith echtrann* over the Loígis maic Find, who lived around Maen Colum Cille; see P. Ó Riain (ed.), *Betha Adamnáin*, introd., p. 18.

[20] A.F.M., s.a. 918 (=920) for Cluain Mór; A.U., s.a. 922, A.F.M., s.a. 921 (=923) for Dísert Diarmata; A.F.M., s.a. 951 (=953), records that Tuathal mac Augaire (in company with Amlaíb Cuaran of Dublin) sacked Inis Ulad, near Donard (see below, 6.2.5).

[21] The name Gilla Comgaill in the Pre-Norman genealogies belongs solely to Uí Muiredaig; A.F.M, A.L.C. at 1041 records the earliest dynast so named; such naming practice has already been discussed in regard to Glendalough and Gilla Cóemgin (see above, 1.2.2).

[22] A.R. I, f. 1b; II, f. 48; *Calendar*, p. 5.

effected in the face of pre-existing claims on the part of other ecclesiastical centres; Dísert Diarmata (discussed above, 4.1.3) had been established as a daughter house of Bangor, the dedication of Maen Colum Cille betrays its former association with the Columban federation, while some small foundations further north belonging to the *paruchia* of Cainnech may also have been absorbed by Glendalough.[23]

It seems likely that Glendalough secured some acknowledgment (perhaps given grudgingly) from the former mother-houses of these new acquisitions, or at least an episode in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* implies that such was the case. Here, Cóemgen travels to Uisnech (the traditional centre of Ireland - hence neutral territory) to meet the saints Colum Cille, Comgall and Cainnech. As the Glendalough patron approached the place of meeting, Colum Cille urged the other saints to rise in his honour.[24] A curious and almost certainly significant aside in the episode relates how Cóemgen, en route to Uisnech, is threatened by an attack of savage dogs. It is the exercise of his saintly power in repelling these animals that motivated the other patrons to salute him. Given the canine/ lupine characteristics often attributed in Old Irish literature to the *díberg*, a semi-outlawed young warrior whose activities extended on occasion to church raiding,[25] these 'canes ferocissimi' of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* very possibly represent hostile forces directed against Glendalough or its dependencies. Reference elsewhere in the *Vita* to Uí Chennselaig bringing savage dogs into the *termann* of Cóemgen and the generally 'bad press' accorded to that dynasty prompts the suggestion that the hostile forces in the episode concerned were Uí

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[23] Mo Libbo, whose probable Dál nAraide origin and absorption into the *familia Coemgeni* is discussed above (4.1.1) was appointed to head the community of Leth Dumae by Cainnech; *Vita S. Cainnici* § 15; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 158.

[24] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §.27, *V.S.H.*, I, p.248; Colmcille exclaimed "Cur ... non surg-eremus in adventu ... Coemgeni, cum angeli Domini in adventu eius consurgent in celo [sic]".

[25] K. Mc Cone, *Pagan Past*, p. 213, 218-9.

Chennselaig.[26] As observed above, Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó did attack Dísert Diarmata and Maen Colmcille, along with other centres, in the course of his 1041 campaign against Uí Muiredaig. The realm of Murchad mac Dúnlainge, which included Glendalough and its immediate dependencies, clearly survived the onslaught. It is possible that the *paruchia Coemgeni*, in the aftermath of this attack, sought and obtained confirmation of its rights in south Co. Kildare from the relevant Bangor, Columban and Osraige interests. However, even if the episode does not specifically relate to the Uí Chennselaig incursion of 1041, it may be noted that it features in a stratum of what appears to be eleventh century material within the *Vita;* the implications of this will be examined later.[27]

5.1.2 : Political Reversal: Context for the Loss of Uí Muiredaig Supremacy at Glendalough 1042 to c. 1072

The record suggests that the Uí Muiredaig presence at Glendalough came under pressure in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Magh Mulchet. With Murchad mac Dúnlainge and his brother Echdonn both removed from the scene, former enemies took advantage of the dynasty's weakness to reassert their own claims. In the Uí Fáeláin raid of 1043, sixty inhabitants of the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough were slain.[28] That same year, Domnall Ua Fergaile king of the Fortuatha was slain in the termonland of Cóemgen by Uí Enechglaiss raiders. Domnall was apparently a nephew of the sons of Dúnlaing, through the marriage of their sister Aibeand to Fergal mac Domnaill king of Uí Garrchon (above, p.136 n. 44). He may on that account have been defending Uí Muiredaig interests; on a previous occasion, Domnall had slain a rival of Murchad mac

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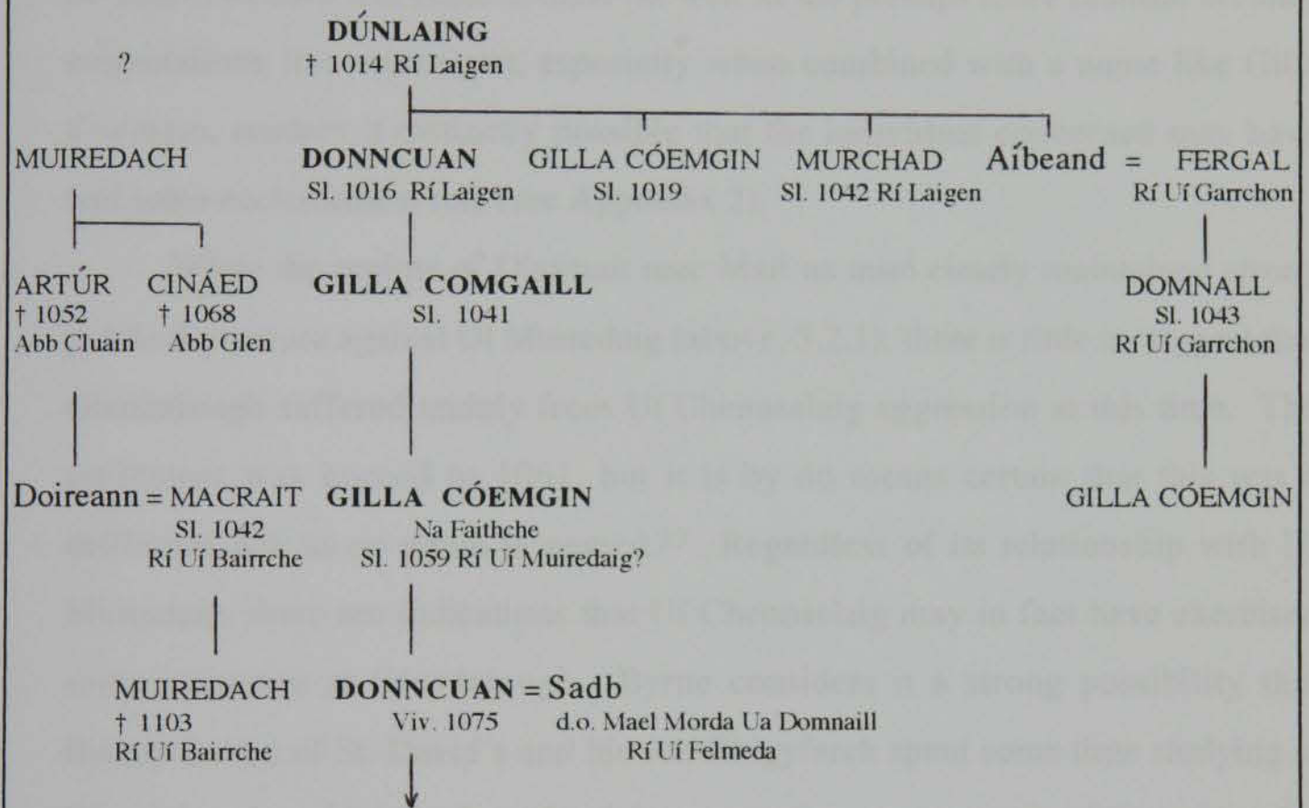
[26] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§19, 24, 42;*V.S. H.*, I, p.244, 247, 254.

[27] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§ 27-30;*V.S. H.*, I, p.248-50; see below, 6.3.2.

[28] A.F.M., 1043; C.S. s.a. [1041].

Dúnlainge.[29] However, the fact that Domnall's son in turn was named Gilla Cóemgin (**Fig. 5A**) may suggest that his dynasty had certain aspirations of its own in relation to Glendalough.[30]

Fig. 5A :Uí Muiredaig Connections with Glendalough in the Eleventh Century



Sources: Rawl B. 502 117 c (highlighted) supplemented by the Annals. Male names in block letters, females in lower case. Marriage connections from the Banshenchus.

It would appear that the lineage of Uí Muiredaig retained a strong influence in ecclesiastical affairs, including a continued presence at Glendalough for some time after losing out in the struggle for overkingship of Leinster. Cináed mac Muiredaig, it will be recalled, held the abbacy of Glendalough for twenty three years after the death of the unfortunate Cathasach ua Cathail in 1045; he

[29] A. U., A.F.M., A.L.C., A.Tig. at 1043; C.S., s.a. [1041]; see above, p. 141, n. 63.

[30] LL 337 c 42; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1480, where the Uí Garrchon pedigree records Gilla Cóemgin son of Domnall Ua Fergaile.

outlived his brother Artúr abbot of Cluain Mór by sixteen years.[31] Later sources lend further support to this record of continued involvement in the affairs of Glendalough. A prominent Uí Muiredaig dynast, Gilla Cóemgin son of Gilla Comgaill, slain by Murchad son of Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó in 1056, is styled 'Gilla Cóemgin na Faithche' in the post-Norman genealogies.[32] As *faithche* can be shown to have had ecclesiastical (as well as the perhaps more familiar secular) connotations this soubriquet, especially when combined with a name like Gilla Cóemgin, renders it distinctly possible that the individual concerned may have had some ecclesiastical role (see Appendix 2).

While the regime of Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó clearly maintained strong political pressure against Uí Muiredaig (above, 3.2.1), there is little to suggest that Glendalough suffered unduly from Uí Chennselaig aggression at this time. The settlement was burned in 1061, but it is by no means certain that this was a deliberate act, as no agent is named.[33] Regardless of its relationship with Uí Muiredaig, there are indications that Uí Chennselaig may in fact have exercised some influence at Glendalough. Byrne considers it a strong possibility that Bishop Sulien of St. David's and his son Rhigyfarch spent some time studying at Glendalough, which had retained its reputation as a centre of learning; he suggests that they may have been guests of Diarmait.[34] Certainly, at a later date, Gormlaith emeritus abbess of Kildare, a granddaughter of Diarmait, died on pilgrimage at Glendalough.[35]

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[31] The obits of Artúr and of Cinaed respectively are recorded by A.F.M. at 1052; A.F.M. and A.U. at 1068.

[32] *Leabhar Ginealaigh Uí Chléirigh*, § 1745, p. 130; J. Ryan, "Ancestry of St. Laurence", 72 (above, p. 143, n. 66).

[33] A.U. s.a. 1060; A.F.M, A.I. at 1061.

[34] F.J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xxii; idem, "Trembling Sod", p. 40; S. Duffy, "Irish Sea Region", p. 10, suggests that Sulien may have played a role in bringing about an alliance between Toirdelbach Ua Briain and Rhys Ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth.

[35] A.F.M., 1112. Gormlaith was daughter of Murchad mac Diarmata.

With the death of the abbot Cináed son of Muiredach in 1068, however, the Uí Muiredaig hold on the ecclesiastical settlement appears to have lapsed for some time. The abbacy reverted to the resident ecclesiastical kindreds, passing first to an Ua Mancháin and then to Tuathal Ua Cathail, probably a kinsman of the abbot Cathasach whom the Uí Muiredaig king had blinded back in 1037. Abbot Tuathal, who held office until 1106 seemingly without disturbance, was both priest and *fer léiginn*.[36] He would appear to have been at least partly responsible for a marked flourishing of learning at Glendalough that can be traced from the later eleventh century into the twelfth. Byrne notes that Plato, Chalcidius, Timaeus and probably also Macrobius (a late twelfth century bishop of Glendalough adopted this name) were studied at the monastic school; the range and modernity of the curriculum is suggested by the fact that Gerbert D'Aurillac's tract *De Abaco*, which introduced Arabic numerals, was also taught.[37] It is curious that a copy of the tract from Glendalough carries two marginal notes by students of Tuathal, the first datable to Pentecost Sunday (13th May) 1106, lamenting the illness and subsequent death of their master.[38] The passing of Tuathal Ua Cathail opened the way for another cleric of the Uí Muiredaig lineage to take the abbacy; the new successor of Cóemgen was a member of the Ua Tuathail line, which on the surface appears strange as by this time the kingship was held by the rival line of Ua Lorcáin.

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[36] A.F.M., A.I. at 1095; A.Clon. s.a. 1094, record that An Bretem Ua Mancháin died of the plague; A.U., A.F.M., A.I. at 1106 record the obit of Tuathal Ua Cathail; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 85.

[37] F.J. Byrne, Introduction to *The Irish Hand*, p. xxii; idem, "Trembling Sod", p. 40.

[38] F 16 Egerton 3323 British Museum; Francoise Henry and G.L. Marsh-Micheli, "A Century of Irish Illumination 1070-1170", *Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.*, 62 C (1962), 120.

5.2 : The Ua Tuathail Abbacy in the Twelfth Century.

5.2.1 : Origins: Compensation in a Time of Ua Lorcáin Ascendancy?

Proceeding to assert his power as overking of Leth Moga after the death of Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó in 1072, Toirdebach Ua Briain would seem to have exploited dynastic rivalries within Uí Dúnlainge, including the dispute between the lines of Ua Tuathail and Ua Lorcáin for the kingship of Uí Muiredaig (above, 3.2.1). Probably due to Ua Briain's patronage, the Ua Lorcáin line emerged as victors and contrived to retain the patrimonial kingship for some forty years. It is against this background that the Ua Tuathail family resurfaced as abbots of Glendalough. Given the extensive control exercised by Ua Briain over the secular and ecclesiastical politics of Leinster, it seems most unlikely that this could have happened against his will.

Certainly the Munster kings were closely involved in ecclesiastical affairs; their association with the religious reform movement has already been noted. Indeed, their first contact with the *paruchia* of Glendalough may well have arisen out of reform exigencies. In 1076, a Munster ecclesiastic was installed as *airchinnech* at Cluain Dolcáin in place of a certain Ua Rónáin. The latter almost certainly represented 'traditional' Glendalough interests; his family was not only well established at Cluain Dolcáin, the close association of which with Glendalough is well attested, but at Tech Mo Sacru where the community was also included as part of the *familia Coemgeni*.[39] An Ua Rónáin would later feature as bishop of Glendalough (see below, 5.2.2). It may not be entirely coincidental that the family, although purporting to represent a line of Uí Bairrche

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[39] A.F.M., 1076; the Ua Rónáin family held lands around Clondalkin at least into the 13th century, note Td. Ronanstown, Par. Clondalkin; A.R. I, f. 162 b; A.R. II, f. 319, 325, 425, 437; *Calendar*, p. 65, 125, 181, 186f; note also Td. Ballyronan, Par. Kilcoole; L. Price, *Placenames*, VI, p. 385; Rawl. B. 502, 121 b 16; *Corpus*, p. 48, records an Ua Rónáin presence at Tech Mo Sacru, which had early associations with Glendalough (below, 6.2.3).

and so claiming the privilege of descent from Cathaír Már, traced its origin to a certain Fergus Laebderc an alter-ego, perhaps, of the ancestor figure accorded to Cóemgen.[40]

It may well be that this experiment failed to achieve its aim; one Fiachna Ua Rónáin died ten years later as *airchinnech* of Cluain Dolcáin.[41] It seems clear, nonetheless, that the Ua Briain overlords exercised considerable influence over the affairs of Glendalough. In 1098, Derbforgaill mother of Muirchertach Ua Briain died on pilgrimage there.[42] Muirchertach's marriage alliance with the Uí Muiredaig line of Ua Lorcáin and the way in which their overkingdom was erected into the Diocese of Glendalough at the Synod of Ráith Bresail has already been raised, while the apparent implications of this territorialisation process for the monastic *paruchia* will be considered presently (above, 3.2.1 and below, 6.3.2). It is possible that the transmission of *Lebor na Cert,* clearly an Ua Briain document, via the Book of Glendalough is yet another reflection of a Munster ascendancy in the north Leinster ecclesiastical sphere.[43]

The Ua Tuathail who succeeded to the vacant abbacy of Glendalough in 1106 was Gilla Comgaill, son of Donncuan who had featured as a strong opponent of Ua Lorcáin designs during the internecine conflict of the 1070s (above, p. 145-6, n.n. 75, 76). A question therefore arises as to why this man's candidacy should have been acceptable to the dominant alignment of Ua Briain and Ua Lorcáin interests. It is possible that Muirchertach Ua Briain and his allies, having got their way in regard to the regional kingship, were prepared to view the abbacy as a "consolation prize" for the Ua Tuathail family.[44] By allowing

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[40] Rawl. B. 502, 121 b 14-16, 31; *Corpus,* p. 48.

[41] A.F.M., A.U. at 1086.

[42] A.F.M., at 1098; M.C. Dobbs (ed), 'Banshenchus', 193 for record of the marriage.

[43] M. Dillon (ed), *Lebor na Cert,* introduction, p. xx, observes this transmission but has nothing to add; ibid., text l. 3, p. 2, acknowledges *Leabur Glindi Dá Lacha* [sic] as its source.

[44] P. Byrne, "Monastery of Clonard", p.4-5, 81-2, discusses the notion of "compensatory abbacy", and proposes Fianamail mac Gerthidi of Clonard † 736 as a possible candidate. See above, 4.2.1.

them to assume a status in the ecclesiastical sphere, they might be compensated for their loss of prestige in secular politics.

Moreover, the Ua Lorcáin-Ua Briain alliance may have considered this arrangement as an insurance against a re-emergence of the civil strife that had marked the closing decades of the eleventh century. To permit a renewal of hostilities along such lines was not in the interest of either side. Even if Ua Briain's power was sufficient to ensure ultimate victory, it made little sense to risk destabilising the province. On this account, the growing connection between the Ua Tuathail line and Uí Chennselaig may have been a cause for some concern for Muirchertach. The mother of Abbot Gilla Comgaill and of his brother Gilla Cóemgin was Sadb, daughter of Máel Morda Ua Domnaill († 1090); her brother, another Máel Morda, was deposed in 1114 from the kingship of Uí Chennselaig.[45] In the final analysis, however, at the time of Gilla Comgaill's appointment to the abbacy in 1106, the line of Ua Tuathail had been effectively excluded from the kingship for several decades. The close cooperation that would be developed with Uí Chennselaig still lay in the future. Muirchertach Ua Briain may well have considered that the family of Gilla Comgaill posed no immediate political threat, and may therefore have allowed them the abbacy of Glendalough as a concession.

From the viewpoint of the Ua Tuathail line, barred from the kingship of Uí Muiredaig for the foreseeable future, control of Glendalough represented a reasonable alternative. While the status of abbatial rank undoubtedly held certain attractions for a dynastic segment deprived of the right to rule, the revenue potential of a major ecclesiastical settlement offered advantages of a more practical kind. There are clear indications that commercial activity at Glendalough continued to develop throughout the twelfth century; reference to

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[45] Lec 393 b; M.C. Dobbs, 'Banshenchus', 195, for record of the marriage of Sadb; A.F.M., at 1114; D. Ó Corráin, "Regnal Succession", 20; see above 3.2.1 and 5.1.1.

an *óenach* in the Irish Life of Cóemgen may date to this period, while there is mention of a mill in the annals.[46]

Gilla Comgaill held office as abbot for over twenty years, during which time the Synod of Ráith Bresail reconstituted the bishopric of Glendalough as a territorial diocese and the Munster overlordship disintegrated following the illness of Muirchertach Ua Briain in 1116. After the latter's death, the Ua Tuathail line began to regain confidence. Perhaps it was in the time of Gilla Comgaill that the transfer of Rawlinson B. 502 from Glenn Uissen to Glendalough where, as argued by Ó Riain, it became known as *Leabur Glindi Dá Locha*, took place (the many connections with Uí Bairrche, political and ecclesiastical have been discussed; above, esp. 1.1.4). It is certainly worthy of note that the pedigree of Uí Muiredaig in this collection is headed by Gilla Comgaill, styled 'comarba Cóemgin'.[47]

When Gilla Comgaill was slain 'las na Fortuathaib' (above, p. 150 n. 86) in the time of political instability that followed the death of Muirchertach Ua Briain, his immediate successor was Gilla Pátraicc Ua Cathail, another member of the Uí Máil ecclesiastical family. The latter, a son of the abbot Tuathal Ua Cathail who had died in 1106, was slain within a year by the Uí Muiredaig.[48] At that point, it may well have been agreed to allow political friction to cool down as the next abbot, Dúnlaing Ua Cathail, was permitted to enjoy a twenty-five year term of office at Glendalough.

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[46] *Betha Caeimgin*, II, § 11, III § 22; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 143, 161; II, p. 139, 156; C. Doherty, "Exchange and Trade", 83; K. Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 63; A.Tig. [1177], refers to a mill which was swept away by floods.

[47] Rawl B. 502, 117 c 1; *Corpus*, p. 12.

[48] A.U., A.F.M. 1128; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 86.

5.2.2 : Uí Chennselaig Patronage in the mid Twelfth Century

It seems clear that the appointment to the abbacy in 1153 of Lorcán (the future St. Laurence) son of Muirchertach Ua Tuathail king of Uí Muiredaig (see above, 3.2.2) involved a restoration of supremacy on the part of that lineage at Glendalough; no doubt the local establishment recognised this and resented what it viewed as an intrusion. Opposition to this renewal of Ua Tuathail ambitions in the region may well provide the context for Muirchertach's action of 1154 in defeating and slaying the king of Uí Enechglaiss.[49]

The restoration of Ua Tuathail fortunes in ecclesiastical matters (as in political) should perhaps be viewed as a product of the above-discussed alliance between the Síl nOnchon segment of Uí Chennselaig under Diarmait Mac Murchada and the ruling line of Uí Muiredaig. Notwithstanding a period of strained relationships during which the youthful Lorcán had been held hostage, political expedience may have prompted the Uí Chennselaig overking to seek compromise.[50] There are, indeed, good grounds to consider that Diarmait's concord with Muirchertach Ua Tuathail, cemented by his marriage to the latter's daughter Mór and reflected in the re-definition of the Diocese of Glendalough at the Synod of Kells, lay behind the promotion of Lorcán to the abbacy at the early age of twenty five.[51] The likelihood that Lorcán, in his capacity as abbot, acted as a witness to Diarmait Mac Murchada's foundation of Ferns c.1160-62 should probably be viewed in this context.[52]

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[49] A.F.M. 1154; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 69.

[50] *"Vita S. Laurencii,* § 3, 130; see also above, 3.2.2.

[51] "Banshenchus", 232; M. Ní Bhrolcháin, "Prose Banshenchas", § 555 D, p. 302, 416, records the marriage; *"Vita S. Laurencii"*, § 5, 132, notes Lorcán's succession; a connection between the two events is suggested by M.F. Roche, "Lives of St. Laurence", p. 8; followed by M.T. Flanagan, *Irish Society,* p. 101; the diocesan reorganisation is discussed below, 6.3.2.

[52] M. T. Flanagan, "Monastic Charters", p. 129, 134ff, 146, considers that this charter, preserved only in a 17th c. transcript and plainly reworked, is quite possibly authentic; ibid., p. 241, where the text of the witness list includes the name of Lorcán, along with that of Bishop Cináed [alias Celestinus] Ua Rónáin of Glendalough.

The subsequent elevation of Lorcán to the archiepiscopal see of Dublin in 1162 has long been viewed as a reflection of Diarmait's patronage; in any case, it is difficult to see how the appointment could have been made without the latter's acquiescence.[53] Certainly, Lorcán features at least twice as a witness to charters of Diarmait subsequent to his promotion.[54] This convergence of interests between Uí Chennselaig and Uí Muiredaig might understandably have generated the renewed confidence of the latter lineage that is apparently reflected in the Book of Leinster. The pedigree of the Ua Tuathail line which, as already observed (3.2.2), is headed 'Genelach Ríg Lagen', was apparently completed around this time; probably in fact after 1164 as Gilla Comgaill, brother of Lorcán and Mór, is titled king of Uí Muiredaig (see **Fig. 5B**). Care was taken to append record of the marriage to Mac Murchada of Muirchertach Ua Tuathail's daughter Mór, while her brother Lorcán is titled *Ardepscop Lagen*.[55]

Certainly, the floruit of Lorcán would seem to correspond with a period of aggrandisement at Glendalough which suggests powerful patronage. It may be significant that the priory of Insula Salvatoris (St. Saviour's), established by Lorcán for the order of Arrouaise, is built in a distinctive style of Irish Romanesque architecture (the "phase II" of Leask), featuring doorways with chevron and bead designs paralleled elsewhere within the *paruchia Coemgeni* notably at Wicklow and Dísert Diarmata.[56] The closest parallel, however, is at the

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[53] A.F.M. 1162; see J. Ryan, "Ancestry of St Laurence", 74; M.F. Roche, "Lives of St Laurence", p.10; M. T. Flanagan, *Irish Society*, p. 101-02; S. Duffy, "Irishmen and Islesmen", 128-9; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 69.

[54] M. T. Flanagan, "Monastic Charters", p. 99, 109, 111, 228-9, 235, 237; Lorcán witnesses the foundation of Killenny and the grant of Baldoyle to All Hallows; this will be discussed presently.

[55] LL 337 d 1; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1480; the pedigrees may in fact have been reworked following the transfer of LL from Tír dá Glas to a location within Mac Murchada's realm where, in 1166, the note lamenting the latter's banishment was inserted; *Bk. Leinster*, I, introd., p. xvii; see W. O'Sullivan, "Make-up of the Book of Leinster", 26.

[56] H.G. Leask, *Irish Churches*, I, p. 96-100, 160-1, 162; Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* (London: Longman, 1970), p. 170-1, 175, 316, 319, catalogue houses

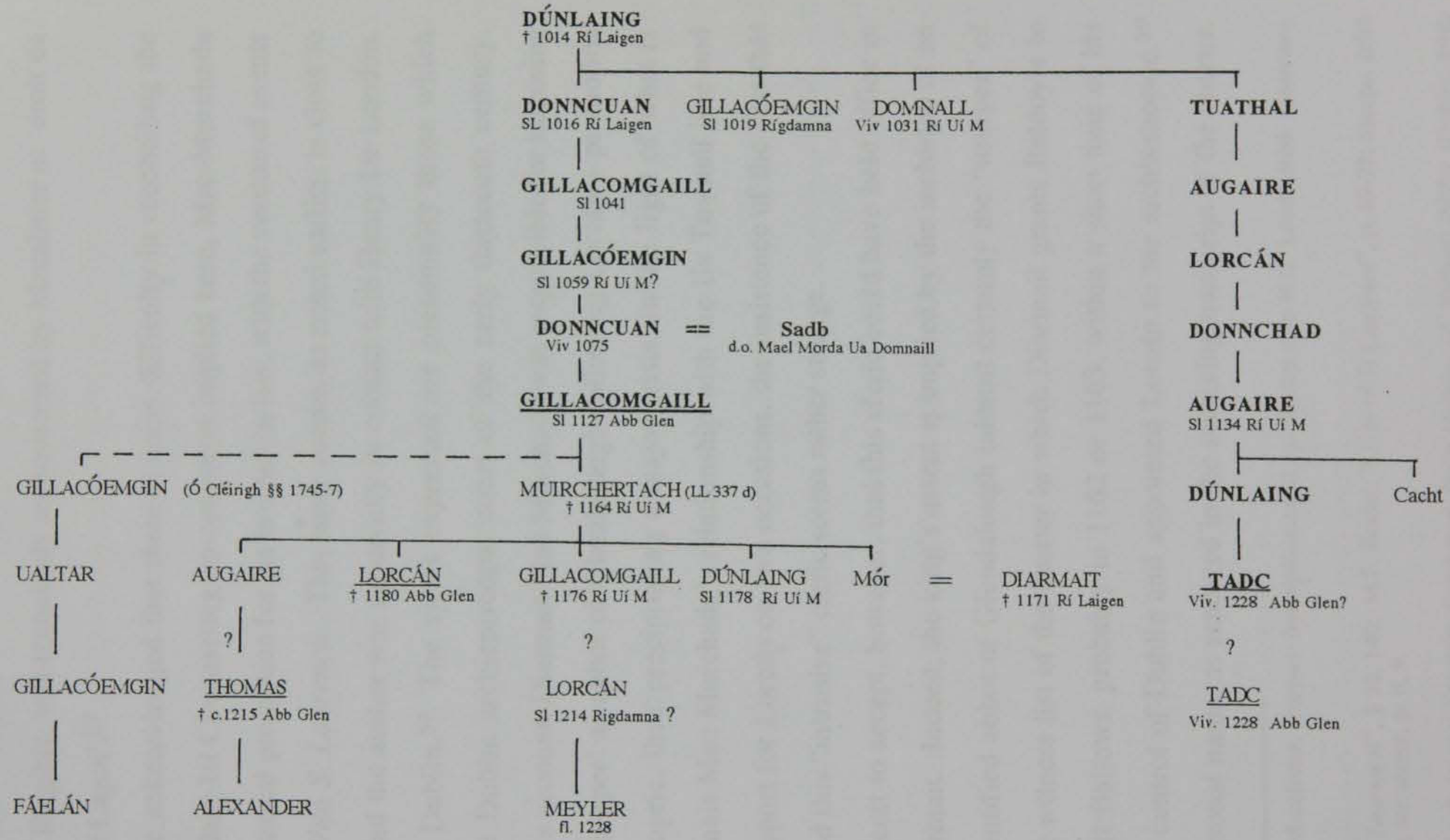


Fig. 5B: Uí Muiredaig Connections with Glendalough in the 12th-13th Century. Source Rawl. B 502, 117c (highlighted) supplemented by LL and by the annals. Male names in block letters (abbots underlined), female names in lower case. Marriage connections from the Banshenchus

Glendalough-related Uí Bairrche ecclesiastical centre of Glenn Uissen where an inscription, now illegible, was tentatively reconstructed by Macalister as 'óroit da D[i]ar[mait do r]í Lagen'.[57]

It must be acknowledged that there is some difficulty in reconciling the close Uí Muiredaig-Uí Chennselaig co-operation implied here, Mac Murchada securing ecclesiastical promotion for his brother-in-law, with the version of events outlined in the *Vita S. Laurencii.* This latter source, as noted earlier, is close to contemporary and the author was apparently in contact with Henry De London, Archbishop of Dublin.[58] The views expressed are presumably those which prevailed at the Dublin archiepiscopal court of the early thirteenth century. According to this account, Diarmait Mac Murchada was responsible for imposing an un-named 'usurper' as abbot of Glendalough following Lorcán's promotion to the archbishopric, thus precipitating a major crisis. In the light of what is known of Diarmait Mac Murchada's relationship with the Ua Tuathail line and his apparent support for Lorcán on two occasions, the insistence of the *Vita* that the king imposed this "intrusive" cleric seems rather strange.

It is difficult to accept, however, that this cleric could have held office in defiance of Diarmait. Indeed, the king's assent is implied by the inclusion of an otherwise unidentified abbot of Glendalough (almost certainly the "usurper" of the *Vita)* in the witness list of the charter in which Diarmait grants Baldoyle to the Priory of All Hallows, probably in 1162 or 1163, within a short time of his having secured control of Dublin and appointed Lorcán to the archbishopric.[59] The abbot's personal name, as rendered in the surviving transcript of the charter,

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[57] R.A.S. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum,* II, p. 28; see also H.G. Leask, *Irish Churches,* p. 102-105.

[58] *"Vita S. Laurencii"*, § 10, 140; M.F. Roche, "Lives of St Laurence", p. 69-72; Sharpe, *Irish Saints' Lives,* p. 30; see above, p. 8, 9.

[59] *Registrum Prioratus Omnium Sanctorum Juxta Dublin,* ed. Richard Butler (Dublin, Irish Archaeological Society, 1845), p. 50-1; ibid., introduction p. ii, suggests a date of 1166; however, Marie Therese Flanagan, "St. Mary's Abbey, Louth, and the Introduction of the Arrouasian Observance into Ireland", *Clogher Record,* 10 no. 2 (1980), 223, opts for 1162.

is unclear. Various suggestions have been made, ranging from Edenigmus to Benignus or even Coemgenus which, if intended as a Latinised form of Gilla Cóemgin, is not an improbable solution.[60] From the manuscript, however, it appears that the first three letters of the name are e, c and h. This seems to indicate a form such as Echenigmus, perhaps a Latinised version of Echen, a personal name well established among lineages of Uí Máil.[61]

Leaving aside speculation on the abbot's name, it is almost certainly significant that he is included in a witness list by King Diarmait along with his predecessor Lorcán, by this time archbishop of Dublin, and Cináed Ua Rónáin, suffragan bishop of Glendalough. Acceptance into such exalted political and ecclesiastical circles would seem to imply that the cleric concerned was not viewed as an "intruder" by his contemporaries. A question arises, therefore, about the degree of balance in the version of events related in *Vita S. Laurencii.* The claim to the effect that the abbot in question held office only for a short period should, perhaps, be also viewed with reserve. Granted, the annals do suggest the possibility of disturbance in 1163; Glendalough was burned with damage to Cró Cóemgin, Cró Ciaráin and the Church of the Two Sinchells.[62] Unfortunately, as no agent is named, it cannot be certain that the destruction was deliberate. Nor is there any inference in the record that a change of abbot took place as a result. Efforts to assess the career of this abbot, therefore, should take account of the apparently partisan character of the *Vita,* especially as the short tenure of office implied by this source is not confirmed by any supporting

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[60] *Registrum Omnium Sanctorum,* introduction p. xi, R. Butler suggests Coemgenus; M.F. Roche, "Lives of St Laurence", p. 13, follows suit; A. Gwynn and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses,* p. 8, suggest Benignus; A. Gwynn †, *Irish Church in Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,* p.267, retains this reading; M.T. Flanagan, "Monastic Charters", p. 237, n.6, considers the name Áedán as a possible solution.

[61] T.C.D. MS. F. 4. 29, f. 45 r ; the writer is grateful to Dr. Philomena Connolly for advice on this interpretation; note that Uí Máil genealogies include the personal name Echen Bec and Echen Már, LL 318 a 10; also the personal name Etigén, LL 317 c 52.

[62] A.F.M. 1163.

testimony.[63] Moreover, an extremely long abbacy is indicated for the next candidate (to 1213 at least) which makes it seem likely that the latter's succession should be placed not at 1163 but towards the end of that decade.

It is quite conceivable, therefore, that Diarmait Mac Murchada did in fact put forward this candidate, notwithstanding his support for the Ua Tuathail line, because of a prior obligation to his own or to another dynastic segment. Alternatively, the controversial abbot may have been appointed by a local interest-group, such as Uí Mail or Uí Enechglaiss. In that event, Diarmait may have acceded to the appointment rather than expel the cleric concerned at the risk of reopening old conflicts. Given the likelihood that Diarmait, whether or not he had made the controversial appointment, approved of this abbot's tenure of office, it might not be unreasonable to place the change of abbacy reflected in the *Vita S. Laurencii* within the years 1166 to 1169, during the time of Diarmait's enforced absence from the kingship of Leinster. It is distinctly possible that the political vacuum left by Diarmait's departure was exploited by the rulers of Uí Muiredaig (believing, perhaps, that the archbishopric of Dublin offered less than adequate political compensation) to reassert the interests of their dynasty at Glendalough.

Certainly it is significant that, whether this abbacy was ended by resignation or expulsion, the next in line was an Uí Muiredaig kinsman of Archbishop Lorcán. The *Vita S. Laurencii* identifies the new appointee, Thomas, as a nephew of Lorcán.[64] The exact relationship between the archbishop and this abbot is not explained. The parentage of Thomas is nowhere recorded; he granted land near Newcastle to the Abbey of St.Thomas Dublin in memory of his

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[63] A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Uí Muiredaig and Glendalough", 70; A. Gwynn †, *Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, p.267, expresses a similar view.

[64] *"Vita S. Laurencii"*, § 10, 141.

parents but, unfortunately, does not name them.[65] Assuming, however, that Thomas succeeded to the abbacy in the mid-to-late 1160s when aged in his mid-to-late twenties, he was probably born c.1140. In that event, it would appear reasonable that he should have been a son of Lorcán's elder brother, Augaire.

This association of Thomas with the lineage of Uí Muiredaig, which Butler in the last century was inclined to doubt, suggesting instead that he was an Anglo-Norman cleric,[66] finds further support from the *Vita S. Laurencii*. The hagiographer is evidently anxious to stress that Thomas was indeed the 'rightful' candidate and that his appointment was made solely on grounds of personal merit, and not because of his family connections. The opportunity is also taken to illustrate Thomas's reputation for sanctity; it is related that when travelling with Lorcán and two other bishops, Thomas's prayers contributed to the healing of a possessed woman. It is further emphasised that the new abbot was appointed in accordance with the will of the entire community, clergy and laity, of Glendalough.[67]

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that, in the final analysis, Diarmait Mac Murchada did support the appointment of Thomas. It is quite possible that Diarmait, on regaining the overkingship of Leinster in 1169, was presented with a *fait accompli;* however, as argued above, the new abbot was his wife's nephew. The charter of Earl Richard fitz Gilbert alias Strongbow, granted in his capacity as vice-regent of King Henry II c. 1172, furnishes crucial evidence here. In confirming the abbacy and *personatus* of Glendalough to Thomas, it seems clear that Strongbow was reiterating an arrangement made some time earlier by

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[65] *Register of the Abbey of St. Thomas, Dublin,* ed. John T. Gilbert (London, Rolls Series, 1889), cap. 198, 240, p. 166-7, 193-4; the donation was made 'pro salute anime patris mei et matris mee' (sic); A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 87.

[66] R. Butler, introd. to *Registrum Omnium Sanctorum,* p. xi; Quite apart from the case argued here, Thomas's political differences with the Dublin administration would suggest that he was not one of their appointees; see below.

[67] *"Vita S. Laurencii"*, §§ 10, 21; 141, 149-50.

Diarmait Mac Murchada. Following a lengthy list of church properties the charter states:

> Quare volo et firmiter precipio quatinus predictus abbas habeat prenominatas terras ... sine tributo et ... omni servitio laicalis persone sicut mihi in verbo veritatis Diarmicius Rex testatus.[68]

The list of witnesses is headed by Archbishop Lorcán and by Aífe, daughter of Diarmait and wife of Strongbow. It appears from this testimony that Diarmait had in fact confirmed the abbacy to Thomas some time prior to his own death (i.e. prior to May 1171). On that account, as in the case of the abbatial appointment (and subsequent archiepiscopal promotion) of Lorcán, this later Uí Muiredaig presence at Glendalough may be viewed as a product of Uí Chennselaig patronage.

5.2.3 : Decline of the Ua Tuathail Abbacy: Pressure from the Norman Lordship.

Controversial as the appointment of Thomas would seem to have been, there are indications that the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough continued to develop as a religious centre and as a commercial venue during the time of his abbacy. Building and renovation work within the monastic city proceeded apace. Leask considered that extension of the cathedral and reconstruction of the church of St. Mary probably took place during the latter part of the twelfth century.[69] Perhaps even more significant was the erection of the small ecclesiastical building known as the "Priest's House". Somewhat altered in structure in the course of nineteenth century restoration, its original purpose is

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[68] Representative Church Body Library, Churchtown, Dublin 14, MS A1, f.21 b; see also A.R. II, f. 92; *Calendar*, p. 2.

[69] H.G. Leask, *Irish Churches*, I, p. 64, 71-2, 74.

not certain. However, it may have been intended, as Herity suggests, to house the relics of St. Cóemgen the founder.[70] Leask compares the structure with the Irish Romanesque St. Saviour's at Glendalough. Both are constructed with the same local mica-schist, and the stone-carving is remarkably similar. Assigning the "Priest's House" to his phase III, Leask argues that it "can hardly be earlier than c.1165, but is more probably at least a decade later".[71]

The same period witnessed a continuation of learning and scribal activity. Ó Riain may well be correct in suggesting that the Drummond Calendar shows signs of having been compiled at Glendalough at some date in the 1160s.[72] The surviving version of *Betha Caoimgin* II may also have been revised in the time of Abbot Thomas, containing as it does references to 'foreign' clerics ("Ro lia 'na chill comhaightigh, Nád airchindech duthaigh") at the ecclesiastical settlement.[73] Similarly, the Life of St. Petroc by John of Tynemouth, which features Dál Messin Corb saints Cóemgen, Eógan and Daccán of Inber Daeile, may be a product of contact between *familia Coemgeni* and Furness Abbey in northern England, after the latter foundation had acquired former Glendalough properties in the Arklow area through Thomas.[74]

The collapse of the Uí Chennselaig provincial kingship following the death of Diarmait Mac Murchada in 1171, and the vigour of the new Norman lordship in displacing local Irish dynasties within range, posed a threat not merely to the

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[70] Michael Herity, "Layout of Irish Early Christian Monasteries", in *Ireland and Europe: The Early Church*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), p. 111.

[71] H.G. Leask, *Irish Churches*, I, p. 158-60.

[72] P.Ó Riain, "Bogus Irish Saints", 2; Idem. "Tallaght Martyrologies", 22-3; cf A. Gwynn †, *Irish Church in Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, p. 311, reserves judgement, merely noting that the evidence for a connection with 12th century Glendalough is "very strong".

[73] *Betha Caoimgin*, II, § 12; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 145; II, p. 141; Katharine Simms, "Frontiers in the Irish Church", in *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland: Papers in Honour of James F. Lydon*, ed. R. Frame, T.B. Barry and K. Simms, forthcoming, considers that the reference to 'foreign clerics' may merely mean 'outsiders'; in any case it would appear not to mean English clerics of the later Reformation period.

[74] *Lives of the British Saints*, IV, p. 95-6, 100; this will be discussed presently.

ruling dynasties of Leinster but ultimately to the independence of the ecclesiastical preserve of Glendalough. The appointment of John Count of Moretain as Lord of Ireland in 1177 and the break-up of the Uí Muiredaig patrimonial kingdom the following year coincided with the arrival of a substantial number of English settlers into northern Leinster (above, 3.2.3). The new Dublin administration was already seeking to realise the potential of the grant King Henry II had made to Strongbow of almost the entire province, including the territories of Arklow and Wicklow in which Glendalough held extensive properties. Not only did the discomfiture of the Uí Muiredaig kingship deprive Glendalough of the political support it had long enjoyed, but it seems likely, as Price has argued, that the ecclesiastical properties became a haven for the displaced Ua Tuathail dynasts and their retainers.

This new situation, in which the abbacy would endeavour to shield its one-time dynastic protectors, may provide the context in which Archbishop Lorcán granted lands in Glenmalure to the Priory of the Desert of St. Cóemgen. In this way, the archbishop's Uí Muiredaig kinsmen were apparently provided, as Price suggests, with a base from which they would later spread into Fartry.[75] It may be noted that Lorcán also conveyed the district of Tír Meicei to Glendalough. Price has tentatively identified this area with the Townland of Kirikee, Parish of Knockrath in the Barony of Ballinacor North, but from the description in the charter the townlands of Castlekelly and Cunard in the Parish of Tallaght seems more likely.[76] Perhaps by way of return, Thomas conceded Credmochae in the territory of Wicklow to Lorcán.[77] On this account, it seems reasonable to view this period of uncertainty which followed the dispossession of

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[75] Cr. M., § lxi, p. 55; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xl; the date of the grant is uncertain, but Price considers it likely to have been made c. 1179; above, p. 156, n. 104.

[76] Cr. M., § lxi, p. 55; A.R. I, f. 95b; A.R. II, f. 253; *Calendar*, p. 8; L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 373; Idem, *Placenames*, I, p. 21.

[77] A.R. I, f. 92; A.R. II, f. 244; *Calendar*, p. 9.

the Ua Tuathail rulers in 1178 as the context in which Abbot Thomas first sought confirmation of the abbacy and its possessions from King Henry II.[78]

With the unexpected death of Archbishop Lorcán at Eu on 14 November 1180, the chapter of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch, was obliged under English law to seek licence from King Henry II for election of a successor. It would appear that the chapter was divided on the question of a candidate, and King Henry seized the opportunity to nominate his chaplain, John Cumin.[79] This absorption of the archbishopric of Dublin into the administration would create an invaluable agency for the extension of effective English control over the unyielding mountain heartland of Leinster. As Duffy points out, the apparent absence of Glendalough from the list of suffragan bishoprics confirmed to Archbishop John Cumin in 1182, may well suggest that moves to absorb the lesser diocese were already underway.[80]

Certainly the sequence of property transactions involving Glendalough, preserved in surviving diocesan records and in the chartularies of Dublin priories for the years following the accession of Archbishop Cumin, serves to confirm this picture of an Irish ecclesiastical preserve struggling to survive. Máel Calainn bishop of Glendalough granted possessions in the Wicklow area and in east Kildare to the Abbey of St. Thomas Dublin, to Llanthony and to the convent of nuns at Timolin; an attempt to rationalise his remaining possessions may lie behind the recorded exchange of properties with Archbishop Cumin.[81] Abbatial

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[78] Cr. M., § xxxiv, p. 38; A.R. I, f. 18b; A.R. II, f. 85; this charter, of uncertain date, confirms the earlier grant by Strongbow; cf A.R. I, f. 1b; A.R. II, f. 48, which records Pope Alexander III's confirmation of episcopal properties to Máel Calainn 1179; *Calendar*, p. 5, 16.

[79] Aubrey Gwynn, "Archbishop John Cumin", *Reportorium Novum*, I no 2 (1956), 286, 293, discusses the circumstances in which Cumin was nominated to the see.

[80] Seán Duffy, "The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World 1306-1329", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 21 (Summer 1991), 61 esp. n.9, argues convincingly that *Episcopatus Insularum* represents the bishopric of the Isles and not Glendalough.

[81] *Register of St. Thomas*, p. 291-2; *The Irish Cartularies of Llanthony Prima et Secunda*, ed. Eric St. John Brooks (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1953), p. 254; A.R. I, f.65; A.R. II, ff. 174, 2; see *Calendar*, p. 20, 58.

properties were also parted with. Abbot Thomas conceded holdings in the Newcastle area to the Abbey of St. Thomas and to the Cistercian house of St. Mary's, and he would appear to have facilitated (c.1200 x 1207) Theobald Walter's grant to Furness Abbey of land in Arklow.[82] The motive for this endowment of monastic foundations in Dublin and in England is not clear; however, it may represent an effort to preserve under monastic administration properties over which Glendalough could no longer retain control, and which were likely to be absorbed by the Dublin administration or by the archbishop. It is distinctly possible that the successors of Cóemgen contrived by such expedients to shield remnants of the Leinster nobility and their retainers from the worst excesses of feudal dues.[83]

Efforts by the ecclesiastical heads of Glendalough to protect the dynastic remnants of northern Leinster may well have precipitated moves towards absorption of the diocese by Dublin. Certain it is that Archbishop Cumin, with the support of John Lord of Ireland, sought to secure the suffragan see. John issued grants of the bishopric, which proved to be abortive, in 1185 and again seven years later.[84] The first of these grants was formulated at Dublin while Bishop Máel Calainn was still alive (although he may have been ailing), which was quite out of line with English ecclesiastical legislation; it would appear, as Price in fact suggested, that John was quite unscrupulous in dealing with the Irish.[85] The immediate successor to the vacant bishopric of Glendalough was another Irish ecclesiastic known as Macrobius, who was obliged to preside over further dismemberment of the episcopal properties. Around 1190, Macrobius

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[82] *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey*, II, p. 2, 15; *Calendar of Ormond Deeds*, Irish Mss Comission ed. Edmund Curtis (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1932), I, no. 20, p. 9.

[83] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introd., p. xxxii.

[84] Cr. M., § 24, p. 31-2; A.R. I, f. 19, 21b; A.R. II, f. 87, 91-2; *Calendar*, p. 11, 22; "The Charters of John Lord of Ireland to the See of Dublin", edited by Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *Reportorium Novum* 3 no. 1 (1963-4), 285-8, 300-3.

[85] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, introduction, p.xliii-xliv.

confirmed a grant of Kilcullen to the Holy Trinity, which had previously been made by Raymond le Gros.[86] Following the death of this bishop in 1192, John Lord of Ireland again issued a grant of the diocese of Glendalough to Dublin. Once again, the bishopric survived, but John ensured the election of an Anglo-Norman candidate, William Piro.

The latter turned out to be essentially a caretaker bishop until the union of the dioceses could be effected. The late Fr. Gwynn maintained that in practical terms William was little more than an archdeacon and was dominated throughout his episcopate by the powerful John Cumin.[87] Whatever the status of William in comparison with his predecessors, it seems clear that the abbot was still the principal ecclesiastic at Glendalough. The stone relief positioned (almost certainly incorrectly) above the doorway of the "Priest's House" is worthy of notice. Dating from the late twelfth century (as already observed) it appears to represent an abbot enthroned, while the bishop and a hooded cleric (perhaps the prior of St. Saviour's?) attend upon him. It might not be inappropriate to interpret this representation as a deliberate statement on the part of Abbot Thomas.

Throughout the 1180s and 1190s, the abbacy of Glendalough was kept under continual pressure as Dublin made strenuous efforts to acquire a substantial part of its possessions. The lands of St. Cóemgen at Ballymore, apparently granted to the archbishop by John Lord of Ireland ante 1190 and confirmed by the pope, may have belonged to the abbacy.[88] A number of properties and church sites on the western side of the mountains which John subsequently made

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86 "The Registrum Novum: A Manuscript of Holy Trinity Cathedral", ed. Maurice P. Sheehy, *Reportorium Novum*, 3 no.2 (1964), 262; the initial grant had been made by Raymond ante 1186, this charter was issued c. 1190.

87 A. Gwynn †, *Irish Church in Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, p. 146; note that in 1193 Cumin received Papal confirmation of a grant of the chapelry of Glendalough; A.R. I, f. 3; A.R. II, f. 52; *Calendar*, p. 23; *Pontificia Hibernica: Medieval Papal Chancery Documents concerning Ireland 640 to 1241*, ed. Maurice P. Sheehy, 2 vols (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1962), I, no. 27, p. 77-8.

88 A.R. I, f. 17; A.R. II, f. 76, 431; *Calendar*, p. 17, 20.

over to Dublin were certainly abbatial property.[89] This clear connivance between secular and ecclesiastical arms of the Dublin administration against Abbot Thomas's interests (and those of his lineage) almost certainly underlay his recurring demand for ratification of his position. Thomas sought and obtained confirmation of the abbacy and its possessions by charter from John Lord of Ireland in 1192 and had this reaffirmed by a Bull of Pope Innocent III six years later.[90] Then on 30 October 1200 John, having succeeded his brother Richard as King of England, conceded the possessions of the abbacy to Thomas for life, provided that they did not exceed forty carucates.[91]

When Dublin finally managed to absorb the suffragan see of Glendalough on the death of Bishop William in 1212, Henry of London, John Cumin's successor in the archbishopric, proceeded to grant the Priory of St. Saviour to All Hallows.[92] It would appear that the ageing Abbot of Glendalough once again sought confirmation of his rights. Therefore King John issued a charter to Thomas providing that the possessions of the abbacy, reserved to the latter for life, be transferred to Henry Archbishop of Dublin after the abbot's death or retirement.[93] By this stage, as he had held office for some forty-three years or more and was presumably aged over seventy, Thomas's departure from the scene was clearly viewed as imminent.

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[89] A.R. I, f. 21; A.R. II, f. 90; *Calendar*, p. 24.

[90] A.R. I, f. 3b, 20b; A.R. II, f. 52, 89; *Calendar*, p. 21, 23-4; *Pontificia Hibernica*, I, no. 36, p. 99-101; the possessions of the abbacy are discussed in detail below, ch. 6.

[91] Charter Rolls John 2 m.20, in *Calendar of Documents: Ireland*, edited by H.S. Sweetman (London, 1877), p. 21.

[92] *Pontificia Hibernica*, II, no. 211, p. 48, records confirmation by Pope Gregory IX in 1234 of a grant originally made to All Hallows by Henry of London c. 1212-1216.

[93] Charter Rolls John 15 m.3, in *Calendar of Documents:Ireland*, p.77; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Prosopographica", 87.

5.2.4 : The Extinction of the Abbacy

The circumstances in which the amalgamation of the dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough was secured, and in 1216 confirmed by papal authority,[94] are complex and could well form the subject of a separate inquiry. For the purposes of the present study, however, suffice it to remark that the continued presence of Uí Muiredaig and other dynastic remnants on Glendalough property was almost certainly a factor underlying the Dublin interest. Presumably it was its role as refuge for recalcitrant north Leinster nobles that prompted Felix Ua Ruadháin, Archbishop of Tuam, to describe the ecclesiastical settlement as a *spelunca latronum* in his testimony to the papal court. Significanly as Mc Neill notes, this testimony was not forthcoming when John Lord of Ireland issued his 1192 grant.[95]

As evidenced by King John's above-mentioned charter to Thomas (dated 30 July 1213) it has long been recognised that the abbacy of Glendalough survived the bishopric. Indeed the testimony of Archbishop Felix, taken at the time of the Lateran Council two years later, seems to infer that the ecclesiastical settlement had not yet been brought under Dublin control. There is no record, however, of the death of Thomas and no indication of when the abbacy was eclipsed. The general assumption appears to be that Thomas was the last abbot of Glendalough. Archbishop Alen inserted a comment to that effect as a marginal note in his Diocesan Register and the assertion that the Abbacy was extinguished along with the bishopric when the sees were united has been repeated by several modern scholars, including Sheehy and Gwynn.[96]

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[94] A.R. I, f. 5; A.R. II, f. 55; *Calendar*, p. 38, 40.

[95] A.R. I, f. 52b; A.R. II, f. 146; *Calendar*, p. 41; see also A. Gwynn †, *Irish Church in Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, p. 268-9; L. Price "Glendalough: St. Kevin's Road", p. 247; W.L. Warren, "King John and Ireland", p. 38, discusses Felix's maintenance at the expense of the king's exchequer following his expulsion from Tuam as a possible motivating factor behind his testimony.

[96] A.R. I, 3b; *Calendar*, p. 24; *Pontificia Hibernica*, I, p. 99 n. 1; A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, p. 177.

It may be noted that the corpus of charter evidence preserves record of a certain Alexander 'filius abbatis de Glindelache' and Richard 'filius Alexandri filii abbatis de Glindelache'; these individuals witnessed the confirmation of lands to the abbeys of St. Mary and St. Thomas.[97] Given the date-span of the charters concerned, from the end of the twelfth to the early thirteenth century, it seems reasonable to suggest that the two represent a son and grandson, respectively, of Abbot Thomas. Granted, while the inclusion of Alexander and of Richard as witnesses would seem to indicate that they were men of some status, this need not imply that they held any ecclesiastical office. More concrete evidence of a post-Union abbacy, however, is provided by a grant of the *vill* of Cell Moccu Birn to Archbishop Luke, post 1228, by Tadc Ua Tuathail (Taddeus Otothyll) Abbot of Glendalough.[98]

As this is apparently the only surviving reference to Tadc as abbot, the time of his accession and likewise the length of his abbacy remains uncertain. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that he succeeded Thomas c.1215. The Uí Muiredaig genealogy in Rawlinson B 502 may, however, hold a key to the identity of this cleric. The pedigree commences at 117 c 1 with a descendant of Dúnlaing mac Tuathail, Gilla Comgaill titled Comarba Cóemgin, who was slain in 1127; presumably he was the most prominent member of his line in the 1120s when the Rawlinson genealogies are understood to have been compiled.[99] The tract continues then from 117 c 11 with a certain Tadc, whose ancestry is traced back through Dúnlaing mac Tuathail to the eponymous Muiredach mac Murchada. The Tadc in question is two generations later than Gilla Comgaill, and

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[97] *Chartularies of St Mary's* , I, No. 5, p. 32-3; II, p. 3; *Register of St Thomas,* no. 173, p. 147.

[98] MS. A.2, f. 455, Representative Church Body Library, Churchtown, Dublin 14; see also *Archbishop Alen's Register* , p. 76.

[99] Carney's date of c. 1130 for the compilation of Rawlinson B. 502 has been generally accepted; see above 1.1.4, esp. p. 22, n. 70; F.J. Byrne suggested that Gilla Comgaill may also have held the kingship of Uí Muiredaig prior to this date; above, 3.2.1, esp. p. 150, n. 87.

therefore could conceivably have been still alive c. 1228. Clearly, this raises important questions as to whether the Leinster genealogies in Rawlinson B 502 might have been extended. If Ó Riain's above-discussed equation of the compilation with the *Leabur Glindi Dá Lacha* is valid, late twelfth or early thirteenth century scribes at Glendalough would have had the opportunity, quite apart from the motivation to effect such an extension. The pedigree of Tadc, it must be stressed, is not an addition. The Laigin royal pedigrees, certainly from 117 a 1 where they commence with Enna mac Diarmata king of Uí Chennselaig at least as far as 118 a 1, appear to be written in the same hand. It has not been established whether or not this entire section postdates the rest of the compilation by perhaps seventy years.[100] At the same time, it is scarcely without significance that every other pedigree in the Leinster genealogies is headed by an individual who can be shown to have lived no later than c. 1130. The possibility remains, therefore, that Tadc mac Dúnlainge meic Augaire is the abbot who succeeded Thomas.

It appears, nonetheless, that record of the abbacy of Glendalough comes to an end with Tadc. Within a decade or so of the diocesan union, it is clear that most of the remaining possessions of the abbacy had been lost. In 1229, Archbishop Luke was granted a charter of disafforestation by King Henry III, which applied to extensive tracts in the north and east of what is now Co. Wicklow, including 'the land called S. Keyvin's land' and Fertyr and Coyllache, all formerly possessions of Glendalough; already, there was quite intensive Anglo-Norman settlement throughout this area.[101] Perhaps it was around this time that Tadc died, and the abbatial office was finally extinguished. Certainly, by the time

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[100] Rawlinson B. 502: Facsimile from Original Manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, with introduction and indices by Kuno Meyer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 65r- 66r; the writer is grateful to Mr. William O'Sullivan for comments on the scribal hand.

[101] A.R. I, 23; A.R. II, 95;*Calendar*, p. 62; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p.xlv.

of Archbishop Fulk, who took office in 1256, the abbacy had already been replaced by a priorate subject to the Church of the Holy Trinity.

The long sequence of abbots of Glendalough was finally broken, and the last formal channel through which Leinster dynastic remnants could pursue an independent line was closed off. Further inquiry into the alienation of church properties may, however, reveal a more complex reality. The view expressed by Price in this regard may well be valid; that on certain church lands such as, perhaps, the monastic estates of St Mary's and All Hallows (which Abbot Thomas had done much to enlarge) and surviving properties of the Glendalough priories, dynastic segments still contrived to remain outside the control of the Dublin authorities. In his determination to re-establish control over alienated properties, Price argues, Archbishop Fulk drove the nobility of the Leinster Irish to support rebellious elements.[102] Before Fulk's archiepiscopate had ended, the process of dynastic re-integration that would culminate in the restoration of the Gaelic overkingship of Leinster was already underway.

Having already examined the overkingship of the northern Laigin from the sixth to the twelfth century and having assessed the impact of dynastic ambitions on the abbacy, the present study now moves to consider the *paruchia* of Glendalough within the context of dynastic politics.

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[102] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p.xlix; above, 3.2.3, esp. p. 160-1.

Chapter 6 : The Paruchia of Glenn dá Locha: Origin, Expansion and Consolidation c. 600 to 1170

6.1 : The 'Monastic Paruchia' and its Reconstruction

6.1.1 : The Character of the *Paruchia*

The "monastic paruchia", a term popularised by the late Kathleen Hughes to convey the notion of a network of lesser foundations which came under the authority of one of the "great monasteries", has increasingly been subjected to critical reassessment (above, 0.2). Recent contributors to the debate, notably Sharpe and Etchingham, have questioned several of the fundamental assumptions which underlie the notion. In the first instance, there is a certain irony in the fact that the term *paruchia*, although it gained currency as a convenient short-hand for a form of monastic organisation possesses, as Sharpe observes, no monastic sense.[1] If the only difficulty was that posed by semantics, it could perhaps be argued that such usage represents a logical extension of the fundamental meaning of a term which describes an ecclesiastical domain in the charge of a clergyman. That being the case, the *paruchia* of a secular priest or bishop could find a parallel with that of an abbot.[2]

The *paruchia* of canonical legislation, despite instances of ambiguity in regard to the term *túath* ('laity' or 'population group') does seem to suggest, as Etchingham points out, territorial units of ecclesiastical administration under the jurisdiction of a bishop. The impression conveyed is that of geographically cohesive and contiguous spheres of authority, territorially defined insofar as it

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[1] R. Sharpe, "Organisation of the Early Irish Church", 261.

[2] The writer is obliged to Mark Philpot, Dept. Medieval History, The Queen's University of Belfast, for drawing attention to this point (13. 4. 1994).

could be said that the territorial delimitation of the *túath* was maintained.[3] Patrician and Brigidine hagiography of the seventh century seems to reflect mutually incompatible metropolitan ambitions, each advancing claims to nation-wide *paruchiae*, while Armagh for its part may have sought to restrict the authority of Kildare within the provincial limits of Leinster.[4] The *paruchia* of the canons, therefore, was under the authority of a bishop and, whether he was an *epscop túaithe* or a "metropolitan", it was envisaged as having territorial limits. Some analogy might be drawn with the secular polity; the *rí túaithe* ruled a small locality, while the overking extended his sway over a *mórtúath*, a province, or an even wider area in accordance with his political power.

However, a difficulty seems to arise with the representation of *paruchiae* in Saints' Lives of later date, especially in connection with foundations which, like Glendalough, were not (insofar as can be ascertained) episcopal in origin. Many years ago, Plummer pointed out that the term *paruchia* (or in other cases its Irish equivalent *fairche)* is expressly used by no less than seven of the *vitae*, in a sense which seems to include distant subject foundations.[5] The constituent elements of these *paruchiae* were rarely adjacent to each other; nor was it even essential that they be located within the same province. The author of the *Vita S. Carthagi* is anxious to stress that, having moved on to Rahen, the saint still retained his *paruchia* in Ciarraige; other lives, without expressly using the same terminology, present a similar picture of scattered possessions.[6] This tendency to

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[3] C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 143-4; Ibid. "Bishops in the Early Church: A Re-assessment", *Studia Hibernica*, 28, forthcoming, points to *Ríagal Pátraic*, §§ 1-3, 6, 7 and *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, § 8.

[4] *Liber Angeli*, f. 20vo; *The Book of Armagh*, ed. John Gwynn (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913), p. lxxvi, 40; *Vita S. Brigitae*, § 4; "Cogitosus: Life of St. Brigit", 11; K Simms, "Diocese of Clogher", 182; C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 148, 150.

[5] C. Plummer, introduction to *V.S.H.*, p. cxi-cxii, notes explicit references to *parochia* in the *vitae* of Brendan (Codex Kilkenniensis only), Carrthach, Ciaran of Cluain, Enda, Moling, Molua and Munnu.

[6] *Vita S. Carthagi*, §§ 16, 32, *Vita S. Comgalli*, § 13, *Vita S. Munnu*, § 14, 16;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 176, 181; II, p. 7, 231, 232.

cross territorial divisions was noted by most commentators from Kenney onwards; however, Hughes was inclined to lay strong emphasis on the dispersed character of the "monastic paruchia", with the implication that it was devoid of politico-geographical coherence.[7]

The argument proposed by Hughes seemed persuasive, especially as it was widely assumed that an early "episcopal church" had been superseded by an 'abbatial church' at some point in the sixth or seventh century. The reality, as Sharpe and Etchingham have both shown, was probably rather more complex; the picture which emerges from canonical legislation and from the annal record is that of a more integrated system of ecclesiastical administration in which bishops retained considerable authority.[8] At Glendalough, as at so many other centres, the head of the church was ofttimes a bishop. A question arises, therefore, as to whether one should expect the (possibly later) *paruchiae* of such foundations to be so radically different in character from the format outlined by the earlier canons.

Several recent commentators have cast doubt on the assumption that the *paruchiae* of the so-called 'monastic foundations' need necessarily be widely scattered. At least in some instances, it transpires that geographical dispersion may be more apparent than real. It has increasingly been recognised that, in reconstructing the *paruchiae* of Iona or Kildare for instance (not to mention Armagh), allowance should be made for the fact that their respective patrons enjoyed something approaching a national status and their cults were widely disseminated. Dedications to these saints may not in all cases indicate sites under the authority of their principal foundation. In regard to St. Brigit, particular

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[7] J. Kenney, *Sources*, p. 294; J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism*, p. 187, 299; Louis Gougaud, *Christianity in Celtic Lands* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1932), p. 222-3; Liam De Paor and Máire De Paor, *Early Christian Ireland* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1958), p. 50; K. Hughes, *Church in Early Irish Society*, p. 63; Eadem, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 71; above, 0 .3, p. ix, xi.

[8] R. Sharpe, "Organisation of the Early Irish Church", passim; C. Etchingham, "Bishops in the Early Irish Church", forthcoming.

patterns of distribution have been observed regarding church dedications. Outside of the Kildare area, there are marked concentrations of Brigidine sites near Wexford Haven and around Dublin; dedications are found right across the midland plain as far as Co. Galway and up into east Ulster, from where they extend into northern Britain and beyond.[9] It is clear that the central issue here is cult diffusion rather than paruchial expansion. There is no suggestion that the authority of Kildare extended into Ulster and overseas.[10]

In regard to other patrons of less exalted status, it has been noted that their foundations are often concentrated within certain areas or regions. Churches of Finbarr appear to be concentrated in south Munster, while those of Finnian are grouped in east Co. Carlow and in south Co. Meath.[11] A further dimension to the problem of dispersed *paruchiae* is the likelihood that, at least in some instances, there may have been a marked discrepancy between the paruchial extent implied in hagiographical sources (i.e. that which was aspired to) and that which was actually attained. Moreover, cases have been isolated in which two major foundations laid claim to the same site.[12]

Dynastic politics as a potential influence on ecclesiastical ambition, whether in promoting paruchial expansion or in forcing limits upon it, has received quite a degree of attention in the course of the last decade. Parallels have been observed between the distribution-pattern of foundations attributed to certain saints and the extent of overkingship achieved by dynasties that

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[9] E.G. Bowen, "Cult of St. Brigit", esp. 39, 41; examination of cult-dissemination in England and continental Europe lies outside the scope of the present study.

[10] *Vita S. Cadoci*, §§ 10, 26, 31, 36, 43, provides a British parallel for overseas cult-diffusion; there are vague claims of property-grants in Scotland and Ireland but churches in these lands, while built in honour of Cadoc, were not expressly under his authority. From available evidence, dependent houses "do not seem ... widely scattered"; W. Davies, "Property Rights and Property Claims", p. 517, 520.

[11] T. O'Connor, "Monastery of Cork", p. 153; P. Byrne, "Clonard", p. 22-3.

[12] K.R. Mc Cone, "Clones and her Neighbours", 390; ibid., 319, notes Ardstraw's claim to Cell na Manach, which was also claimed by Glendalough; see below 6.2.1; see also C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*".

presumably had a vested interest in promoting the cult of the saint concerned. The connection between the seventh century Armagh claim to ecclesiastical hegemony and the fortunes of the Uí Néill, which Binchy sought to establish, may not be as far off course as Sharpe later considered.[13] Herbert has remarked that the early *paruchia* of Colum Cille, whose monastic organisation may have been indebted somewhat to his experience as a member of the Cenél Conaill royal circle, is to a considerable degree reflective of that dynasty's sphere of influence; moreover, as the *paruchia* developed in the eighth and ninth centuries, it largely coincided with the overkingship of the Southern Uí Néill dynasty of Clann Cholmáin.[14]

At a still later date, there are indications that the *Paruchia Cholum Cille*, which extended across several provinces, developed separate jurisdictional divisions for the administration of dependencies within specific realms of the Uí Néill overkingship. Thus, in 1161, the High King Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn confirmed jurisdiction over the Columban churches in Meath and Leinster to Ua Brolcháin, which would seem to suggest that a sub-paruchia with some degree of autonomy had previously existed.[15] The marked parallel between Brigidine dedications in north Leinster and the extent of the Uí Dúnlainge overkingdom noted by Mc Cone (see above, 4.2.2) may also point to paruchial expansion in conjunction with dynastic ambition. The implications of this phenomenon for Glendalough will be discussed presently.

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[13] D.A. Binchy, "Patrick and his Biographers", 59-60, interpreted Muirchú's "Tara Story" in this light; Richard Sharpe, "St. Patrick and the See of Armagh", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 4 (Winter, 1982), 58, appears to rest his objection on the grounds that the story did not represent a fifth century reality.

[14] M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry*, p. 34-5, 65-6; T. Ó Cathasaigh, "Review of *Iona, Kells and Derry*", 192.

[15] A.U. s.a. 1161; see K. Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 133; F.X Martin, "Diarmait Mac Murchada", p. 55; A.U. s.a. 887, records an obit of Máel Pátraic, Patrician steward of Meath, suggesting a similar sub-division of the Armagh *paruchia* at an earlier date.

Considering the indications of overlap between dynastic and paruchial expansion discussed earlier, it is essential to re-examine the testimony of both hagiography and annals that such expansion involved not only the foundation of new ecclesiastical settlements but, on occasion, the absorption of existing sites. The Lives of the Saints (including the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, see below, 6.2.4) preserve accounts which imply that lesser foundations voluntarily submitted to major ecclesiastical centres. This is generally symbolised by a story which alleges that the founder of the lesser site offered his church to the greater patron saint. The annals, however, which have no didactic purpose, can present a rather less idealistic picture. There are indications, as Charles-Edwards observes, that at least in some situations ecclesiastical sites within a conquered territory were forcibly subjected to the favoured foundation of the conqueror.[16] It is perhaps not unreasonable to expect that, in such circumstances, there may have been connivance between secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Bitel suggests the likelihood that clerics co-operated with kings in seeking to extend royal power beyond the túath.[17] Nor should this be especially surprising; whatever the reality behind the royal genealogical links claimed for so many founder-saints including Cóemgen of Glendalough, it is clear that a significant number of their successors were members of ruling dynasties (above, 4.2.2, 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2).

Finally, it remains to consider the extent to which paruchial expansion, as reflected in the sources, involved temporal authority. As the *comarba* of the patron saint clearly governed the extended community of the principal foundation and administered its economic resources, it seems reasonable that, through the *airchinnigh* of subject sites, he had ultimate control over their temporalities also. Presumably it was this power, rather than any straight-

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[16] Thomas Charles-Edwards, "The Church and Settlement", in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter, ed. *Ireland and Europe: the Early Church* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), p. 168; Ibid., p. 170, where the author suggests that dynastic interests may have prompted the appointment of local *rechtairí* for the collection of rents and dues.

[17] L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 147.

forward issue of ecclesiastical obedience, which underlay the conflict that arose between competing paruchial interests. An overall pattern in relation to such conflict has been observed, with *paruchiae* emerging in the seventh century and expanding throughout the eighth as key ecclesiastical settlements (including Glendalough) attracted political patronage. The record shows that armed clashes between rival *paruchiae*, sometimes referred to as "monastic warfare", dies out in the ninth century probably because, as Doherty and others have observed, paruchial expansion had reached its limits and a level of relative stability had been achieved.[18]

The coincidence of dynastic and ecclesiastical interests reflected in this inter-paruchial conflict, however, raises a further question as to whether more was at stake than control of individual sites. In view of the apparent continuity of episcopal authority in the Irish Church into the eighth century and beyond, as discussed above, the possibility arises that authority over districts (or at least over population groups) may have been at issue. Etchingham has drawn attention to an episode in the *Vita Prima* of St. Brigit, apparently dating to the eighth century, which seems to claim for Kildare ecclesiastical supremacy over a district adjacent to Lough Mask.[19] A stray reference to the alleged authority of Cóemgen over Araide has already been noted (above, 2.1.5). It seems reasonable, therefore, in view of the indications that dynastic ambition not uncommonly underlies paruchial expansion, to reassess the distribution of ecclesiastical sites subject to Glendalough in the light of an apparently prolonged contraction of the Laigin overlordship through the seventh century (above, 2.1.3). There are also clear implications, however, for the character of the so-called "monastic paruchia'

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[18] D. Ó Corráin, "Early Irish Churches", p. 334-5, discusses the date-span of paruchial development, observing that the seventh to ninth century represents a key period; C. Doherty, "Monastic Town", p. 54; L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 42.

[19] *Vita Prima S. Brigitae*, § 11, ed. S. Connolly, 16; *Bethu Brigte*, ed. Donncha Ó hAodha (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), § 4; see also C. Etchingham, "Implications of *Paruchia*", 151.

which may, contrary to the view previously expressed by Hughes, have retained something of the territorial dimension ascribed to the *paruchia* of the canons.

6.1.2 : Reconstructing the *Paruchia*

There are indications that major ecclesiastical foundations did in fact, as already observed (above, 1.1.8) keep formal records of their properties and dependent churches. It may be noted that claims of dues, probably extracted from *lebair sochair* were on occasion incorporated into hagiographical texts while, as Mac Niocaill points out, there are allusions to the existence of *libri possessionis* in various biblical commentaries and in ecclesiastical and secular law tracts.[20] Such records, had they survived, would certainly have facilitated the task of assessing monastic possessions. Unfortunately, no example remains intact, although in the case of Glendalough extracts from a *liber confraternitatis* may, as noted earlier, be reflected in the Irish Litany.[21]

The annals are of little assistance in seeking to reconstruct paruchial expansion. Several items are recorded that seem to imply a relationship between Glendalough and other foundations but, on the basis of the annals alone, it is rarely possible to assess the connection. The relative standing of the foundations may provide some lead. Some of the houses mentioned enjoyed a status comparable to that of Glendalough. Thus there is record of an abbot of Tech Moling as lector at Glendalough, and of dual abbacies involving the Céili Dé centre of Tallaght and the great midland foundation of Clonmacnois. These notices, as already argued, may reflect intrusion by outside dynastic interests and

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[20] *Betha Maedóic*, II, represents a case in point; see above, p. 7, n. 20; see also G. Mac Niocaill, *Notitiae as Leabhar Cheannanais*, p. 6-7.

[21] F.J. Byrne, "Derrynavlan", 123; see above 1.1.7, esp. p. 34-5, nn. 120, 121; also below 6.2.1.

efforts to avoid further domination.[22] References to dealings with lesser houses may reflect a different kind of relationship. There is, for example, a notice to the effect that the relics of Cóemgen and of Mochua Chluana Dolcáin were taken on circuit together in 790; obits worthy of consideration in this context may include that entered at 930 for an abbot of Tech Mochua named Máel Cóemgin, along with the already-mentioned records at 1030 and 1052 respectively of Bishop Tuathal ua Garbháin of Cell Cuilinn and Abbot Artúr mac Muiredaig of Cluain Mór Maedóic.[23] It is scarcely coincidental that the eleventh century annals should indicate parallel Uí Muiredaig interests at Glendalough and at several ecclesiastical centres in the Liffey Plain, which aside from Dísert Diarmata and Cluain Mór Maedóic include Cell Cuilinn and Kildare itself. In the light of the surviving record of Uí Muiredaig involvement at these centres (see above 3.1.3, 5.1.1), it may be significant that the *Boruma* tract, which features Bishop Áedán mac Maine (above, 4.1.2) and which includes an itinerary through certain Glendalough possessions, selects for special mention the ecclesiastical students of Cell Cuilinn, Cluain Mór and Kildare.[24] However, the full import of these notices for the paruchial relationships of Glendalough can be appreciated only because other sources provide contextual data.

The range of hagiographical sources available for Glendalough, discussed in Chapter 1, is particularly extensive. Of special significance is the apparent survival of material from the already-discussed *liber confraternitatis*, preserved in a litany, which probably dates to c.800. Supplementary data is contained in the genealogies of the saints, which includes a network of Dál Messin Corb

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[22] A.F.M. s.a. 930; A. Clon. s.a. 927 (=932), record Dublitir of Tech Moling and Glendalough; A.F.M. s.a. 866 (=868), 950 (=952), 957 (=959), record dual abbots Dainiél, Ferdomnach Ua Maenaig and Martán; see above, 4.3.1; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Unity of Cóemgen and Ciarán", forthcoming.

[23] A.U. s.a. 789 (=790) see above, 4.2.2; A.F.M. s.a. 928, A.Clon. s.a. 925; for Bishop Tuathal and Abbot Artúr see above p. 209, esp. nn. 12, 14.

[24] A.U., A.F.M., A.L.C., 1024, 1036, 1041; A.Tig., s.a 1036; C.S. s.a [1034]; A.I., A.Clon., s.a. 1037; LL 303 a; *Bk. Leinster*, V, p. 1296-7; see also below, 6.2.5.

ecclesiastics and which has every appearance of contrivance, along with the martyrologies and the *Comainmnigud Nóem Hérend*, where various other foundations (represented by their patrons) are associated with Cóemgen of Glendalough.[25] As might be expected, the lives of the saints provide a further corpus of information. The *Vita S. Coemgeni* includes a number of episodes which suggest that certain foundations were subject to Glendalough, while the lives of several other saints help to complete the picture.

Glendalough is particularly fortunate in the survival of a substantial body of post-Norman charters, confirming its possessions and recording property transactions. Although these documents are late and present a post-Reform situation, they display a remarkable degree of continuity with the earlier sources (see above, 1.1.8). Extensive research in placenames, particularly the work of Price in relation to Co. Wicklow, complemented by field survey and record of dedications, means that foundations attributed to the *familia Coemgeni* and sites listed among the possessions of Glendalough can for the most part be identified. Proceeding firstly with the task of identification, the writer will plot the relevant ecclesiastical settlements, at which point distribution-patterns should become apparent.

6.2 : The Paruchia of Glendalough

6.2.1 : The *Familia Coemgeni* of the Irish Litany

The Litany of Irish Saints, a version of which is incorporated into the Book of Leinster, includes a tract which (as noted above) is apparently based on a Glendalough *liber confraternitatis*. If the date of c.800 ascribed to the litany by

[25] Discussion of these sources by various commentators including Ó Briain, Herbert, Ó Riain and others has been summarised above; see 1.1.5, 1.1.6 and 1.1.7.

Hughes is acceptable, the account preserved here is the earliest available general picture of the *familia* of Cóemgen (**Fig. 6A**). The tract commences "cethracha do naemaib i nGlinn da Locha im Chaemgen n-uasal sacart ..." and then proceeds to list twenty-five alleged companions of Cóemgen, of whom twelve are expressly associated with foundations.[26] The implication would seem to be that the sites in question were subject to Glendalough. In regard to the thirteen ecclesiastics remaining, all but one can be linked with particular foundations - but not entirely on the evidence of the litany. The testimony of other sources in relation to these individuals will be examined presently. Two of the clerics listed, certainly Abbot **Dairchell** and perhaps also Bishop **Sillán**, appear to have actually been members of the Glendalough community.[27]

Of those located by the litany, **Mo Choe** is associated with Araide, almost certainly Araide Cliach, on the eastern shore of Lough Derg Co. Tipperary. It is probably significant in this regard that a genealogical tract on the Araide should credit Glendalough with authority over the district.[28] **Mo Chua** or Crónán is the patron of Cluain Dolcáin and, as already observed, his relics were taken on circuit along with those of Cóemgen in 790. The foundation of Cluain Dolcáin (Td. and Par. Clondalkin, By. Uppercross, Co. Dublin) features prominently in Glendalough tradition. **Mo Ríóc**, as already observed, is associated with Inis Bó Finni on Lough Ree while **Dagán** is the founder of Inber Daeile (Td. and Par. Ennereilly, By. Arklow).[29] The list also includes **Mo Senóc** of Mugna (Td. and

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[26] LL 373 b 40; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1698-9; *Irish Litanies*, p. 54-7; eight of these saints are elsewhere alleged to have been members of Dál Messin Corb, including Dagán, Mo Shenóc, Petrán, Lochán and Enna, Molibba, Áedán and Menóc; see below, 6.2.3.

[27] Dairchell and Sillán are discussed above 4.1.

[28] BB 154 a; see *Onomasticon*, p. 34; above, p. 105, n. 108; it may be noted that Lec.118 associates Mochonna with Araide; see also below 6.3.1.

[29] Mo Ríóc is discussed above, p. 168 n. 13; P. Ó Riain, "Irish Section of Calendar of Saints", 84, suggests that Dagán may be identical with Daig of Inis Chain; alternatively, traditions concerning the two may have become confused; Dagán is accorded a Dál Messin Corb origin, LL 351 f 1, 372 c 51, 373 a 59; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1566, 1695, 1697.

Fig. 6A : The Familia Coemgeni according to the Litany of Irish Saints (LL 373 b)

Mo Choe nAirid	Máel Anbis	Mo Chua Cluana Dolcáin
Mo Ríóc Insi Bó Finne	Affinus Franc	Cellach Sax
Dagán Inbir Daeile	Mo Shenóc Mugna	Mo Chonnóc Gailinni
Mo Shinu Glinni Munare	Mo Bai m.h. Allae	Rufin Anchorita
Mo Goróc Dergne	Silán [sic] Epscop	Darchell ab [sic]
Mo Libbo m. [h] Araide	Guaire m. Daill	Glúnsalach Slébe Fuait
Murdebur frater Caemáin	Corconutan frater M.	Áedán frater Cóemáin
Lochán ó Chill Manach E.	Enna	Petrán Cilli Lainni
Mo Themníóc	Menóc &c.	

Par. Ballaghmoon, By. Kilkea-Moone, Co. Kildare) and **Mo Chonnóc**, here linked with Gailinn (Td. and Par. Gallen, By. Ballybrit, Co. Offaly), who was apparently revered at Glendalough even if the historicity of his association with the latter site may be open to question.[30] **Mo Sinu**, a hypochoristic form of Sillán, is seemingly distinct from the above-mentioned bishop of that name unless he represents a cult alter-ego. In any case, he is the patron of Glenn Muniri (Td. Ballyman, Par. Old Conna, By. Rathdown, Co. Dublin). This site, excavated within the last ten years, produced evidence for occupation as early as the fifth century and was still a centre of activity as late as the fourteenth; it may also be noted that there is a St. Kevin's Well in the townland of Ballyman.[31] Other members of the *familia Coemgeni* whose foundations are expressly mentioned include **Mo Gorróc** of Dergne (Td. and Par. Delganey, By. Rathdown, Co. Wicklow) and **Glúnsalach** of Sliab Fuait (By Upper Orior, Co Armagh). In view of his associations with Dál nAraide, the latter merits particular consideration.[32] Of those that remain, **Lochán** and **Enna**, both of whom are genealogically linked to Dál Messin Corb, are assigned to Cell [na] Manach nEscrach (Td. Kilnamanagh, Par. Tallaght, By. Uppercross, Co. Dublin); this site has strong Glendalough traditions including a St. Kevin's well, and was apparently claimed at some stage by Ardstraw.[33] The last individual in the list to be specifically identified with a foundation is **Petrán** of the unlocated Cill Lainni, whom the tract on saints and places associates with

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[30] Mo Shenóc is also linked to Dál Messin Corb, LL 352 b 54; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1571; Rawl. B 502, 120 b 29; *Corpus*, p. 41; Mo Chonnóc is discussed above, 4.1.2, where an identification with Colmán Brit of Gallen is indicated; F.J. Byrne, *High Kings*, p. 221 suggests that Gallen may (ultimately) have fallen into the Clonmacnois sphere of control.

[31] E. O'Brien, "Churches of Sth East Co. Dublin", 515, reports a corn kiln of probable 5th C. date and medieval iron working; C. Ó Danachair, "Holy Wells of Co. Dublin", 86.

[32] Aside from the location of Sliab Fuait, LL 348 g 41 traces Glúnsalach's pedigree to Dál nAraide; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1544; see below, 6.2.4.

[33] For pedigree see LL 350 a 46; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554; Rawl B 502, 120 b 28; *Corpus*, p. 41; L. Price, "Place Names of Sth Co. Dublin", 128; C. Ó Danachair, "Holy Wells of Co. Dublin", 86; K. R. Mc Cone, "Clones and her Neighbours", 319, comments on Ardstraw's claim to Kilnamanagh; *Vita S. Eogani*, § 3, *V.S.H. Salman.*, p. 401.

Domnach Eochaille (perhaps Td. Killinure, Par. Aghowle or the Yew Tree Graveyard, Td. Balisland, Par. Carnew, By. Shillelagh).[34]

The thirteen ecclesiastics who are not associated in this source with particular foundations (aside from Bishop Sillán and Abbot Dairchell), include **Áedán**, **Molibbo** and **Menóc**, all three of whom are joined to the Dál Messin Corb genealogies. Áedán, who features in a list of alleged kinsfolk of Cóemgen and who appears as the peace-mediator bishop of Glendalough in the Boruma Saga, may be identical with a saint of that name in the Comainmnigud tract.[35] The rather questionable Dál Messin Corb pedigree ascribed to Molibbo has already been examined (4.1.2), while Menóc is one of three patrons from the litany to be located in the martyrologies; their case will be discussed presently.[36] **Mo Baí** (or Mo Boe) moccu Alldai is associated in the genealogies with Cluain dá an Dobair, which might suggest a location on the River Anner in south Co. Tipperary, although Price points to Cloney, Co. Kildare.[37] The five remaining members of the *familia* are not located in the sources, but medieval church dedications provide an indicator in two cases.[38]

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[34] Petrán is also linked to Dál Messin Corb; LL 350 a 61; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554; Rawl B 502, 120 b 30; *Corpus*, p. 41; his cult at Glendalough and possible identity with the British saint Petróc has already been discussed (above, 4.1.3).

[35] LL 301 b, 350 a 63; Ibid. 366 e 33, has Áedán h. nGarrchon, perhaps the same; note also 366 e 43-4, where an Áedán is commemorated at Cluain Dartada (cf FO) and Cluain Tarb; *Bk. Leinster*, V, p. 1296, VI, p. 1554, 1659; above, 4.1.2, also below, 6.2.2, 6.2.5.

[36] Menóc, Corconutan and Cellach are located in the martyrologies; below, 6.2.2.

[37] LL 349 b 44, 372 a 49; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1547, 1693; An Dobar/ River Anner is discussed by Michael A. O'Brien, "Placenames", in J.F. Meenan and D.A. Webb (ed.), *A View of Ireland* (Dublin: for Br. Assoc for Advanced Science, 1957), p. 192; L. Price in *Calendar*, index p. 327; for Dál Messin Corb *forsloinne* of Uí Alldai see above, 4.1.2, and below 6.2.5.

[38] Affinus and Guaire are discussed below, 6.2.4, 6.2.6. Those who cannot at present be located are Máel Anfis (unless the latter is identified with Máel Anfaid of Dair Inis in the Blackwater estuary), Rufín and Mo Themníóc, whose pedigree links him to the Cerdraige of Tulach Gussa; Rawl B. 502, 150 b 52; *Corpus*, p. 219; LL 351 b 1; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1561.

6.2.2 : The Evidence of the Martyrologies

The earliest of the martyrologies M.T and F.O., as discussed in the opening chapter (see 1.1.6), were probably compiled in the late eighth to early ninth century; however the notes accompanying the latter collection, in particular, are of varying date and may well be eleventh century additions. It is difficult, therefore, to accept the testimony of the martyrologies as a universally valid representation of, for instance, an eighth century reality.

While such limitations are readily understood, it is still agreed that the close association of saints in these sources, as in hagiographical tradition generally, probably indicates that a form of confraternity existed at some point (see above, p. 42-3). In pursuit of this notion, Ó Riain draws parallels between the joint featuring of certain saints in the calendars and in the vitae, noting the association of place and pedigree as common factors. Pointing to the fact that the daughters of Colum Cremthainne, commemorated at 14 September on the day after Dagán Inbir Daeile, feature in the vita of Daig Insi Caín, Ó Riain infers a possible connection between Glendalough and Inis Caín, although this is not attested elsewhere.[39] He goes further to suggest that a correlation might be expected between those who share the feastday of a prominent patron and the 'dramatis personae' of the saint's *vita*.[40] This does not appear to hold true in regard to Cóemgen of Glendalough. The case of a certain **Critán**, who allegedly shares two separate commemorations with Cóemgen, will be examined presently, as the link between the two is not apparent on the evidence of the martyrology alone.[41]

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[39] M.T. 14 Sept; *Vita S. Dagaei mic Cairill*, § 15, *V.S.H. Salman.*, p. 392; P. Ó Riain, "Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography", 155; Idem, "Irish Section of the Calendar of Saints", 84, 88, 92 n.70.

[40] P. Ó Riain, "Cainnech Alias Colum Cille", p. 23.

[41] *Dormitatio Cóemgeni* at 3 June is not at issue here, but two other notices which may record the saint's *natalis* or *translatio;* M.T. 11 May and 16 Oct. In each case, reference to Cóemgen is coupled with Critán, son of Illadon, alias Mo Chritóc; see below, 6.2.4.

For the purposes of the present study, it may be noted that M.T. confirms the association of several members of the *familia Coemgeni* with the foundations cited in the litany.[42] The same source places **Enán** (or Menóc) at Glenn Faidli (Td. Ballymoat, Par. Glenealy, By. Newcastle, Co. Wicklow), a link which is attested elsewhere; further, the tract on saints and places and that on the mothers of saints, both of which are probably of later date, add Glais Eille (Td. Glaseely, Par. Athy, By. Narragh-Reban, Co. Kildare) and the unlocated Rus Mór Menóc.[43] On the testimony of F.O., **Corconutan** was at Daire Eidnech, located in Eóganacht Caisil by a gloss which further identifies it with the better known Daire na Fland (Td. Lurgoe, Par. Graystown, By. Slieveardagh, Co. Tipperary).[44] It may be significant that a later cleric of Daire Eidnech named Fer Dá Chrích, who died in 748 as abbot of Dair Inis in the Blackwater estuary, is identified by an F.O. gloss with Áed ua Aithmet, while one of his successors was Dainiél ua Aithmit, who died in 778. Both were apparently descended from a line known as Uí Aithmit Chaiss, traced to one Deilgine son of Garrchú of Dál Messin Corb.[45]

Of the remaining members of the *familia Coemgeni,* only **Cellach** and the already mentioned bishop Áedán are assigned to locations by the F.O. notes. The former is placed at Dísert Cellaich "fri Glenn dá Lacha anairdes atá", probably situated in Glenmalure and the latter at Cluain Dartada, perhaps to be identified

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[42] M.T. commemorates Lochán and Enna at 31 Dec., Petrán at 4 Jun., Mo Ríóc at 1 Aug., Mo Chua at 6 Aug., Dagán at 13 Sept., Mo Gorróc and Mo Shenóc at 23 Dec.

[43] LL 367 d 41, 372 c 54, 373 a 60, have Glenn Faidli; LL 353 c 39 adds Glais Eille, 373 c a 60 adds Rus Mór; *Bk Leinster,* VI, p. 1582, 1664, 1695, 1697; the saints and places tract may be post 10th c if Martán eps Tamlachtan, LL 353 c 1, is the abbot who died in 959.

[44] N. Ó Muraíle, "Doire na bhFlann", 116; F. J. Byrne, "Derrynavlan", 121-2; ibid. 116, traces the name-change of the site to two 9th C. reforming abbots named Flann.

[45] M.T., F.O. at 6 Oct. has Fer Dá Chrích Dairi Eidnig; A.U. s.a 746, recté 747 (=748) for latter's obit; A.U. s.a. 777 (=778) for obit of Dainiél; Rawl B 502, 120 bb 7, for Huí Aithmit Chaiss; *Corpus,* p. 38-9; Dair Inis was associated with Máel Anfaid; N. Ó Muraíle, "Doire na bhFlann", 120-1, n. 58; Peter O'Dwyer, *Céili Dé: Spiritual Reform in Ireland 750 to 900,* 2nd ed (Dublin: Editions Táilliúra, 1981), p. 30, 37, 55-7.

with Clonard in Agory (Par. Tullygorey, By. Narragh-Reban, Co. Kildare).[46] In view of the above-mentioned problem in dating these glosses, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not an early situation is reflected here. It may be added that the patrons of several other foundations which can be shown to have had connections with Glendalough are calendared, but the relationship between the sites is not clear from the testimony of the martyrologies.[47] The accompanying map aims to reconstruct the *familia Coemgeni* incorporating additional data from the *féilirí* and glosses (**Fig. 6B**).

6.2.3 : The *Familia Coemgeni* of the Genealogies

It is not fully agreed whether the collection of saints' genealogies is a product of the eighth or ninth century (above, 1.1.5); in either case, it is perhaps reasonable to expect that the reality reflected therein should be that of the eighth century or earlier. The text in the Book of Leinster includes an interesting tract on the saints of Dál Messin Corb which, as noted earlier (above, p. 29 n.103), was viewed by Ó Briain as a probable representation of the *familia* of Glendalough. With "noeb Dál Mes Corb in so" added in the margin, the section commences with Cóemgen mac Cóemloga, and proceeds to catalogue a further twenty two ecclesiastics, all but five of whom are associated with specific foundations.[48] Aside from Cóemgen, five of those listed feature in the Irish litany ; Lochán and Enna, Mo Senóc, Petrán and Corconutan.

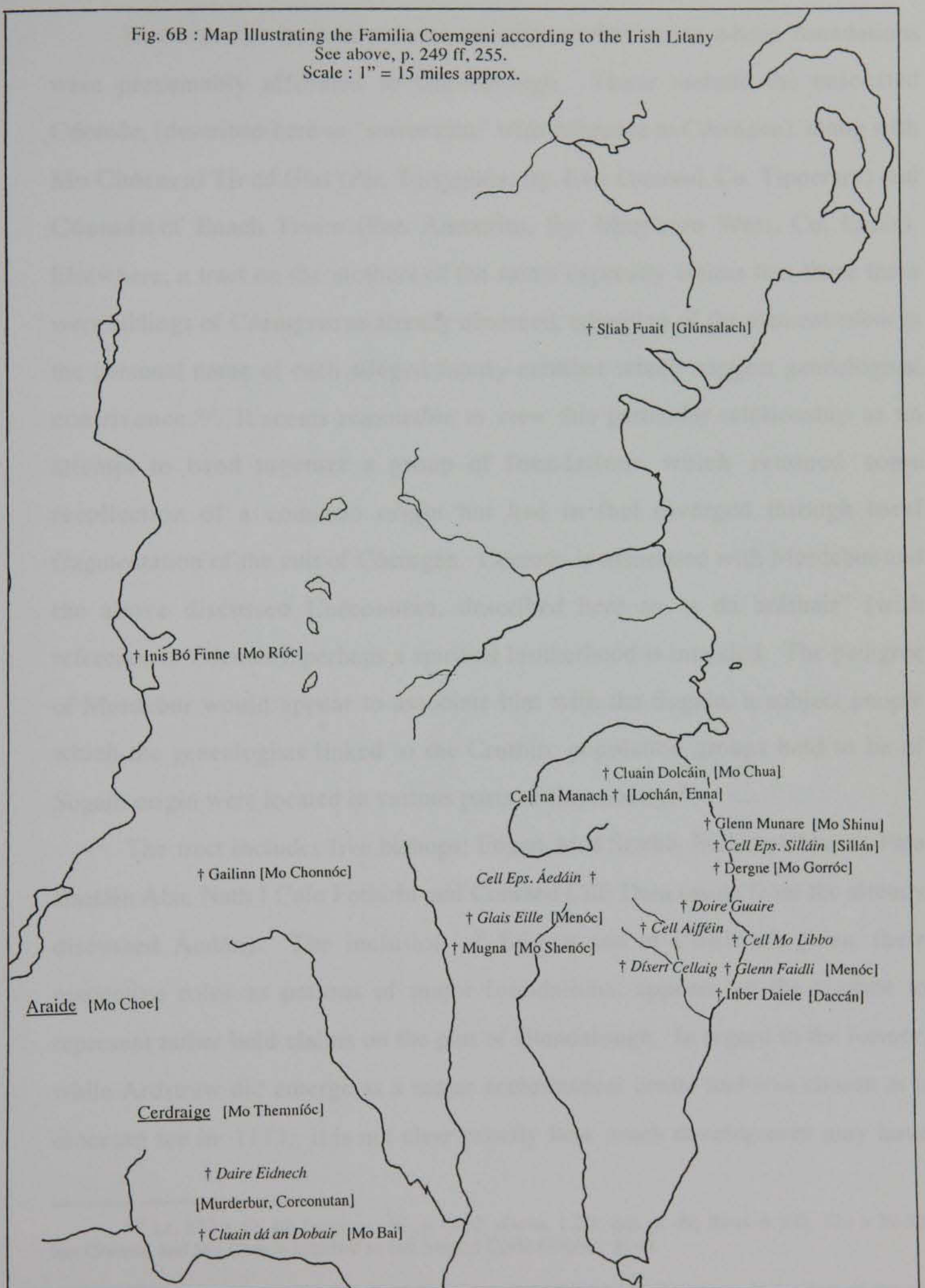
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[46] F.O. 11 Feb, 7 Oct.; L. Price, "Placename Study", 33; Áedán has been previously discussed (above, n. 35).

[47] For instance Mo Chóem, Cóemán, Etchian, Conláed, Mo Sacru (M.T. and F.O.); Nath I, Scoth and Mengán (M.T. only); the daughters of Mac Ieir (F.O. only); and Becnat, entered only in the post-Norman *Martyrology and Book of Obits of Christ Church*, ed. J.C. Crostwaithe (Dublin: Celtic Society, 1846), at 12 Nov.; see below, 6.2.3.

[48] LL 350 a 43; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554.

Fig. 6B : Map Illustrating the Familia Coemgeni according to the Irish Litany
See above, p. 249 ff, 255.
Scale : 1" = 15 miles approx.



However, the tract introduces seventeen other saints whose foundations were presumably affiliated to Glendalough. These include the unlocated **Cóemóc**, (described here as "sorror eius" with reference to Cóemgen), along with **Mo Chóem** of Tír dá Glas (Par. Terryglass, By. Lwr Ormond, Co. Tipperary) and **Cóemán** of Enach Truim (Par. Annatrim, By. Maryboro West, Co. Laois). Elsewhere, a tract on the mothers of the saints expressly claims that these three were siblings of Cóemgen; as already observed, repetition of the element *cóem* in the personal name of each alleged family-member would suggest genealogical contrivance.[49] It seems reasonable to view this particular relationship as an attempt to band together a group of foundations which retained some recollection of a common origin but had in fact diverged through local fragmentation of the cult of Cóemgen. Cóemán is associated with Murdebur and the above discussed Corconutan, described here as "a dá bráthair" (with reference to Cóemán); perhaps a spiritual brotherhood is intended. The pedigree of Murdebur would appear to associate him with the Sogain, a subject people which the genealogists linked to the Cruthin; population groups held to be of Sogain origin were located in various parts of the country.[50]

The tract includes five bishops; Eógan Aird Sratha, Etchian Chluana Fata Baetáin Aba, Nath I Cúle Fothirbi and Conláed Cilli Dara (aside from the already discussed Áedán). The inclusion of **Eógan** and of **Conláed**, given their respective roles as patrons of major foundations, appears on the surface to represent rather bold claims on the part of Glendalough. In regard to the former, while Ardstraw did emerge as a major ecclesiastical centre and was chosen as a diocesan see in 1111, it is not clear exactly how much development may have

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[49] LL 372 a 40; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1692; above, 1.2.3, esp. p. 49; Rawl B 502, 120 b 29-30, has Cóemán and Mo Chóem attached to Dál Messin Corb; *Corpus*, p. 41.

[50] Murdebur and a brother Forannán were allegedly sons of Cuanán, a descendant of Sogain Salbude son of Fiachra Araide; LL 348 e 45; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1542; see above, 4.1.3; note segments of the Sogain were settled in central Connacht, Mide, Brega and Fermag in Airgialla; see F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 236-7.

taken place by the eighth century. In any event, Bishop Eógan is elsewhere associated with Cell Manach nEscrach which was certainly claimed by Glendalough (and which, as already observed, was also linked to Ardstraw).[51]

Conláed is significant in that his cult is closely associated with Kildare. This foundation had, as previously noted (above, 2.2.1), attracted the patronage of Uí Dúnlainge at an early date. Having developed as a royal basilica by the mid seventh century, there is ample evidence that it had already acquired an extensive *paruchia* and its patroness was considered to be the premier saint of the Laigin.[52] Even though aspirations to ecclesiastical supremacy could at times outstrip reality, it seems unlikely that Glendalough could have expected to dominate the *Civitas Brigitae*. It may be noted, however, that the reference here is not to the patroness but to Conláed who, although featured in Kildare hagiography as St. Brigit's episcopal colleague, is clearly the junior partner. In the *Vita Brigitae* of Cogitosus, the foundress calls Conláed from his hermitage (generally identified with Par. and By. Connell, Co. Kildare) to serve as bishop at Kildare.[53] Perhaps this reflects the absorption of a minor ecclesiastical settlement by an already-expanding Brigidine *paruchia* in the seventh century. When Uí Dúnlainge interests were established at Glendalough towards the end of the eighth century (above, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.2.2), the cult of the hermit-bishop may have been adopted by the *familia Coemgeni*. This may well explain the Dál Messin Corb pedigree assigned to Conláed and the latter's association with Dinn Flatha Ceneóil Lugair (By. Gorey, Co. Wexford), where Glendalough ambition is much in evidence.[54]

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[51] Eógan is firmly placed in the Dál Messin Corb genealogies; LL 350 a 45, 351 e 30; Rawl B 502, 120 b 28; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554, 1565; *Corpus*, p. 41; the claims of *Vita S. Eogani* are discussed above, n. 33 and those of *Vita S. Coemgeni* below, 6.2.4.

[52] F.J. Byrne, *Kings*, p. 131, 144.

[53] *Vita S. Brigitae*, prologue; "Cogitosus: Life of St. Brigit", 11; *Bethu Brigte*, ed. D. Ó hAodha, introduction, p. xiii, xiv; K. R. Mc Cone, "Bríd Chill Dara", p. 35.

[54] LL 351 e 34, gives Conláed's pedigree; LL 353 c 13, the tract on saints and places locates him at Dinn Flatha; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1566, 1581; see below, 6.2.8.

Regarding the other bishops, there is less evidence to suggest compromise between Glendalough and another major ecclesiastical centre. **Etchian** (Etcheán) of Cluain Fata Baetáin Aba (Par. Clonfad, By of Fertullagh, Co. Westmeath), is elsewhere associated with the unlocated Tech Do Chua mic Nemáin.[55] He is featured in the Life of Colmán mac Luacháin of Lann, in which he baptises the latter and is rewarded with the site of Tír na Copán.[56] **Nath I**'s foundation of Cúl Sachaille has long been identified with a site in the Parish of Taney (By. Rathdown, Co. Dublin); as the form of the placename Tech Nath I would seem to imply that the bishop's relics were kept there, the suggestion may well be valid.[57]

Of the others included in this group of alleged Dál Messin Corb saints, **Mo Sacru** is perhaps most worthy of note. Although not associated here with a specific foundation, he is elsewhere placed at Tech [Mo] Sacru (Td. and Par. [Ta]saggart, By. Newcastle, Co. Dublin) where, significantly, a branch of the Ua Rónáin lineage of Uí Bairrche was settled.[58] Mo Sacru may possibly be identified with one of the guarantors of the *Cáin Adamnáin* and so have flourished towards the end of the seventh century.[59] As the patron of unlocated Raith Biclend is described as **Bicliu** Uscidi, he may have been associated with a site in the parish of Killiskey (By. Newcastle, Co. Wicklow); this would seem to be identical with the Cellusquedi of Pope Alexander's Bull to Bishop Máel Calainn

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[55] LL 353 a 4, tract on saints and places; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1578.

[56] *Betha Colmáin maic Luacháin*, §§ 7, 10, ed. Kuno Meyer, Todd Lecture Series No. 17 (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis, 1911), p. 6, 10; the writer is greatful to Mr. Charles Doherty, Dept. Early (Incl. Medieval) Irish History, U.C.D. for this reference.

[57] P.J. O'Reilly, "Taney and its Patron", *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 32 (1902), 380, on the testimony of Archbishop Alen's *Liber Niger* identifies the Sachaill with a tributary of the Dodder in the Parish of Taney; D. Flanagan, "Christian Impact on Early Ireland", p. 37-8, discusses the derivation of the Old Irish ecclesiastical placename element *Tech* from the Latin *Domus*, frequently signifying a church at which the patron's relics were kept.

[58] M.T. at 3 March has Mo Sacru i Tigh Thacru; Rawl. B. 502, 121 b 16 records Uí Rónáin at that site; *Corpus*, p. 48; the Ua Rónáin lineage also had connections with Glendalough, see above, 5.2.1.

[59] M. Ní Dhonnchadha, "Guarantor List", 189, 195, where Moacru [sic] is included among the ecclesiastical signatories.

in 1179, and the Kyllusky which Archbishop Fulk c. 1256-71 conferred on the archdeacon of Glendalough. The original Irish form of the placename is probably Cell Uscaidi, rather than the Cill Uisce suggested by Price.[60] **Becnat** is here linked with Cell Becnatan and with Tír Chóicir. There are at least two locations which preserve the placename Kilbegnet; one is a townland (Par. Kilgorman, By. Gorey, Co. Wexford), the other a parish (By. Ballymoe, Co. Roscommon), while Tír Chóicir would seem to be Tirhogar (Par. Lea, By. Portnahinch).[61] The last five members of this alleged kin-group are associated with foundations which, on the basis of available evidence, cannot be located. This would seem to be the case for **Cóemell** and **Trénán**, who are placed at Imgan (unless this is Ráith Imgain; Rathangan, By. E. Offaly), for **Cillíne** mac Diarmata of Uachtur Achaid and for **Lumsech** and **Fedelm** of Cill Lumsigi.

In addition to the aforementioned individuals who are categorically listed among the *familia Coemgeni*, several others are accorded Dál Messin Corb pedigrees while still more are linked by genealogical or topographical notes to that dynasty or to Glendalough. **Berchán** mac Decill is traced to the same line as Cóemgen and is expressly associated in the genealogies with Senchill in h. Briúin Chualand (Td. Shankill, Par. Rathmichael, By. Rathdown, Co. Dublin); he may be identical with Mo Bí Clairenech Domnaig Broic, who is apparently to be distinguished from his namesake of Glasnevin.[62] It may be noted that a holding known as "St. Kevin's lands" extended to the west of Donnybrook in the

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[60] A.R. I. f. 1b, 134b; A.R. II f. 48, 353; *Calendar*, p. 5, 137; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 408; A.S. Mac Shamhráin, "Placenames and Archaeology: the Study of Ecclesiastical Settlement", *Archaeology Ireland*, 7 no. 3 (Autumn 1993), S15; see also below 6.2.6.

[61] Lec. 90 Vc 35, records Uí Chuanda Chilli Bicneadan, descended from Dercmossach son of Cathaír Már; LL 374 b 31, where 'secht noebepscoip Tíri Choicir' are included in the Litany of Irish Saints; *Corpus*, p. 69; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1704; church and well dedications associate Becnat with Dalkey, Co. Dublin; see below, 6.2.6.

[62] LL 351 g 1, 351 g 20; for pedigrees of Berchán m. Decill and Mo Bí Glasi Nóenden [sic]; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1567; Rawl B 502, 120 b 39;*Corpus*, p. 41, links former to Dál Messin Corb; see M.T. at 30 Sept and 12 Oct; see also below, 6.2.4, 6.2.5.

Barony of Dublin.[63] **Findbarr** Cilli Adgair (Td. Killegar, Par. Powerscourt, By. Rathdown, Co. Wicklow) is also linked to Dál Messin Corb, and would seem in addition to be the patron of Cill Rethaire (Td. Kilruddery, Par. Bray, By. Rathdown, Co. Wicklow).[64] Other relevant figures include **Ingena Meic Ieir**, whom the *féilirí* locate at Cell na nIngen (Td. Kilininny, Par. Tallaght, By. Uppercross, Co. Dublin), and **Meic Conaill** who, along with **Ingena Eógain meic Conaill**, are associated with the unlocated Cill Garraisce.[65] The *familia Coemgeni* as reflected in the genealogies is illustrated in Fig. 6 C.

Other isolated references to saints with Dál Messin Corb or Glendalough associations may provide further indications to the confederation of Coemgen. Such references include **secht nóeb epscoip** Dromma Aurchailli (Td. and Par. Dunmurghill, By. Ikeathy-Oughteranny, Co. Kildare),[66] **Scoth** and **Mengán** of the unlocated Cill Maigi Uachtair and of Cluain Moescnae in Fer Tulach,[67] and **Brutiuc** *aite Cóemgin* of Cúl Corrae in Corco Roíde.[68] By the same token, the claim recorded in the genealogies to the effect that Mella, mother of Abbán of Cill Abbáin and Mag Arnaide, was a sister of Cóemgen, may represent an agreement between the two *paruchiae*.[69]

It might be questioned whether the record of Dál Messin Corb segments or *forsloinnte* at certain ecclesiastical sites was ever explicitly intended to reflect

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[63] N. Donnelly, *History of Dublin Parishes*, No. 1, p. 3.

[64] LL 351 e 58, 367 d 50, 53; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1566, 1664; Rawl B 502, 120 b 44; *Corpus*, p. 42; see below, 6.2.5.

[65] LL 351 e 45, 351 f 20; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1566; Rawl B 502, 120 ac 19; *Corpus*, p. 37; M.T. 26 Oct, LL recension commemorates Ingena meic Ieir of Cill Maignend, perhaps a mistake for Cill na nIngend.

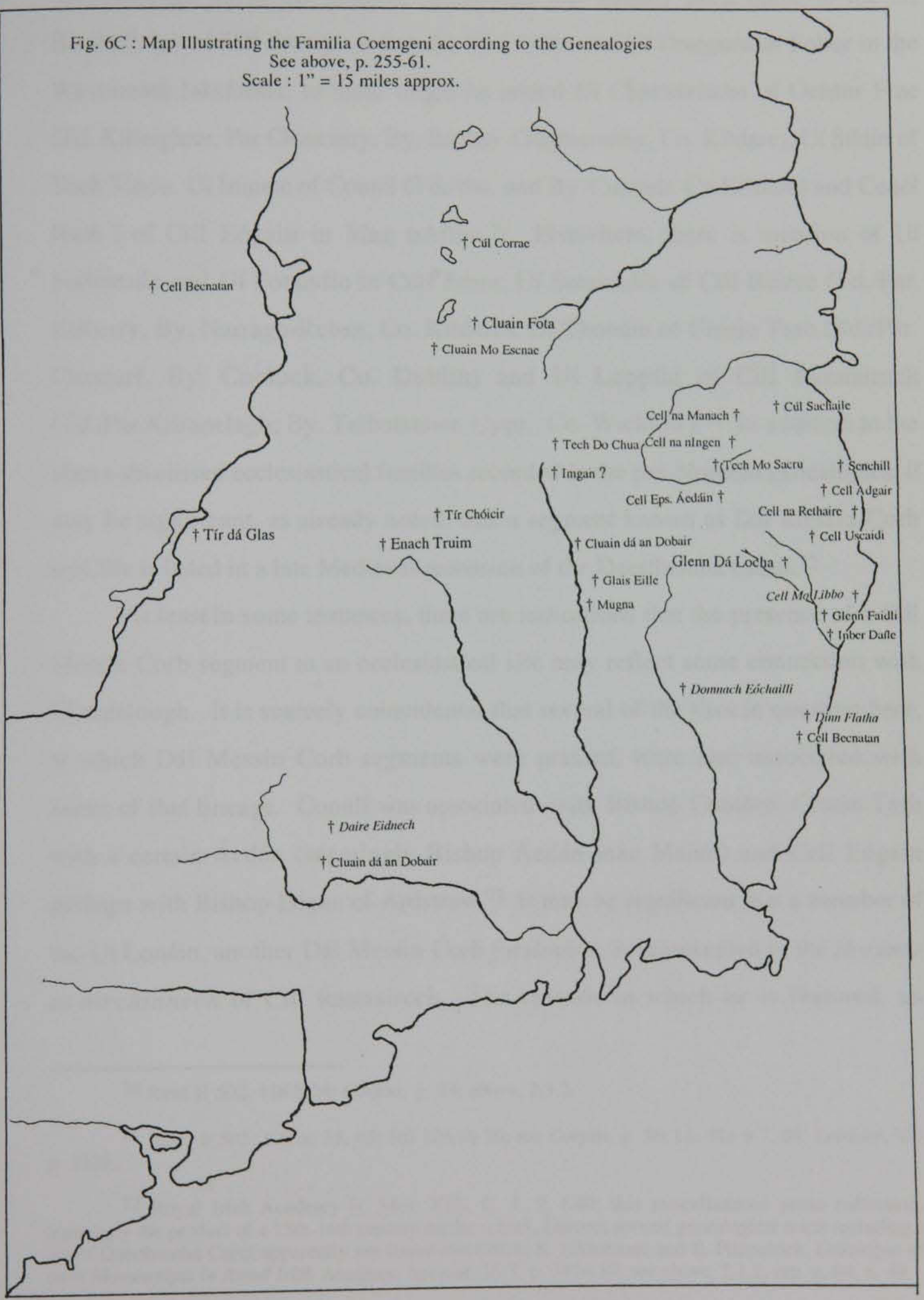
[66] Rawl B 502, 118 b 26;*Corpus*, p. 24, records epscoip Dromma Aurchaille.

[67] LL 353 b 61; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1581, for Scoth and Mengán; M.T. 9 Jan. and 26 Aug. commemorates Fáelán of Cluain Moescnae; a gloss at the latter date locates the site in Fer Tulach.

[68] LL 353 c 53; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1582, records Epscop Brutiuc.

[69] LL 352 a 66; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1570; see below, 6.2.4.

Fig. 6C : Map Illustrating the Familia Coemgeni according to the Genealogies
See above, p. 255-61.
Scale : 1" = 15 miles approx.



Glendalough paruchial claims. Reference has already been made to the Uí Báethallaigh of Cill Bicsige and to the Uí Chúáin and Uí Draignén at Fobur in the Westmeath lakelands; to these might be added Uí Chaibdeilche of Óchtur Fine (Td. Killeighter, Par Cloncurry, By. Ikeathy-Oughteranny, Co. Kildare), Uí Síláin of Tech Tindu, Uí Inmete of Conull (Td./Par. and By. Connell, Co Kildare) and Cenél Nath I of Cill Eógain in Mag nAilbe.[70] Elsewhere, there is mention of Uí Follomuin and Uí Forandlo in Cúil Emre, Uí Seancháin of Cill Beirce (Td./Par. Kilberry, By. Narragh-Reban, Co. Kildare), Uí Chonáin of Cluain Tarb (Td./Par. Clontarf, By. Coolock, Co. Dublin) and Uí Loppíni of Cill Rannairech (Td./Par.Kilranelagh, By. Talbotstown Uppr., Co. Wicklow).[71] In addition to the above-discussed ecclesiastical families recorded in the pre-Norman genealogies, it may be significant, as already noted, that a segment known as Dál Messin Corb na Cille is listed in a late Medieval recension of the Daerthuatha Caisil.[72]

At least in some instances, there are indications that the presence of a Dál Messin Corb segment at an ecclesiastical site may reflect some connection with Glendalough. It is scarcely coincidental that several of the sites in question here, at which Dál Messin Corb segments were present, were also associated with saints of that lineage. Conull was associated with Bishop Conláed, Cluain Tarb with a certain Áedán (seemingly Bishop Áedán mac Maine) and Cell Eógain perhaps with Bishop Eógan of Ardstraw.[73] It may be significant that a member of the Uí Lonáin, another Dál Messin Corb *forsloinne*, is represented in the *Boruma* as *airchinnech* of Cill Rannairech. The episode in which he is featured, as

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[70] Rawl B 502, 118 b 24; *Corpus*, p. 24; above, 2.1.2.

[71] Rawl B 502, 120 ac 35, 45; BB 124 ab 20; see *Corpus*, p. 38; LL 313 b 7; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1339.

[72] Royal Irish Academy Ir. Mss. XIX, C. 1. 2, f.40; this miscellaneous prose collection, seemingly the product of a 15th-16th century bardic school, features several genealogical tracts including a list of Daerthuatha Caisil apparently not found elsewhere; K. Mulchrone and E. Fitzpatrick, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in Royal Irish Academy*, fasciculi 26-7, p. 3414-18; see above, 2.1.2, esp. p. 84, n. 49.

[73] For Glendalough associations of Conláed, Eógan and Áedán see nn. 35, 51, 54.

already observed, accords focus to Bishop Áedán and includes an itinerary which takes in several of the west Wicklow properties of Glendalough.[74] An alleged link between Cóemgen and Beirech, almost certainly the patron of Cill Beirche, will be discussed presently (below, 6.2.4).

The ecclesiastical settlements located in or adjacent to the lakeland petty kingdom of Corco Roíde are worthy of particular consideration. As previously observed, there was continued Laigin interest in this area into the seventh century or later, and there are a number of dedications to Leinster saints in the area (see above, 2.1.2, 2.1.3 and below, 6.2.6). At the centre of the territory was Cúil Corrae, apparently the see of Bishop Brutiuc who, as already mentioned, was claimed to have been tutor to Cóemgen. The ecclesiastical settlements of Fobur and Cell Bicsige were close at hand. Curiously, the latter site had a similarly named counterpart included among the later properties of Glendalough; the former parish church of Kilbixy, which Price would locate in the townland of Shelton Abbey (Par. Kilbride, By. Arklow).[75] Not far distant was Cell Lúcáin, with its dedication to St. Etchian, almost certainly the Dál Messin Corb bishop associated with Cluain Fata Baetáin Aba. The latter's foundation of Tír na Copán, although not precisely located, was probably in the same vicinity (above, p. 259). These sites and their associated Dál Messin Corb segments (along with locatable Brigidine dedications) are plotted on the map which follows (**Fig. 6D**).

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[74] LL 301 a; *Bk. Leinster*, V, p. 1291-2; Rawl B 502, 120 bb 12; *Corpus*, p. 40; above, p. 247.

[75] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 474-5, discusses location of Kilbixy; A.R., I, f. 21 b; II, f. 92; *Calendar*, p. 2; see below, 6.2.5.

Fig. 6D : Map Illustrating Dál Messin Corb and Other Laigin Segments in Mide

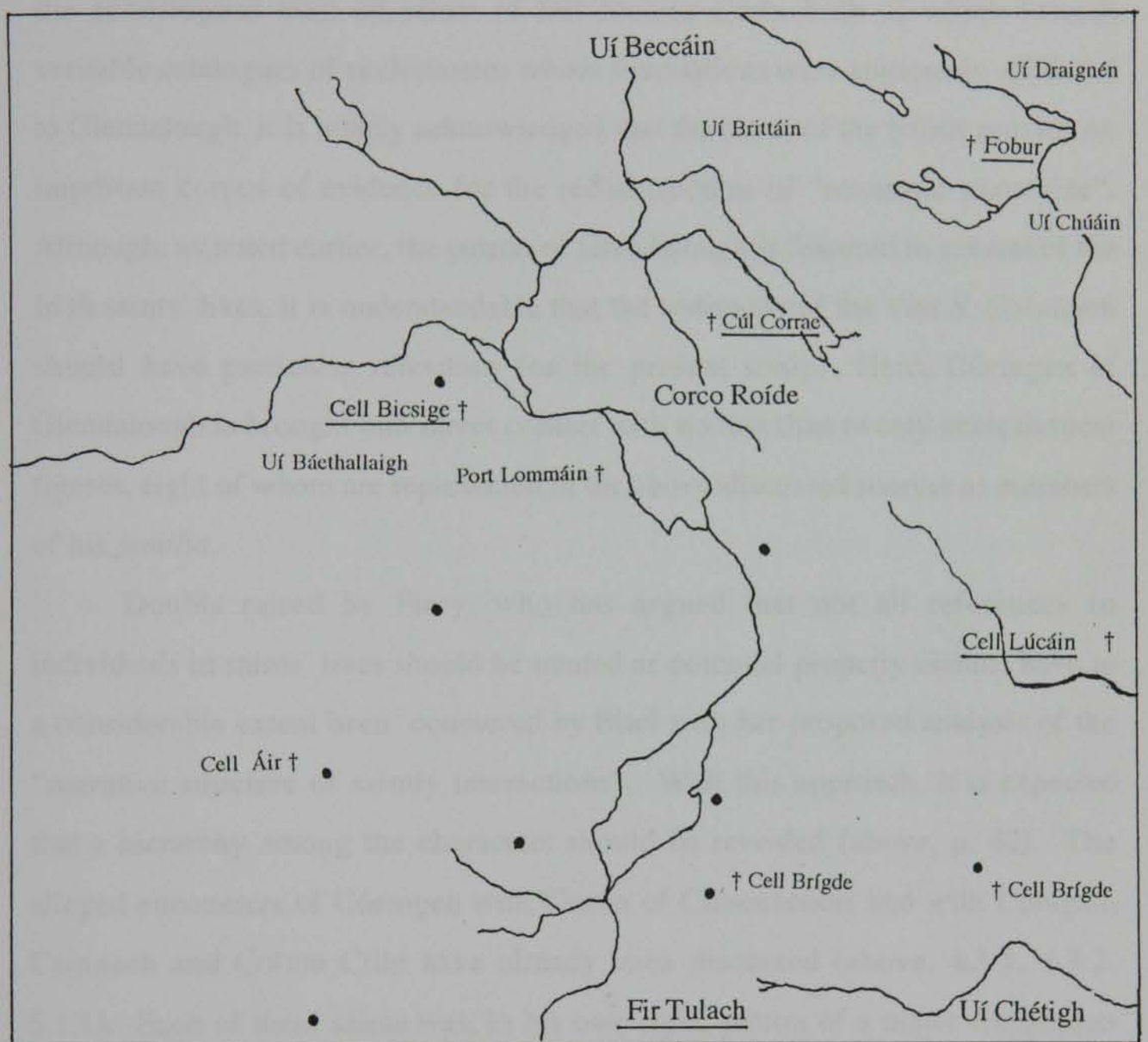


Fig. 6D : Map Illustrating Dál Messin Corb and other Laigin Segments in Mide
Sites/ districts associated with Dál Messin Corb underlined;
Brigidine sites and well-dedications also indicated.
Based on the Genealogies; P. Walsh, Placenames of Westmeath; O.S. Maps
See above, p. 263-4.

6.2.4 : The Evidence of the *Vitae Sanctorum*

In addition to the sources examined to date, including the Irish litany and the genealogical tract on saints of Dál Messin Corb, both of which furnish veritable catalogues of ecclesiastics whose foundations were apparently affiliated to Glendalough, it is widely acknowledged that the Lives of the Saints provide an important corpus of evidence for the reconstruction of "monastic paruchiae". Although, as noted earlier, the patron of Glendalough is featured in several of the Irish saints' lives, it is understandable that the testimony of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* should have particular relevance for the present study. Here, Cóemgen of Glendalough is brought into direct contact with no less than twenty ecclesiastical figures, eight of whom are represented in the above-discussed sources as members of his *familia*.

Doubts raised by Firey, who has argued that not all references to individuals in saints' lives should be treated as potential property claims, have to a considerable extent been countered by Bitel with her proposed analysis of the "narrative structure of saintly interactions". With this approach, it is expected that a hierarchy among the characters should be revealed (above, p. 42). The alleged encounters of Cóemgen with Ciarán of Clonmacnois and with Comgall, Cainnech and Colum Cille have already been discussed (above, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 5.1.1). Each of these saints was, in his own right, patron of a major foundation and the episodes in which they feature presumably represent, as previously outlined, agreements made between the *paruchiae* which claimed them as figureheads. However, examination of the *Vita S. Coemgeni* does show that a clear majority, up to sixteen, of the characters are individuals of lesser stature and are featured in a subordinate role to the Glendalough patron. To begin with, three of the ecclesiastics are expressly claimed to have surrendered themselves and their foundations to Cóemgen. Included here are Mo Chua of Cluain Dolcáin (already featured in the Litany as a member of the *familia Coemgeni),* a

certain **Cassair** ingen Áeda (who is otherwise unidentifiable) and an abbot named **Garbán**, whose church would appear to be identified with Cenn Sáile (Td. Kinsealy, Par. Balgriffin, By. Coolock, Co. Dublin).[76]

Several other churchmen provide services for Cóemgen; Bishop Eógan, Lochán and Enna (who also feature in the litany and in the tract on Dál Messin Corb saints) are represented as the young saint's teachers; **Beoán** the hermit, apparently associated with Fidh Cuilinn (Td. and Par. Feighcullen, By. East Offaly, Co. Kildare) is subsequently a tutor while Bishop **Lugaid**, whose identity is not quite certain, ordains Cóemgen to the priesthood.[77] **Berchán Cecus**, probably identical with Mo Bí Clárainech of Glas Naíden (Td. and Par. Glasnevin, By. Coolock, Co. Dublin), prepares a bath for Cóemgen; **Mochonna** (almost certainly the same as Mo Chonnóc of the Irish litany), who prophesies the future greatness of Fáelán mac Colmáin, refers to the Glendalough patron as 'noster pater', while Mo Gorróc brings the saint his final communion.[78]

Others are represented as members of the community of Cóemgen and do the saint's bidding. A certain **Guaire** and another Berchán, (clearly not the previously mentioned patron of Glas Naíden; perhaps intended to represent Berchán Senchilli) feature as emissaries, while another **Crónán**, distinguished from the saint of Cluain Dolcáin, requests Cóemgen's advice.[79] According to the

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[76] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§ 1, 29, 45 ;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 234, 249, 256; the submission of Mochua is also related in *Betha Caoimhgin* (i), § 8; (ii), § 2-3; (iii), § 2; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 126, 132-3, 155; II, p. 122, 127-9, 151; the case of Garbán has been noted (above, p. 14 n. 46); his church was situated 'prope civitatem Ath Cliath ... super fretum maris posita'.

[77] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§ 4, 9, 10 ;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 235, 238-9; the tradition of Cóemgen's education is repeated in the Codex Salman. *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 2 and *Vita S. Eogani*, § 3; *V.S.H. Salman*, p. 346, 401; Beoán mac Nessáin (M.T. 8 Aug), is linked to Cenél Athemnan Serthenna oc Fid Chuilend; Rawl B 502, 118 b 21; *Corpus*, p. 23; LL 311 c 41; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1331; Lugaid in F.O. 6 Oct., where a gloss associates him with Cúil Bendchair, shares his feast with Fer dá Chrích of Daire Eidnech, which had Glendalough connections; above n. 45.

[78] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§ 30, 36, 48;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 249-50, 252, 257; Cóemgen visits Berchán en route home from Garbán's foundation which, as noted above, is probably Kinsealy; C. Plummer, index *V.S.H.*, II, p. 348 equates Berchán with Mo Bí of Glasnevin.

[79] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, §§ 42, 43;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 254; Guaire may be the Airgialla saint at LL 347 g 56; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1533; note dedications near Glendalough; below, 6.2.6.

episode here related, the said Crónán sought and obtained the concession of a feastday in common with his spiritual father.[80] The *Vita Sancti Coemgeni* also narrates how one Critán was restored to life and, according to the version in the Codex Salmanticensis, joined the saint's *familia*. In all probability this is the Critán mac Illadon who is commemorated at 11 May and again at 16 October along with Cóemgen *Abbas;* presumably he is in turn to be identified with Mo Chritóc Insi Ulad of the *Comainmnigud* tract.[81] Finally, it might be noted that Cellach, included in the litany among the *familia Coemgeni*, is represented in the *Betha Caoimhgin* as a monk of Glendalough.[82]

In comparison with *vitae* emanating from other Irish ecclesiastical centres, the hagiographical corpus of Glendalough is extremely sparing in its references to places. Of the twenty ecclesiastics who feature in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* only Munnu, who advises the Glendalough patron not to travel abroad, is directly associated with a foundation.[83] Cóemgen's itinerary after he leaves his place of schooling (the Litany locates Lochán and Enna at Cill na Manach; above, n. 26) is left suitably vague. However, it may be noted that while staying with Bishop Lugaid, the young saint travels 'in rure' and restores to life two young women 'de Nepotibus Dallayn'. It is probably significant that the branch of Uí Liatháin known as Cenél Dalláin (observed earlier) had an ecclesiastical tradition and was held to be the ancestral line of one Cillíne mac Diarmata. The latter may well be

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[80] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 43;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 255; only the late M.Don. records a Mo Chua at 3 June, the *dormitatio* of Cóemgen; note also Mo Chua mac Cóemloga in the *Comainmnigud* tract, LL367 g 19; above, 4.1.2.

[81] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 46 ;*V.S.H.*, I, 256; § 14; *V.S.H. Salman*, p. 365; M.T. see above n. 41; LL 368 e 44; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1671. Fifteen clerics named Mo Chritóc are listed, it seems likely that some represent alter-egos; M.Don. associates Mo Chritóc with Achad Finnich on the Dodder in Uí Dúnchada; Inis Ulad is discussed below 6.2.5.

[82] *Betha Caoimhgin* (i), § 31; (ii), § 16; (iii), § 27-8; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 129, 149-50, 162-3; II, p. 125, 145-6, 157-8.

[83] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 21 ;*V.S.H.*, I, 244; the former's *monasterium* is named as Teach Munnu 'que est in australi plaga regionis Ceannselach'; the foundation of Garbán from the topographical note seems to be identifiable with Kinsealy (above, n. 76).

the above-discussed patron of Uachtar Achaid, whose name is appended to the Book of Leinster list of Dál Messin Corb saints and whose kinsman Eochaid is associated with Cell Fáe (possibly Kilfea, in Par. Killiskey, near Glendalough).[84] The ancestral territory of Cenél Dalláin presumably lay in north-central Munster and in all probability, the foundation of Mo Themníóc, whom the Litany includes in the *familia Coemgeni*, lay in the same vicinity; that is to say adjacent to Tulach Gossa of the Cerdraige, in turn an *aithech-thuath* of Caiseal. The presence near Caiseal of a Dál Messin Corb segment (above n.72), apparently in an ecclesiastical role, will be recalled. The case for a Glendalough association with north Munster will be examined presently, in the light of Leinster dynastic interests in the region. Aside from this brief but potentially significant allusion to Cóemgen's alleged travels in Uí Liatháin, there is little information about other foundations on his part. Fleeting reference is made to an early hermitage at Cluain Duach, for which Price suggested a location in the vicinity of Holywood (By. Talbotstown Lwr, Co. Wicklow); there is also mention of a place of retreat at Dísert Cóemgin.[85] In addition, the Irish Life has the saint perform his lenten penance at Cell Aifféin, at the eastern extremity of the Glendalough valley.[86] Foundations of alleged *familia* members and placenames mentioned in the Lives of Cóemgen are shown in **Fig. 6E**.

While the above discussion has focused on Glendalough hagiography, it must be acknowledged that the testimony of other *vitae* has an important role in any endeavour to reconstruct the *paruchia*. There are, as noted earlier, several references in the lives of other saints to Cóemgen or to alleged members of his

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[84] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 11 ;*V.S.H.*, I, 239; LL 321 e 26; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1386; Rawl B. 502, 151 b 1; Lec. 217 Vb 6 adds Cillíne mac Diarmata and Eochaid mac Rosa meic Dalláin 'in cuius hereditatem Cell Fáe'; *Corpus*, p. 225, 227; see above, 2.1.2.

[85] *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 12, 15, 16 ;*V.S.H.*, I, 240-1, 242; L. Price, "Glendalough: St. Kevin's Road", p. 251, 264, 267, 269-70; Idem, *Placenames*, IV, p. 207-17.

[86] *Betha Caoimhgin* (i), § 31; (ii), § 16; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 129, 149-50; II, p. 125, 145-6; L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 36, notes obsolete toponym Kilafeen, Td. Laragh, Par. Derrylossery.

Fig. 6E : Saints featured in the *Vita S. Coemgeni*

Crónán § 1

Eógan, Lochán and Enna § 4

Beoán § 9-10

Lugaid § 10-15

Colum Cille, Comgall and Cainnech § 27

Ciarán § 28

Garbán § 29

Berchán Cecus § 30

Mo Chonna § 36

Guaire Cecus § 42

Crónán and Berchán § 43

Cassair ingen Áeda § 45

Critán § 46

Mo Gorróc § 48

community. These clearly reflect relationships with Glendalough viewed from the perspective of other foundations, and occasionally represent counter-claims in relation to subject houses elsewhere associated with the *paruchia Coemgeni.* The lives of Beirech Cluana Cairpde illustrate this point. Here, Beirech comes to Glendalough as a student and helps with the fostering of Fáelán mac Colmáin. Cóemgen himself had, as observed above, studied under the holy men of Cill na Manach and the implication drawn from this is that they were subject to him, providing him with a service, as it were. However, *Betha Beraigh* is more explicit in depicting the relationship between master and pupil in this instance. Beirech serves as Cóemgen's cook and, following his ordination by the Dál Messin Corb bishop Eitcheán, is permitted by his master to proceed to his own foundation, the siting of which Cóemgen foretells; finally an *óentad* is concluded between the two.[87] It may be significant that Beirech's principal foundation of Cluain Cairpde is located near Loch Rí, an area in which there was a strong Glendalough interest; also, there was a church dedicated to Beirech in Uí Muiredaig (Td. and Par. Kilberry, By. Narragh-Reban W., Co. Kildare), which would appear to have had some Glendalough connection.[88]

A further insight into Glendalough's paruchial claims is provided by the *Vita S. Monenni* in which Cóemgen features prominently, albeit in a somewhat dubious light. Three consecutive episodes, which Esposito long ago suggested may have been lifted from a version of Cóemgen's Life, relate how the patron of Glendalough and the patroness of Cill Sléibe resolved their differences concerning rights in Dál nAraide.[89] The *tirannus* Glún Salach (whose conversion is elsewhere claimed for Cóemgen) is according to this account converted by

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[87] *Betha Beraigh,* § 24, 29-45; *B.N.E.,* I, p. 27, 28-32.

[88] Kilberry is closely associated with Clonwanwyr (Cluain dá an Dobair) in charters of c. 1219-20, 1227, 1223-28; A.R. I, f. 7b; A.R. II, f. 1, 43, 60; *Calendar,* p. 42, 47, 60.

[89] M. Esposito, "The Sources of Conchubranus' Life of St. Monenna", *Eng. Hist. Review,* 35 (1920), 76-7.

Monenna and, on the basis of a vision, is given a site which had been reserved for Cóemgen. The latter sets forth in anger to lead an attack against Monenna's convent, but she encounters him at Sord (Par. Swords, By. Nethercross, Co. Dublin) and dissuades him from action; to acknowledge what amounted to a concession on his part, *Balneum Cheuin* is placed on top of Sliab Fuait by Monenna.[90] The only other Saint's Life to feature Cóemgen is the *Vita S. Abbani*, in which the Glendalough patron is one of three Leinster saints (the others being Abbán and Moling) whose birth is foretold by Patrick; it is probably significant that the mother of Abbán is identified by the genealogists with Mella, an alleged sister of Cóemgen.[91] Some relationship between the two *paruchiae* may well be implied from this, but it is not made explicit. Abbán, it transpires, acquired or was entrusted with a number of foundations in Munster, notably in Uí Liatháin and between Fer Maige and Déissi, areas in which Glendalough had established interests.[92]

However, aside from the patron Cóemgen, several lesser figures that are elsewhere alleged to have been members of his familia feature in the *Vitae Sanctorum* in submissive roles that seem to represent counter-claims of paruchial authority. The case of Molibba moccu Araide, appointed by Cainnech as abbot of Leth Dumae in northern Leinster, has already been observed (above, p. 171 n. 20). A venerable anchorite named Critán is called to spend Easter with Comgall of Bangor, whose community coincidentally includes a monk by name of Enán.[93] It is distinctly possible that these are to be identified with the figures so named who elsewhere appear as members of *familia Coemgeni* (above, esp. nn. 36, 81).

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[90] "Life of St. Monenna by Conchubranus", §§ 10-12, p. 266-8; C. Plummer, introduction to *V.S.H.*, p. liv, n. 5.

[91] *Vita S. Abbani*, § 2, 3 ;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 4; where Mella is a sister of St. Ibar; W.W. Heist, "Over the Writer's Shoulder: St. Abbán", 79; cf LL 352 a 66; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1570.

[92] *Vita S. Abbani*, § 22 ;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 17; see above, 4.1.2.

[93] *Vita S. Comgalli*, § 16, 18 ;*V.S.H.*, II, p. 8, 9.

There is no ambiguity concerning the identity of Mo Ríóc Insi Bó Finne who, although closely associated with Cóemgen in the Irish Litany and *Comainmnigud* tract, receives the holy bishop Áed mac Bricc as a guest.[94] Granted, the episode related here, in which the ascetic bishop miraculously changes a meal of meat into bread and fish, seems to represent a claim to the moral high ground in monastic discipline rather than an assertion of authority. Moreover, Mo Chóem Tíri dá Glas and Cóemán of Enach Truim are unequivocally featured as disciples of Colum mac Crimthainn who is their *magister*.[95] Mochóemóg of Liath Mór, possibly a duplicate of Mo Chóem (therefore in turn an alter-ego of Cóemgen?), concedes the site of Enach Truim to Cóemán and has as his pupil Dagán of Inber Daeile.[96]

Finally, it may be noted that certain saints lives, rather than featuring Cóemgen or members of his *familia* in 'subordinate' roles which may infer supremacy, refer instead to specific sites which may represent more express claims. Thus, Munnu is warmly welcomed by the inhabitants of Cill Bicsige, where he miraculously restores a man to life.[97] As already observed, a segment of Dál Messin Corb was located at Cill Bicsige in the lakelands, while another site so named lay in the vicinity of Glendalough (above, n. 75, below 6.2.5). The episode in *Betha Adamnáin* concerning the disputed possession of Telach Bregmuin and the even bolder claim in *Vita S. Moling* in regard to succession at Glendalough itself have already been discussed (above, 4.2.1, 4.3.1). The probable meaning of these seemingly contradictory claims and counter-claims will be examined in due course.

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[94] *Vita S. Aedi*, § 31 ;*V.S.H.*, I, p. 43.

[95] *Vita S. Fintani*, § 3 ;*V.S.H.*, II, p. 97.

[96] *Vita S. Mochoemoc*, § 11, 26-7 ;*V.S.H.*, II, p. 168-9, 178; the Connachta ancestry accorded to Mochóemóg need not rule out this possibility. He appears to have been especially active in the Leinster/ Munster marches; e.g. §§ 12, 15, 18, p. 169, 170, 172-3.

[97] *Vita S. Munnu*, § 11; *V.S.H.*, II, p. 230; the 'quandam cellam' is named as Cell Bicsiche in the Codex Salmanticensis version; *Vita Prior S. Fintani seu Munnu*, § 12; *V.S.H. Salman*, p. 201.

6.2.5 : The Testimony of the Charters

Clearly, the surviving charters that are of most relevance to the present study include Strongbow's confirmation of the abbey and *personatus* of Glendalough to Abbot Thomas c. 1172-6, and the Bull of Pope Alexander III of 13 May 1179, confirming the possessions of the bishopric to Máel Calainn. Together, these two documents provide us with the most comprehensive picture of the properties and dependencies of Glendalough as they were in the later twelfth century, following the establishment of a diocesan structure at the synods of Ráith Bressail and Kells. That being the case, these sources record the constituents of the *paruchia Glindelachensis* which by that time lay mainly within the boundaries of the diocese.

The introduction of archiepiscopal provinces and territorial bishoprics effectively precluded what amounted to claims of extra-provincial ecclesiastical supremacy over population groups, such as were formerly advanced by the successor of Cóemgen in relation to Araide in north Munster (above, n. 28). With the new diocesan structure, there is no reason why a monastic headship should not have continued to exercise authority over ecclesiastical communities elsewhere, in a manner similar to that of the Continental religious orders. Merely to secure the subordination of religious communities to a central authority was, however, not the entire object of the exercise. The union of dynastic and abbatial interests, as explored above (chapters 4 and 5), had made it important to control ecclesiastical settlements and secure their revenues. Moreover, the gradual territorialisation of Irish kingship, in regard to which the diocesan reform was both a cause and effect, was quite advanced by the twelfth century. On this account, the rationale for Irish ecclesiastical *paruchiae* in their more dispersed form had already ceased to exist. Where they survived, as in the case of Glendalough, it seems reasonable to suggest that over a period of time they effectively contracted into the sphere of control of the dominant regional

dynasty. In this way, a correlation might be expected between late 'monastic paruchiae', overkingdoms and dioceses. This pattern may be observed in relation to the twelfth century *paruchia* of Finbarr of Cork. The limits of the *fairche* assigned to Finbarr in the Irish Life clearly reflect the boundaries of the Cork diocese.[98]

The monastic possessions of Glendalough, as catalogued in the charter of Strongbow to Thomas (for the most part confirmed by John Lord of Ireland and by Pope Innocent III) include a blanket claim to Fertir, Mag Mersa and Uí Máil, with all appurtenances around the *Civitas Coemgeni*.[99] The lands and ecclesiastical settlements subject to the abbot are then listed on a district by district basis (see **Fig. 6F**). There are eleven possessions in the land of Wicklow, five of which are clearly church sites. These include **Cell Molibbo**, representing a dedication to the Dál nAraide saint first featured among the *familia Coemgeni* in the Irish Litany. The exact location is uncertain, but Price has suggested a site in the townland of Castletimon, Parish of Dunganstown (formerly Ennisboyne), in the Barony of Arklow.[100] In the same vicinity are found Menóc's foundation of **Glenn Faidli** (Td. Ballymoat, Par. Glenealy, By. Newcastle), **Inber Daeile** of Dagán (Td. & Par. Ennereilly, By. Arklow), **Cell Britton** which is possibly located in the Parish of Dunganstown in the same barony and the otherwise unidentified **Cell Moccu Buadáin**.[101]

The list continues with the land of Arklow, which includes **Cell Bicsigi** (probably in Td. Shelton Abbey, Par. Kilbride formerly Kilbixy, By. Arklow),

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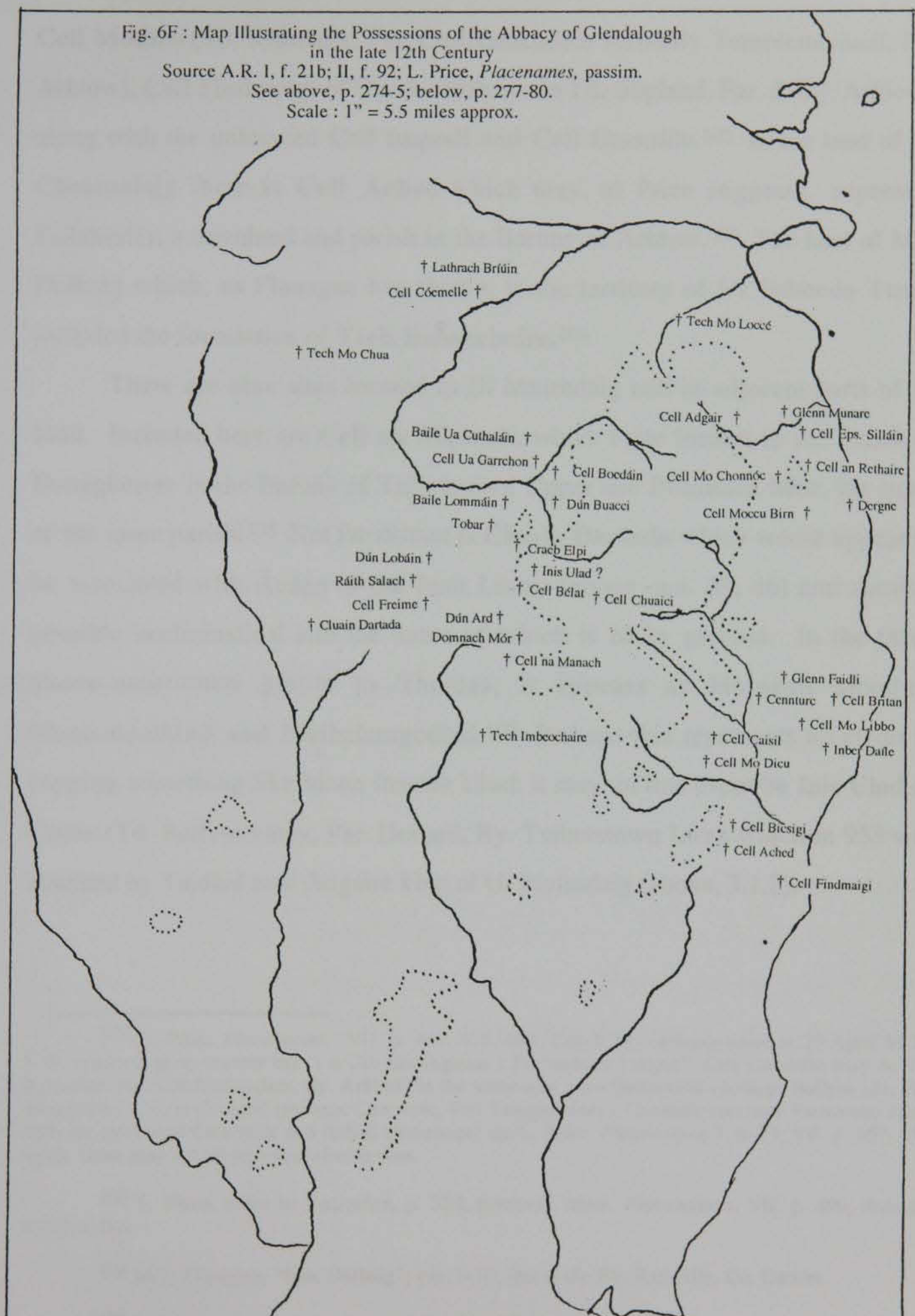
[98] *Betha Bairre*, § 21, 34; *B.N.E.*, I, p. 15, 17-8; II, p. 15, 17; T.P. O' Connor, "Bairre and his Paruchia", p. 60, 165-6.

[99] A.R. I. f. 3b, 20b, 21b; A.R. II f. 52, 89, 92; *Calendar*, p. 2, 21, 23-4; see above, 5.2.3, esp. p. 231 n. 78.

[100] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 439, 446.

[101] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 439, 444, 458; see above, n.n. 29, 43; also in the land of Wicklow are six unidentified sites including Credmochae, Rubastolage, Achad Caracane, Cullenn, Baccnaseri and Cnoc Loingsechane; these may represent church sites or land holdings.

Fig. 6F : Map Illustrating the Possessions of the Abbacy of Glendalough
in the late 12th Century
Source A.R. I, f. 21b; II, f. 92; L. Price, *Placenames*, passim.
See above, p. 274-5; below, p. 277-80.
Scale : 1" = 5.5 miles approx.



Cell Modicu (Td. Kilmagig, Par. Castlemacadam formerly Templemichael, By. Arklow), **Cell Findmaigi** of Cuach (Killynee in Td. Bogland, Par. & By. Arklow), along with the unlocated **Cell Impodi** and **Cell Cassaille**.[102] In the land of Uí Chennselaig there is **Cell Ached** which may, as Price suggests, represent Killahurler, a townland and parish in the Barony of Arklow.[103] The land of Mac Dalbaig which, as Flanagan has shown, is the territory of Uí Felmeda Tuaid, included the foundation of **Tech Imbeochaire**.[104]

There are nine sites located in Uí Muiredaig and in adjacent parts of Uí Máil. Included here are **Cell na Manach**, which Price locates in the Parish of Donaghmore in the Barony of Talbotstown Upper and **Domnach Mór**, the *caput* of the same parish.[105] Not far distant is **Cluain Dartada** which would appear to be associated with Áedán of the Irish Litany (above, n.n. 35, 46) and another possible ecclesiastical site the name of which is badly garbled. In the three above-mentioned grants to Thomas, it appears as Muinsuli hicotlud, Munisulcothlud and Mutbalamgodlad.[106] Perhaps this represents an effort at copying something like Maen Insulae Ulud; it may, in that event be **Inis Ulad** of Critán (Td. Ballymooney, Par. Donard, By. Talbotstown Lwr), which in 953 was attacked by Tuathal mac Augaire king of Uí Muiredaig (above, 3.1.2).

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[102] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 469, 475, 480; Cuach, is commemorated at 29 April M.T., F.O., where a gloss locates her 'i n-Uib Enechglaiss i Fortuathaib Laigen"; Cell Cassaille may be Td. Kilcashel, Par. Castlemacadam, By. Arklow; in the same area were Balliumeill (perhaps Ballymoyle, Par. Ennereilly), Carrac Cochaill (perhaps Carrycole, Par. Templerainey), Cennturc (perhaps Rathdrum) along with the unlocated Criachane and Achad Cruachane; see L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 13; VII, p. 457, 473; again, these may not all represent church sites.

[103] L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 324; however, idem, *Placenames*, VII, p. 490, does not mention this.

[104] M.T. Flanagan, "Mac Dalbaig", esp. 9-10; this is the By. Rathvilly, Co. Carlow.

[105] L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 349; idem, *Placenames*, III, p. 171.

[106] A.R. I. f. 3b, 20b, 21b; A.R. II f. 52, 89, 92; *Calendar*, p. 2, 21, 24; in the same area are the unidentified possessions of Less na hUinsenn, Balitarsna, Locheleig, Raffann and Ard m' crebane. They may or may not be church sites.

Four of the Glendalough possessions in Uí Fáeláin are identifiable. Amongst them is **Baliucutlane** (Td. Coughlanstown W., Par. Tipperkevin, By. Sth Naas) where, although the dedication is lost, there is a church ruin of later medieval date. It may in fact be the demesne of Uí Chuthlacháin, a segment of Uí Bairrche.[107] Then there is **Lathrach Bríúin** (Td. Laraghbrien, Par. Maynooth, By. Nth Salt, Co. Kildare), **Tech Mochua** (Td. Timahoe, Par Gilltown, By. Clane), presumably dedicated to one of the saints named Crónán associated with the Glendalough patron (above, n.n. 79, 80) and the unlocated **Cell Caimille**, commemorating an alleged kinswoman of Cóemgen.[108]

The possessions of Glendalough which this charter assigns to the land of Mac Gilla Mocholmóg were not, according to Nicholls, situated in Uí Dúnchada proper.[109] It may be noted, however, that the group of sites in question commences with **Tech Do Loga**. The only identifiable foundation so named within the district is Templeogue (Par. Tallaght, By. Uppercross, Co. Dublin). Granted, the rest of the sites concerned are situated in or adjacent to the Barony of Rathdown. Those which can be located include the already-mentioned **Cell Adgair** and **Cell Rethaire** (both associated with the alleged Dál Messin Corb saint Findbarr, above n. 64), **Glenn Muniri** (associated with Mo Sinu of the Litany), **Deirgne** of Mo Gorróc, **Cell Mo Chonnóc** (above, 4.1.2) and **Cell Moccu Birn** (above, p. 86, n. 58). The abbatial properties also included **Villa Udunetha** (perhaps the church of St. Crispin at Rathdown is intended) and **Cell Epscuip Silláin**, which remains unidentified although its position in the list would suggest a location near Delganey. The final group of possessions, those

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[107] Rawl. b 502, 121 bc 48; LL 313 cb 47; *Corpus*, p. 50; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1341; L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 316.

[108] Cóemell of Imgan is in the genealogical catalogue of Dál Messin Corb saints; elsewhere the mother of Cóemgen is called Cóemell; LL 350 a 69, 372 a 40; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1554, 1692; *Vita S. Coemgeni* § 1; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 234; above 1.2.3, esp. p. 49; 6.2.3; the unidentified Dundaemane and Raithedagain are also in Uí Fáeláin.

[109] K. Nicholls. "Land of the Leinstermen", 538.

situated on the far side of the mountains, are of particular interest. As already observed, several of the sites are listed in the *Bóruma* saga as part of the alleged military itinerary of Uí Néill High King Áed mac Ainmerech.[110] The section commences with **Dún Buacci** (where there was a church in the 13th C. dedicated to St. Cóemgen and which Price tentatively identified with Cluain Duach).[111] The list continues with **Elpi** (perhaps originally Craob Elpi) and **Baile Lommáin**, both apparently in the parish of Crehelp (By. Talbotstown Lwr). The two sites appear to have had ecclesiastical associations; Price would identify the former with an enclosure known as "the Religeen", and the latter with an old cemetery in the townland of Lemonstown.[112] There are three sites within the parish of Donard (By. Talbotstown Lwr.); **Dún Aird** itself, **Cell Bélat** (Td. Kilbaylet) and **Cell Cuachi** (Td. Kilcoagh). The Barony of Talbotstown Upper includes **Dún Lobáin** (Par. Dunlavin), **Rath Salach** (Td. and Par. Rathsallagh) which, as Price notes, was dedicated to St. Moling in the thirteenth century and **Cell Freime**, which Price equates with Freynestown.[113] Then, in the northern part of Talbotstown Lower are **Topor** (Td. and Par. Tober), and **Cell Boedáin** (apparently Templeboodin, Td. Lackan, Par. Boystown), which may well have been associated with Mo Boe of the Litany. There is also **Cell Ua Garrchon,** perhaps associated with the Dál Messin Corb saint Áedán (above, 4.1.2), which Price identifies with a site in the townland of Kilbeg (Par. Boystown), where there is a St. Boodin's Well and some stone remains, believed locally to represent a church.[114] The only remaining property which is clearly an ecclesiastical site is

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[110] LL 301 a, 303 a-b; *Bk. Leinster*, V, p.1291, 1296-7; see above, n. 24, n. 74; included here were Dún Buacci, Cell Bélat and Inis Ulad.

[111] A.R. I, f. 21b; A.R. II, f. 92; cf A.R. II, f. 2, recording a transaction of Archbishop Henry c. 1219-28; *Calendar*, p. 2, 58; L. Price, *Placenames*, IV, p. 207 ff.

[112] L. Price, *Placenames*, IV, p. 205.

[113] Ibid., III, p. 155-6.

[114] Ibid., IV, p. 239-40.

the unidentified **Cellin U Lugair**, which immediately brings to mind Dinn Flatha Ceneoil Lugair (associated with the Dál Messin Corb Conláed; above, n. 54) at Tara Hill in the Barony of Gorey.[115]

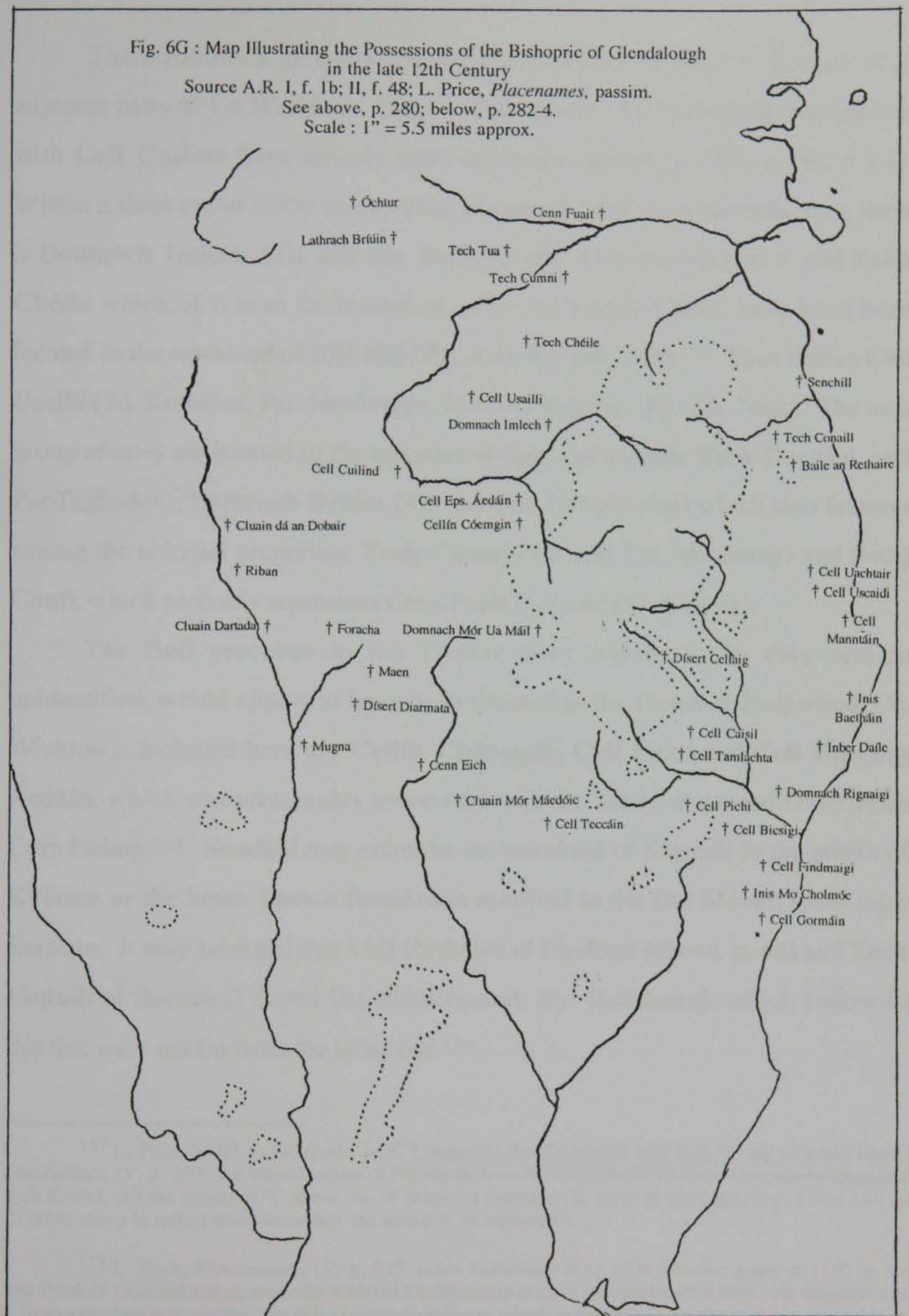
The Bull of Alexander III to Bishop Máel Calainn (here called Malchus) sets down the parameters of the Diocese of Glendalough. The authority of the bishop extended from **Dulgen** (unidentifiable, unless it is Deirgne Mogorróc) to **Tech Fledi** (unlocated, but probably in the Barony of Gorey) and from **Oatcharr**, perhaps Óchtur Fine (Td. Killeighter, Par. Cloncurry, By. Ikeathy-Oughteranny) to the unidentified **Hundchenn** which was probably near the Kildare-Carlow county boundary.[116] The possessions of the bishopric are then catalogued (**Fig. 6G**). The Bull commences with three sites which are grouped closely together in the south of the Barony of Kilkea-Moone. These include **Dísert Diarmata** (closely associated with Uí Muiredaig/ Glendalough interests in the eleventh century; above, 3.1.3, 5.1.1), **Mugna** of Mo Shenóc and **Cenn Eich**, probably Kineagh in the adjacent barony of Rathvilly (within the Deanery of Castledermot). The list continues with a number of sites which lay, for the most part, in the Barony of Narragh-Reban. **Riban** itself is apparently in the townland and parish of Churchtown, **Cluain dá an Dobair** is the foundation associated with Mo Boe moccu Alldae (above, p. 182, n. 49), **Maen [Colum Cille]** is the Columban site which featured along with Dísert at the centre of Uí Muiredaig activities in the eleventh century (above, 3.1.3, 5.1.1),, while **[An] Forach** is the caput of the Parish of Narraghmore.

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115 This final grouping in the charter also includes Ardmeicbrein, Achad Budi, Balimenaig (Ballymooney), Baliumail, Bali Ingini Brain, Baliunennendig, Baliudaldehinsa, Baliumelain (Ballymoylan), Baliulaccuane and Baliudaluig. Aside from a difficulty of location in most cases, it is not clear if these in fact represent ecclesiastical sites.

116 A.R. I, f. 1b; A.R. II, f. 48; *Calendar*, p. 5; Óchtur Fine is where the segment of Uí Chaibdeilche with its alleged Dál Messin Corb connections was located (above, n. 70).

Fig. 6G : Map Illustrating the Possessions of the Bishopric of Glendalough
in the late 12th Century
Source A.R. I, f. 1b; II, f. 48; L. Price, *Placenames*, passim.
See above, p. 280; below, p. 282-4.
Scale : 1" = 5.5 miles approx.



There follows a group of foundations which lie in east Co. Kildare or in adjacent parts of Co Wicklow. The eleventh century Uí Muiredaig associations with **Cell Cuilinn** have already been discussed (above, p. 182, n. 50; 5.1.1). Within a short radius is the unidentified **Domnach Mór an Athechda**, then there is **Domnach Imlech** (Td. and Par. Burgage, By. Talbotstown Lwr.) and **Tech Chéile** which, if it is to be identified with Cell Chéile Chríst, may have been located in the townland of Kill Hill (Par. Kill, By. Sth. Salt).[117] Then comes **Cell Usailli** (Td. Killashee, Par. Newbridge, formerly Kilossy, By. Sth. Naas). The next group of sites are located in the baronies of Salt, and include **Tech Tua** (Td. and Par.Taghadoe), **Lathrach Bríúin** (Td. and Par. Laraghbrien) which also features among the abbatial properties, **Tech Cumni** (Td. and Par. Stacumny) and [leth] **Confi**, which probably represents Cenn Fuait (Td. and Par. Confey).

The Bull proceeds to list further sites which, while they remain unidentified, would appear to have been situated in the Parish of Holywood, Co. Wicklow. Included here are **Cellín Chóemgin**, **Cell Gnoe** and **Cell Epscuip Áedáin**, which was presumably associated with the above-discussed Dál Messin Corb bishop.[118] **Senchill** may either be the townland of Shankill in the parish of Kilbride or the better known foundation ascribed to the Dál Messin Corb saint Berchán. It may be noted that **Cell Rethaire** of Findbarr (above, n. 64) and **Tech Conaill** of Beccán (Td. and Par. Powerscourt, By. Rathdown), which follow in this list, were not far from the latter site.[119]

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[117] L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 332, suggests that Domnach Mór may be Jago Parish; Idem, *Placenames*, IV, p. 250, for identification of Domnach Imlech. Cell Chéile Chríst is commonly identified with Kilteel, but the intrusive 't' seems out of place; in contrast, the early modern spelling of Kill Hill as Kilheale seems to reflect more accurately the sound of an aspirated 'c'.

[118] L. Price, *Placenames*, IV, p. 217, notes Killenkeyvin in a De Marisco grant of 1192 in the Red Book of Ormond and equates this with the Geallincemg [sic] of Alexander III's Bull. He suggests that Killescoppeadain was nearby. On that account Cell Gnoe, which is listed between the two, was probably in the same vicinity.

[119] L. Price, index to *Calendar*, p. 368, opts for the Co. Dublin Senchill; while Archiepiscopal properties (including Cell Tuca and Ráith Salach) surround this site and it later features as a dependent chapel of Cluain Chaoin, it is not mentioned in the Bull of Pope Alexander to Archbishop Lorcán; A.R. I, f. 1; A.R. II, f. 47; *Calendar*, p. 3. Also listed are Athincip, Ballenfuid, Achacloinmalechain and Crinan,

The next identifiable group of sites are in the east of Co. Wicklow. **Dísert Cellaig** is presumably the hermitage of Cellach, an alleged member of *familia Coemgeni*, referred to in F.O. (above, n. 46); it is located by Price in the townland of Ballinabarny (Par. Knockrath, By. Ballincor Nth.).[120] **Inis Boethen** is Ennisboyne (Par. Dunganstown, By. Arklow), **Lecppadric** may be the Kilpatrick in the parish of Ennereilly, and **Cell Manntáin** is in Wicklow town. **Cell Óchtair** is probably Killoughter in the parish of Rathnew (although it is not identified as such by Price), while **Cell Usquedi** (Td. and Par. Killiskey, By. Newcastle) is almost certainly the foundation of Dál Messin Corb saint Bicliu Uscaidi, as argued above (see n. 60). In spite of Price's suggestion to the contrary, it seems quite reasonable that **Cell Pichi** should be identified with Kilpipe, a townland and parish in the Barony of Ballincor South.[121] In the listing sequence it comes after Killiskey, but immediately before Inber Daeile (the foundation of Dagán), Cell Caissil and Cell Bicsigi, all three of which were situated between Wicklow and Arklow and have already been discussed as possessions of the abbacy. The significance of these cases of apparent overlap between abbatial and episcopal possessions is not clear. Aside from the fact that the respective charters of confirmation are quite close in date (1172-6 and 1179), the same sites are subsequently confirmed to Abbot Thomas.[122] It seems unlikely, therefore, that a transfer of property took place. Perhaps the possessions in question were divided in some way between the abbot and the bishop; the former may have administered the lands while the church was subject to the latter.

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which remain unlocated; it is not clear whether these represented ecclesiastical settlements or merely property holdings.

[120] L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 16, 44.

[121] Ibid., II, p. 76, followed Reeves with the Kilpipe identification which, given the Red Book of Ormond rendering of Kilpeth, seems reasonable; ibid., VII, p. 405, reconsiders his identification, suggesting that the 'f' in Kilfea (Par. Killiskey; in spite of its position in the listing sequence) could represent an aspirated 'p', hence Cell Phichi. Aspiration, however, need not always transfer in written form and, as argued above n. 84, Kilfea seems to represent Cell Fáe.

[122] A.R. I, f. 3 b, 20 b; II, f. 52, 89; *Calendar*, p. 21, 24.

Yet a further group of sites are located to the south of Arklow. These include **Domnach Rignaigi** (Td. Templerainey, Par. Kilbride, By. Arklow), **Celltamlacha** which is unidentified but probably in the same vicinity, and the already mentioned **Cell Findmaigi** (Killynee in Td. Bogland, Par. & By. Arklow), which represents another apparent case of shared abbatial/ episcopal property. Another two foundations lay further south again in the Barony of Gorey, Co. Wexford. **Cell Gormáin** (Td. and Par. Kilgorman) and **Inis Mocholmóg** (Td. and Par. Inch) were both situated within range of Tara Hill.[123] Finally, there were three possessions to the west of the mountain chain; **Cell Tagáin** (Td. and Par. Kiltegan, By. Talbotstown Uppr.), **Cluain Mór Maedóic** which, as discussed above, at one time had an Uí Muiredaig abbot and apparently featured in the political designs of that dynasty (above, 5.1.1), and **Domnach Mór** of Uí Máil which was also included among the properties of the abbacy.

6.2.6 : Dedications and Traditions

In addition to the foundations expressly associated in hagiographical sources with alleged members of the *familia Coemgeni*, and the catalogue of Glendalough possessions preserved in the charters, there remains a body of dedications, placenames and folk traditions which may well merit some consideration. The value of this genre of evidence has already been discussed (above, 1.3.3, 1.3.4). Dedications, especially to 'national' saints (which could include Cóemgen), may in some cases be modern. Placenames are frequently undatable. The nature of folk tradition is such that difficulties of transmission and the problem of assessing the antiquity of any given piece of data render it of limited value to the historian.

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123 The association of Conláed with Dinn Flatha Ceneoil Lugair at Tara Hill will be recalled; above, n. 54. The significance of this will be considered presently.

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the corpus of written evidence, extensive as it is, falls considerably short of presenting us with a complete picture. A basic premise of the interpretation of hagiography is that the close association of saints (especially, as the present writer would argue, where one is portrayed as subservient to another), suggests that the foundations of one (the lesser) were subject to the other (the greater). The compilers of the calendars, however, and the genealogists, are extremely sparing with the topographical information they provide. That their commentary is far from exhaustive is demonstrated by the fact that Mo Chonnóc is nowhere in the sources associated with Cell Mo Chonnóc nor Mo Libba with Cell Mo Libba. Yet, it is clear that the saints concerned were the patrons of these foundations, as they are featured among the twelfth century possessions of Glendalough. By the same token, the charters discussed above are equally selective. They do not, for example, record Cluain Dolcáin or Glenn Muniri - foundations which are known from other sources to have been subject to Glendalough. Clearly, this is because the sites in question were, by the later twelfth century, subject to the archbishopric of Dublin. The charter list of Glendalough's possessions is concerned almost exclusively with subject houses which lay within the boundaries of the post-Kells diocese.

The Dublin diocesan record from the thirteenth century onwards preserves reference to ecclesiastical placenames now lost and notes dedications, some of which may be early, to saints of the *familia Coemgeni*. For instance, a late thirteenth century list of churches in the Dublin diocese includes Ecclesia de **Dergory**, which almost certainly represents Doire Guaire and commemorates the 'messenger' of the community of Cóemgen.[124] Other sources which relate to ecclesiastical properties in the united dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough preserve similar information. The church of **Cell Droichit** (Td. and Par. Celbridge,

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[124] Cr. M. cxlvi, *Nomina Ecclesiarum Decanatus Dublinensis*, p. 143; *Vita S. Coemgeni*, § 42; *V.S.H.*, I, p. 254; L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 27, suggests that Doire Guaire may be represented by a ruin with pre-Norman features in Td. Ballinafunshogue, Par. Derrylossery, By. Ballincor Nth.

By. Sth. Salt), granted to the Abbey of St. Thomas, was apparently dedicated to St. Mochua, the patron of Cluain Dolcáin who features so prominently in Glendalough hagiography; the site of a well carrying an early-modern inscription 'Thobor Mochua' is located nearby.[125] Record of a dedication to Berchán, who also features in Glendalough hagiography, at **Drumkay** (Par. Rathnew, formerly Drumkay, By. Newcastle) has already been noted.[126]

A seventeenth century diocesan survey of Kildare carried out by Bishop Mac Eochagáin records a number of dedications then remembered to saints with Glendalough connections. Within the Barony of Ikeathy-Oughteranny there were dedications to Mochua at **Barreen** (Par. Clane) and to Garbán at **Clonshanbo** (Par. Kilcock). Further west in the Barony of Coolestown, Co. Offaly, it appears that the *familia Coemgeni* were especially commemorated; Berchán at **Clonsast**, Cóemán at **Cloncreen** and **Clonbullogue**, and Cóemgen himself at **Capella de Cuasán**, which would appear to have been in the same vicinity.[127] Secular records of sixteenth or seventeenth century date occasionally refer to church dedications; thus we find **Carrickbrennan** (Par. Monkstown, By. Rathdown) linked with Mo Chonna and the **'Ivy Church'** at Brockagh adjacent to Glendalough associated with Mo Gorróc.[128] The late Fr. Ronan pointed to nineteenth century building leases for the townland of Newtown Blackrock, Co. Dublin, which describe a parcel of land known as **Renniue** as "part of the second portion of Taney". As the Bull of Alexander III of 1179 implies that Taney had

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[125] *Reg. St. Thomas*, §§ 185, 186, 341; p. 158-60, 295. Other dedications to Mochua, such as that at Barreen, are discussed presently.

[126] Lateran Regesta, vol. cccv, f. 59: 13 Eugenius IV: to Archbishop of Dublin, Id. Apr. 1443; *Calendar of Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 9, A.D. 1431-47, ed. J. A. Twemlow (London: H.M.S.O., 1912), p. 393; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 420; see above, p. 62.

[127] Franciscan Library, Killiney, MS A 31, f. 2; Eamonn De hÓir, "Blúire Cill-sheanchais faoi Fhairche Chill Dara", *Dinnseanchas*, 2 no. 2 (1966), 29-39.

[128] Fiant of Elizabeth I, no. 3146 (1577);*Twenty Second Report of Deputy Keeper of Public Records*, (Dublin: H.M.S.O., 1890), appendix, p. 772, records St. Machona's Church, Carrickbrennan; L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 29, notes the association of the 'Ivy Church' (alias Trinity Church) with Mo Gorróc.

been divided into at least two portions, Ronan proposed that the original designation of this site was Rath Nath I, thus representing a dedication to the Dál Messin Corb bishop.[129]

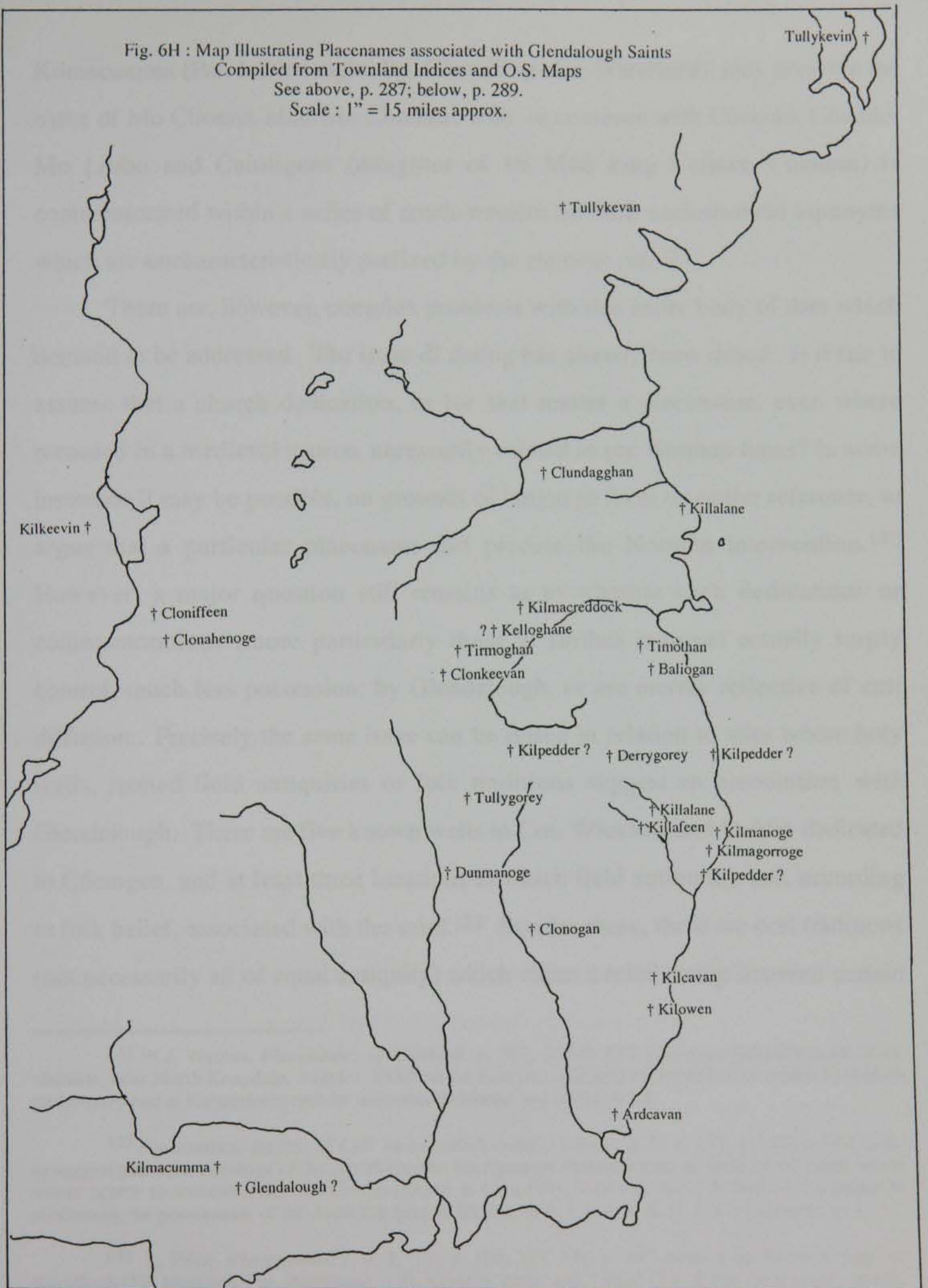
Aside from the instances discussed earlier, where there is medieval or early modern written record of dedications to members of the *familia Coemgeni*, a substantial number of placenames seem to preserve reference to the same group of individuals. For the most part names of townlands, or location-names within townlands, they are invariably compound toponyms in which a settlement element (in most cases *cell* or *tech*, occasionally *cluain* or *baile)* is combined with a personal name. In this way a number of Glendalough saints are commemorated, some of whom were alleged to have had Dál Messin Corb ancestry. Among those who feature in placenames are Mo Chua, Mo Gorróg, Guaire, Crítán, Mo Boe, Menóc, Cóemán, Mo Chóem, Eógan, possibly Petrán and certainly Cóemgen himself (**Fig. 6H**). The greatest concentration of these toponyms may be found in Co. Wicklow and in adjacent parts of Cos. Dublin and Kildare. However, examples occur further afield. Instances have earlier been cited of placenames in the north-east which commemorate Cóemgen and in the vicinity of Clonmacnois which apparently commemorate Affinus and Mo Shenóc, two other saints with Glendalough connections (above, p. 177, n. 32; 203, n. 114). Other examples which may be added include Kilkeevin in the Barony of Ballintober Co. Roscommon, a short distance to the west of Lough Ree, where Mo Ríóc of Inis Bó Finne was claimed for Glendalough apparently at an early date (see p. 168, n. 13, and above n. 29). There is a Kilcavan near Tara Hill in the Barony of Gorey, and an Ardcavan overlooking Wexford Harbour, while a townland of Clundagghan was recorded in Co. Meath during the seventeenth century.[130]

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[129] A.R. I, f. 1; II, f. 47; *Calendar*, p. 3, confirms 'mediatatem de Tignai' to Archbishop Lorcán; Myles V. Ronan, "History of the Diocese: Deanery of Taney", *Reportorium Novum*, 1 no. 1 (1955), 35, also points to a holy well known as Tobbernea in Td. Newtown Blackrock, By. Rathdown, Co. Dublin.

[130] Y.M. Goblet, *Parishes and Townlands*, p. 156, for Td. Clundagghan, Par. Laracor, Co Meath.

Fig. 6H : Map Illustrating Placenames associated with Glendalough Saints
Compiled from Townland Indices and O.S. Maps
See above, p. 287; below, p. 289.
Scale : 1" = 15 miles approx.



Kilmacumma (Par. Inislounaght, By. Glenahiery, Co. Waterford), may preserve the name of Mo Chonna, alias Mo Chonnóc who, in common with Cóemán, Cóemhi, Mo Libbo and Caintigern (daughter of Uí Máil king Cellach Cualann) is commemorated within a series of south-western Scottish ecclesiastical toponyms which are uncharacteristically prefixed by the element *cell*.[131]

There are, however, complex problems with this entire body of data which demand to be addressed. The issue of dating has already been raised. Is it fair to assume that a church dedication, or for that matter a placename, even where recorded in a medieval source, necessarily existed in pre-Norman times? In some instances it may be possible, on grounds of language form or earlier reference, to argue that a particular placename did predate the Norman intervention.[132] However, a major question still remains as to whether such dedications or commemorations (more particularly those at further remove) actually imply control, much less possession, by Glendalough, or are merely reflective of cult diffusion. Precisely the same issue can be raised in relation to sites where holy wells, named field antiquities or folk traditions suggest an association with Glendalough. There are five known wells in Cos. Wicklow and Dublin dedicated to Cóemgen, and at least three locations at which field antiquities are, according to folk belief, associated with the saint.[133] Besides these, there are oral traditions (not necessarily all of equal antiquity) which claim a relationship between certain

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[131] W.J. Watson, *Placenames of Scotland*, p. 282, 301-5, 314, discusses Kilmachonock (now obsolete, near North Knapdale, Argyle), Kilkivan (in Kintyre), Kilchintorn (near Loch Duich), Kilmalieu (at Inverary and at Kingairloch) and the unlocated Kilchemi; see above, 4.1.3.

[132] For instance, the use of *Cell* in a Scottish context (above, p. 61 n. 187, p. 181) would seem to suggest placename coinage of the pre-Norse era; the toponym Ballemochain, or Baile Mo Chainn, which would appear to commemorate Mo Chóem (above, p. 63 n.193), occurs in the 1179 Bull of Alexander III confirming the possessions of the Archbishopric of Dublin; A.R. I, f. 1; A.R. II, f. 47; *Calendar*, p. 3.

[133] L. Price, *Placenames*, I, p. 3, IV, p. 192, 217, VII, p. 447, notes a St. Kevin's "cup" at Kilcallogh (Td. Meetings, Par. Rathdrum), a St. Kevin's "cave" and "chair" (Td. & Par. Holywood), and St. Kevin's "footmark" at Kilbaylet (Par. Donard), while a "Kevin's Lane" at Dunganstown is, he considers, probably modern. There is St. Kevin's Well at Dunganstown; C.Ó Danachair, "Holy Wells of Co. Dublin", 75, 80, 84, 86, records further examples at Abbotstown (Par. Castleknock), Patrick's Close (Kevin Street, Dublin), Glenn Muniri (Td. Ballyman, Par. Old Conna), and Cell na Manach (Td. Kilnamanagh, Par. Tallaght).

sites and the patron of Glendalough. The tradition preserved in the Irish Life that the saint was born at Ráith an Tobair Ghil and that concerning Mo Chonnóc and Cóemgen collected earlier this century have been referred to already (above, p. 71 n. 11, p.165 n. 6). To these might be added other folk beliefs as indicated by Ronan.[134] Again, there is insufficient evidence in most cases to establish whether a particular holy well, field antiquity or tradition points to an historical connection with Glendalough, or to popular devotion of relatively modern times (**Fig. 6J**). The occurrence of the placename Glendalough (Par. St Mary's, By. Glenahiery) in Co. Waterford raises difficulties of a similar kind. The locality, which furnishes the only other extant example of this placename, apparently preserves no tradition of Cóemgen or even of an ecclesiastical site. There are, however, several topographical and historical indicators which, taken together, seem to suggest a possible connection with the *familia Coemgeni* (below, Appendix 3).

It seems unnecessary to labour the point that hyperscepticism is not in itself a virtue, especially when it is clear that not all of Glendalough's possessions are documented. As already observed, no foundation of Guaire can be recognised among the recorded possessions of Glendalough, while the sites associated with Petrán remain unidentified. It may, on that account, better serve the present discussion to consider some of the instances in which placename or dedication evidence does in fact seem to indicate a connection with the *paruchia Glindelachensis*. The site of Tigrony (apparently Tech Cróinín) in the Parish of Castlemacadam, which probably commemorates one of the *familia Coemgeni* named Mo Chua or Crónán, features as a property of the Priory of All Hallows and may therefore have been granted to the Augustinians c.1216 as part of an

[134] M. Ronan, "Deanery of Wicklow", 132, 135, alludes to folk stories which represent Mo Libbo as nephew and successor of Cóemgen (one recalls the genealogical claim in the *De Matris* tract; above, p. 170, n. 18), and which attribute the foundation of a church at Knockatemple to three sisters of St. Kevin, named Keene, Kine and Kellagh.

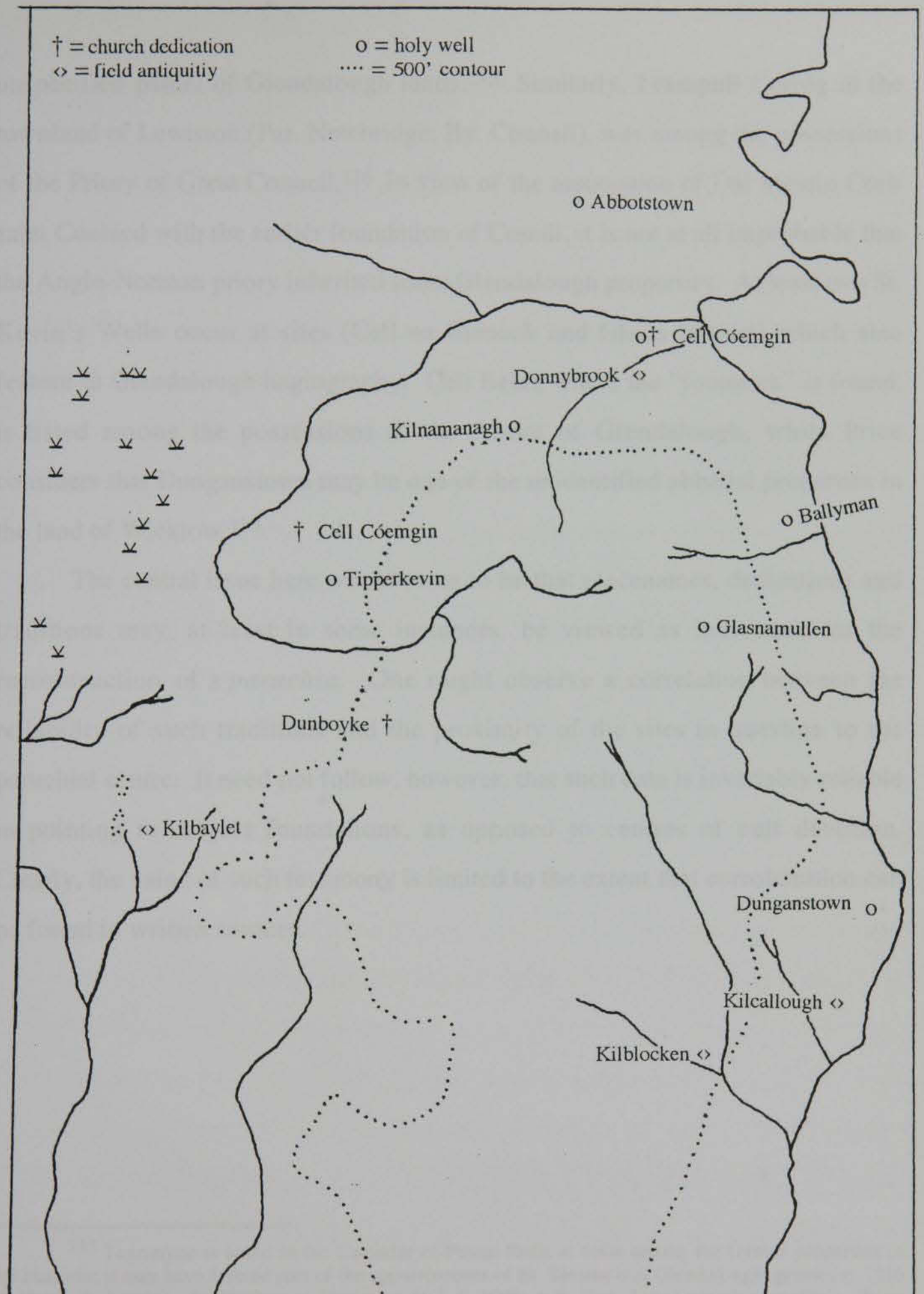


Fig. 6J : Map Illustrating Church Dedications, Wells and Field Antiquities associated with St. Cóemgen of Glendalough
Sources: L. Price, *Placenames*, passim; C. Ó Danachair, "Holy Wells", passim.
See above, p. 289.
Scale : 1" = 7 miles approx.

unspecified parcel of Glendalough lands.[135] Similarly, Teampull Corróg in the townland of Lewiston (Par. Newbridge, By. Connell), was among the possessions of the Priory of Great Connell.[136] In view of the association of Dál Messin Corb saint Conláed with the earlier foundation of Conull, it is not at all improbable that the Anglo-Norman priory inherited some Glendalough properties. At least two St. Kevin's Wells occur at sites (Cell na Manach and Glenn Muniri) which also feature in Glendalough hagiography. Cell Bélat, where the "footmark" is found, is listed among the possessions of the Abbot of Glendalough, while Price considers that Dunganstown may be one of the unidentified abbatial properties in the land of Wicklow.[137]

The central issue here would seem to be that placenames, dedications and traditions may, at least in some instances, be viewed as indicators for the reconstruction of a *paruchia*. One might observe a correlation between the reliability of such traditions and the proximity of the sites in question to the paruchial centre. It need not follow, however, that such data is invariably reliable in pointing to subject foundations, as opposed to centres of cult devotion. Clearly, the value of such testimony is limited to the extent that corroboration can be found in written sources.

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[135] Tegronyne is noted in the Calendar of Patent Rolls at 1604 among the former properties of All Hallows; it may have formed part of the appurtenances of St. Saviour's at Glendalough, granted c. 1216 by Henry de London, Archbishop of Dublin; A.R. I, f. 159b; A.R. II, f. 416; *Calendar*, p. 55; L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 467.

[136] M. Comerford, *Collections of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlen* (Dublin: Duffy and Son, 1883), p. 297, cites an inquisition of 1606 which confirmed former ownership of Lewiston by the Priory of Great Connell.

[137] L. Price, *Placenames*, VII, p. 447.

6.3 : The Paruchia of Glendalough: The Combined Evidence

6.3.1 : The Distribution of Sites Associated with Glendalough

It can scarcely be overemphasised that the picture of the Glendalough *paruchia* which may be obtained from the combined body of evidence (including hagiographical tradition, charters, placenames and dedications) is far from complete. Nonetheless, it is sufficiently comprehensive to permit the observation of general trends. From plotting foundations associated with Glendalough on maps (see especially above, Figs 6B-E) it emerges that, even in pre-diocesan times, the overall distribution pattern of the *familia Coemgeni* was essentially Laginocentric. More specifically, the majority of sites associated with Glendalough at any stage of its history are found in northern Leinster, within the overkingdom of Uí Dúnlainge.

There are, of course, a substantial number of 'outliers' reflected in the Irish Litany and in the league of alleged Dál Messin Corb saints. Glúnsalach, as noted above, is associated with a site at Sliab Fuait in the north east while at least four members of the *familia Coemgeni* are located in the midlands, even extending west of the Shannon. Etchian of Cluain Fota, Brutiuc of Cúil Corrae, Mo Ríóc of Inis Bó Finne and Becnat of Cell Becnatan (if the site intended is in fact that in the Barony of Ballymoe) have already been discussed (above, 6.2.3). By the same token, foundations associated with Glendalough saints extend in an arc from east Munster across to the Shannon, from Cluain dá an Dobair to Doire na Fland to Tír dá Glas. There also appears to have been a strong hagiographical tradition linking the area around Tara Hill (By. Gorey) with Glendalough interests. The testimony of placenames and dedications, for all the reservations about their probable historical value, seem to confirm the same general picture. The main concentration occurs in northern Leinster, with isolated examples in the

midlands, in the east-Munster marches and in the vicinity of Tara Hill (see above, p. 287, 289).

It seems perfectly reasonable to view this overall distribution pattern as a reflection of the political contacts of the north Leinster kings, in particular those established by Uí Máil, the lineage which supplied overkings in the seventh and early eighth centuries. There are, as already outlined, indications in the annals and in hagiographical tradition that Uí Máil had established dynastic interests at Glendalough at least by the reign of Cellach Cualann. Clearly a ruler of considerable political acumen, the latter contracted marriage-alliances with the Ciannachta, Dál nAraide and Dál Riata which gave him a chain of contact extending to northern Britain. Presumably, the presence of Ulster clerics at Glendalough as recorded in the annals, the diffusion of saints' cults in both directions and the pursuit of claims by later *comarbaí Chóemgin* at Sliab Fuait should be viewed in this context.

Another probable factor behind the geographical spread of Glendalough claims in the midlands and in Munster is the former existence of a "Greater Leinster" and the apparently prolonged process of its contraction, discussed at length above (2.1.3). The power of the Laigin overkings in Mide may have been broken only in the sixth century, while there are indications in the genealogies and in the Lives of the saints that in fringe areas such as Fer Tulach (and perhaps southern Fingal) a tenuous hold was retained into the seventh century if not later. Similarly, the political influence of the Laigin would seem to have survived in northern and eastern Munster courtesy of the Corco Loígde dynasty (the ancestry of which was spuriously traced to Dál Messin Corb) into the seventh century. Moreover, the contraction of Laigin overlordship resulted in the stranding of numerous dynastic segments extending in a chain, as it were, from Conmaicne Réin back across the lakelands of Mide to the Liffey-Tolka valley; similarly, Laigin interests were apparently established in Araide Cliach and in Uí Fothaid, resulting in two further 'chains' of dynastic segments extending back

towards the Leinster border. The apparent persistence of Uí Fáilge activity in the Westmeath lakelands into the eighth century as documented in the annals (above, p. 96 n. 79) may suggest that at least some of these stranded segments retained elements of a Leinster identity, long after they had been brought under tribute by the Uí Néill or by the Eóganachta whose overlordship, in any event, may have been less monolithic than is sometimes assumed. An added factor in the equation was the presence in north Leinster, particularly among the Dál Messin Corb and Uí Máil, of *forsluinte* from the Shannon valley and especially from Munster. Some of these groups clearly had ecclesiastical connections. Attention has already been drawn to the presence of Corco Loígde ecclesiastics among the *familia Coemgeni*, to the establishment in north Leinster of saints' cults related to that dynasty and to the ecclesiastical settlement of Dál mBirn in the Uí Máil subkingdom of Uí Théig, which featured among the possessions of Glendalough (above, p. 86 n.58, p. 278). From the genealogies, it emerges that the Cenél Dalláin lineage of Uí Liatháin, in whose territory Cóemgen was alleged to have restored to life two young women, may have established a presence at Cell Fáe near Glendalough and perhaps promoted the inclusion of Cillíne mac Diarmata into the catalogue of Dál Messin Corb saints (above, p. 81, 260, 269 n.84).

Thus it may be understood that a coincidence of ecclesiastical and dynastic interests lay behind the geographical distribution of Glendalough connections. It might be argued that this is so whether control/ possession was in question or merely the diffusion of a cult. Clashes involving Glendalough and other conflicting paruchial ambitions, such as occurred at Sliab Fuait and at Telach Bregmuin (above, p. 186f, 272), and the assertion of what appears to be a blanket claim to supremacy in Araide (above, p. 249 n.28), would seem to suggest that in at least some instances control was an issue - perhaps with revenues at stake. In any case, cult-diffusion is not an automatic process; the cults of saints are carried by individuals. In an Irish context this probably meant clergy, as few other classes would have had the necessary mobility. The foundation and

endowment of churches almost invariably involved royal patronage, which in turn presupposed a willingness to accept immigrant clergy from a particular kingdom (or area) and, perhaps, a conscious decision to adopt the cult of their patron saint. It would seem reasonable to assume that certain dynasties were, at different stages, predisposed towards the adoption and subsequent promotion of particular saints' cults. No doubt profitability and political expedience were matters for consideration.

To a certain degree, therefore, the early *paruchia* of Glendalough is reflective of political ambition. The later Uí Máil rulers secured marriage alliances with Ulster and North British dynasties, and employed mercenary troops from those parts. If, as suggested above, Glendalough contact with the north-east and with Britain is viewed in this context, it can be argued that it arose from (or in association with) a political initiative. For Mide and Munster, the same degree of purposefulness is less in evidence. It is not clear how far into the seventh century Uí Máil or other Leinster dynasties retained any meaningful political influence in these areas, or pursued alliances with the subsequent overlords. Nonetheless, the former "Greater Leinster" had left a heritage of emigré Laigin segments and immigrant *forsluinte*, which to varying degrees preserved their own identities and perhaps pursued their own loyalties in ecclesiastical, if not in political, matters. Expansion of Glendalough's *paruchia* outside of Leinster, therefore, if not necessarily a product of political initiative, is nonetheless reflective of dynastic contacts.

The probable validity of this hypothesis can be assessed by examining the distribution of Glendalough possessions within the province of Leinster. They are for the most part confined to northern parts, within the overkingdom of Uí Máil, later absorbed by Uí Dúnlainge. Particular concentrations occur in Iarthar Liphi, the patrimony of the Uí Muiredaig lineage of Uí Dúnlainge, extending across the sub-kingdoms of Uí Máil, Uí Garrchon and Uí Enechglaiss. It may be significant that the ruling lineages of these territories are the only Leinster

dynasties to adopt the personal names Máel Cóemgin or Gilla Cóemgin.[138] For all practical purposes, the cult of the Glendalough patron is not found in the realm of Uí Chennselaig, the rulers of which appear in a decidedly bad light in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* (above, esp. p. 212-3). However, it seems that something of an exception has been made for the subkingdoms of Uí Dego and Uí Felmeda Tuaid. In regard to the former, the local dynasty feature as allies of Uí Dúnlainge in the late ninth to early tenth century (above, p. 118). In Uí Felmeda Tuaid, the interests of Uí Muiredaig had become established in the post-Clontarf period and two ecclesiastics of that lineage held the abbacies of Glendalough and of Cluain Mór Maedóic.[139] Subsequently, Uí Muiredaig formed a marriage-alliance with the line of Domnall Remar which assumed the local kingship of Uí Felmeda Tuaid and the possessions of Glendalough in the twelfth century include Tech Imbeochaire in that territory (above, p. 146, 148, 277).

This coincidence of ecclesiastical and secular political interest has been observed in general principle by Herbert and Bitel, while Mc Cone has pointed to the particular case of Uí Dúnlainge and implies that the ambitions of the dynasty parallel those of Kildare in Magh Liphi.[140] In fact, dedications to Brigit are heavily concentrated in north Co. Kildare, adjacent parts of west Co. Wicklow, and south Co. Dublin; the territories of Uí Fáeláin and Uí Dúnchada. In contrast, they are curiously absent from south Co. Kildare, the realm of Uí Muiredaig.[141] Again, in Co. Carlow, it may be noted that St. Brigit's Wells are found in the north of the county, especially in the Barony of Forth (the sub-kingdom of

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[138] Rawl B 502, 117 c 4, 125 a 43; LL 337 c 1, c 3, c 42; *Corpus*, p. 12, 78; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1479-80; this naming practice has been discussed above, p. 44, 207 n.6.

[139] The abbots in question are Cináed (†1068) and Artúr (†1052), sons of Muiredach; see above, p. 208-09.

[140] L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 147; K.R. Mc Cone, "Bríd Chill Dara", p. 40.

[141] P. Jackson, "Holy Wells of Co. Kildare", esp. 137.

Fothairt Tíre), but not in the south.[142] There is yet another concentration of Brigidine dedications around Wexford Haven (Fothairt Mara). Outside of the historical province of Leinster they are particularly concentrated in the territory of the Déissi, where adoption of the cult of Brigit by the ruling lineages seems to reflect protracted contact with the Laigin (above, p. 82 n. 41), while in the midlands there is a strong focus in Fer Tulach and in the lakelands district.[143] Having thus examined the geographical distribution of the *paruchia Coemgeni* and having explored the extent to which dynastic factors may have influenced its early expansion, it remains to consider the politico-ecclesiastical character of the *paruchia* over time.

6.3.2 : Paruchial Relationship: Change and Continuity

Study of development over time, as opposed to analysis of geographical distribution, requires detailed chronologically-based records. However, as discussed above, the laconic character of annal obits for the earlier (i.e. pre-Viking) period renders it difficult to ascertain paruchial extent, much less apprehend adaption to changing political circumstance, on the testimony of this source alone. Certainly, annals of the pre-Viking period record that clerics of Leinster origin held abbatial office at several foundations on the Connacht and Munster marches. This includes houses which are associated with Glendalough in hagiographical and genealogical tradition. As already observed (above, n. 45), two eighth century abbots of Dair Inis belonged to a lineage of Dál Messin Corb. Around the same time, at Mo Ríóc's foundation of Inis Bó Finne on Loch Rí, the obit of Abbot Máel Fothartaig mac Máele Tuili expressly states that he was a

[142] Edward O'Toole, "The Holy Wells of Co. Carlow", *Béaloideas*, 4 no. 1 (1933), 8, 9, 12-13; ibid. 4 no. 2, 121.

[143] P. Walsh, *Placenames of Westmeath*, p.21, 59, 68, 179-80, 195-6, 224, 266, 305, 357.

Leinsterman; indeed his father's personal name occurs in the genealogies of Uí Máil.[144] At Tír dá Glas, a site associated with Mo Chóem, several of the abbots from the mid-seventh to the early ninth century bear names of Leinster appearance, some of which feature in the genealogies of Dál Messin Corb and of Uí Máil.[145] The picture which emerges, while far from conclusive, is one of abbatial office at a number of these foundations being dominated by Laigin lineages, which in turn had close associations with Glendalough, from as early as the seventh century right through the eighth. In this connection, it may be of significance that the annal record in general (as pointed out by Ó Corráin and others; above, p. 245, n.18), with its reports of ecclesiastical strife and "monastic battles", seems to present the eighth century as a high point of paruchial expansion.

Any account of Glendalough links with particular dynasties and foundations, as outlined in the previous section, is dependent on hagiographical and genealogical tradition for an historical context. It may be noted that the sources which provide the most comprehensive overview of *Paruchia Glindelachensis* (the Irish Litany, the genealogies of the saints, and the *Vita S. Coemgeni* in its original form) are all of early date ranging from the late eighth to perhaps the tenth century. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that, as a collective whole, they present us with an eighth (or at latest ninth) century reality, broadly complementing the picture presented by the annals. There are grounds for placing the *Betha Adamnáin* episode (above, 4.2.1), involving conflict between Glendalough and Columban (and perhaps Kildare) interests at Telach Bregmuin, in the reign of Cellach Cualann or not too long thereafter. Similarly, the *Vita S. Monenni* account of a Glendalough clash with Cell Sléibi (above, p.

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[144] A.U, s.a. 735 (= 736); Iugulatio Máel Fothartaig mac Máele Tuili di Laignib; see index to *Corpus* for name Máel Tuili among Uí Máil and Uí Dúnlainge; the name of the next recorded abbot Fiangalach mac Anmchada (A.U. 754 = 755) also has Leinster connotations.

[145] A.I. s.a. 654, 677, 717, 740 records Máel Aithcen, Librén mac Colmáin, Congertach and Cillíne, abbots of Tír dá Glas. A.U. s.a. 752, 813 adds Máel Tuile and Blathmac mac Aolgusa.

272, 295) may, if Sharpe's argument regarding a general composition date of c.800 for Latin Lives is accepted, belong to the same period.

The general picture then, obtained from this diverse body of sources, is that of a *paruchia* which may have commenced expansion by the later seventh century and which had reached a considerable extent by the eighth. In any event, it incorporated many foundations of seventh century or earlier date, which were established by Laigin (especially by Dál Messin Corb or Uí Máil) ecclesiastics or were situated in areas where a local population group (regardless, in some instances of political change at regional level) retained a loyalty towards, or connection with, those particular dynastic interests.

It seems reasonable to expect that the situation was never entirely stable. Quite apart from the gap between aspiration and reality that is presumed to exist in most situations where an ideology (secular or religious) is at stake, the occurrence in the *Vitae Sanctorum* of what appear to be counter-claims to certain ecclesiastical properties (above, 6.2.4) suggests that changes of paruchial control may in fact have taken place. The annal record for the marchland foundations discussed above is not sufficiently comprehensive or continuous to make conclusive statements on their subsequent orientation. However, it does appear from what record there is of Tír dá Glas that succession to the abbacy from the ninth century onwards was dominated by Munstermen. In this particular instance, it would seem that connections were maintained between the foundation concerned and Leinster, as there are strong indications that *Lebor Laigen* was commenced there in the mid-twelfth century (above, p. 23 n.75). This need not imply, however, that the community of Tír dá Glas remained for centuries within the *familia Coemgeni*.

There are indications that the *paruchia* of Glendalough did indeed contract. Gallen, as already observed (n. 30), apparently came into the sphere of Clonmacnois. The inclusion of Flann mac Fairchellaig and Flann mac Duib

Thuinne among the *Lucht Óentad Máele Ruain*,[146] may suggest that Daire Eidnig alias Daire na Fland had, through its involvement with the Céili Dé ascetic revival, become alienated from Glendalough by the ninth century. Granted, other foundations were probably brought within the *paruchia* at a later stage. The Céili Dé establishment of Dísert Diarmata which, as noted above, features among the twelfth century Glendalough properties, dates only from 811. At what precise point it was absorbed is not clear, but it is unlikely to have been before the late tenth century when the fortunes of Uí Muiredaig revived. In the years prior to 945, the abbacy of Dísert Diarmata was held by one Guaire mac Selbaig, probably of Osraige lineage, whose brother was *fer léginn* of Glendalough (see above, 3.1.2, 4.3.1).

As discussed earlier, the annals for the post-Clontarf period record close involvement on the part of Uí Muiredaig dynasts in activities at Dísert Diarmata and at other ecclesiastical settlements in Iarthar Liphi, parallel to an active pursuit of interests at Glendalough (above, 3.2.3, 5.1.1). This impression that the eleventh century may have been a period not so much of contraction but of consolidation for an Uí Muiredaig-backed Glendalough, finds a certain level of support in the hagiography. The "savage dog" episode of *Vita S. Coemgeni* which, as already suggested, seems to imply recognition of Glendalough aggrandisement achieved at the expense of the *paruchiae* of Comgall, Colum Cille and Cainnech (involving Dísert Diarmata, Maen and perhaps a claim to a foundation of Mo Libbo moccu Araide) may, on the grounds of historical circumstance, represent an eleventh century situation (above, 5.1.1). Moreover, the episode concerned appears to form part of a four-section stratum reflecting other developments of seemingly comparable date. These include the Cóemgen-Ciarán *óentad*, which historically arose from the dual abbacy of Ferdomnach h. Maonaig (†952) and extended at least into the middle years of the eleventh century (4.3.1, 4.3.2), and

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[146] LL 370 cb 42; *Bk. Leinster*, VI, p. 1683.

an account of Cóemgen's journey to Fine Gall, where he accepted the surrender of Garbán of Cenn Sáile and was received by Mo Bí of Glas Naíden. From the evidence of the dedications examined earlier it is clear that the cult of Cóemgen was carried into Fine Gall; the well at Abbotstown, Par. Castleknock, and the church and well near Dublin city provide testimony (see n.133). It is extremely tempting to place this Fine Gall expansion in the reign of the Ua Briain overkings, whose rule of Dublin was no doubt facilitated by their protegés the Ua Lorcáin kings of Uí Muiredaig. Muirchertach Ua Briain, whose mother Derbforgaill died at Glendalough, was the principal secular power behind the Synod of Ráith Bressail where, as observed above, an extensive Glendalough diocese was planned to include the overkingdom of Uí Muiredaig and the Hiberno-Scandinavian kingdom of Dublin.

It seems, therefore, that the general picture for the Glendalough *paruchia* throughout this period is one of rationalisation. Following decades of Osraige domination in the tenth century, the Uí Muiredaig lineage re-emerged in both secular and ecclesiastical politics. From then on, the interests of Glendalough were duly brought into line with those of the new rulers of north Leinster, with adjustments made over time to accommodate the ambitions of Uí Muiredaig's overlords. The entire process reflects the gradual territorialisation of kingship in pre-Norman Ireland, which finds expression in the creation of the dioceses in the twelfth century. The long-term outcome is an apparent correlation, as in the case of Glendalough (observed above, 6.2.5), between late "monastic paruchiae", overkingdoms and dioceses.

The twelfth century possessions of Glendalough, as evidenced by the charters, do broadly reflect the diocesan structure. It may be noted that neither the confirmation of Strongbow to Abbot Thomas nor the Papal Bull to Bishop Máel Calainn refer to the above-discussed sites in Fine Gall, or indeed to the foundations of Cluain Dolcáin and Cell na Manach which are closely associated with Glendalough in the early sources. The re-shaping of the dioceses at the

Synod of Kells in 1152 saw these, and presumably other possessions elsewhere, cut off from Glendalough. Subsequently, these foundations were among the possessions of the Archbishop of Dublin.[147] For the most part, as already noted (6.2.5), the 'monastic paruchia' of Glendalough lay within the perimeters of the diocese. Tech Do Loga, if it is to be identified with Templeogue in south Co. Dublin (above, p. 278), would seem to be an exception. It transpires that possessions confirmed to Bishop Máel Calainn include Cell Ausaille which (subsequently in any event) is within the Diocese of Kildare while Cell Tagáin and Cluain Mór Máedóc are in Leighlin. However, diocesan boundaries are not always clear-cut. Glendalough apparently extended into part of south-east Co. Dublin around Killegar, Ballyman and Shankill; by the same token, Kilcoole and Kiladreenan were among the possessions of the Archbishopric of Dublin.[148]

No doubt an important factor which should not be overlooked is the degree of continuity that is discernible in the Glendalough record. In a number of instances, individual foundations which early sources associate with the *paruchia Glindelachensis* are still included among the possessions of either the abbot or the bishop in the latter part of the twelfth century. Inber Daeile of Dagán, Glenn Muniri of Mo Sinu, Mugna Mo Senóc and Dergne Mo Gorróc, each of which is specifically referred to in the Litany, feature in the charters. Other early members of the *familia Coemgeni* whose foundations are included among the abbatial possessions are Menóc (Glenn Faidli), Áedán (Cluain Dartada and Cell U Garrchon), Mo Chonnóc (Cell Mo Chonnóc), Mo Libbo (Cell Mo Libbo), Sillán (Cell Epscuip Silláin), Findbarr (Cell Adgair and Cell na Rethaire) and Cóemell (Cell Caimille). There may be still further examples; Tech Mochua, as remarked earlier, probably commemorates one of the saints named Crónán

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147 A.R. I, f. 1; A.R. II, f. 47; *Calendar*, p. 3; Cell na Manach na nEscrech, however, is not included in any of the twelfth century lists.

148 A.R. I, f. 1, 1b, 21b; A.R. II, f. 47, 48, 92; *Calendar*, p. 2, 3, 5.

associated with Cóemgen in the *vita*, but whether Mochua of Clondalkin is intended or another patron of the same name is unclear. Inis Ulad of Critán would appear to be listed among the abbatial properties (above, p. 277), while Cell Boedáin may commemorate Mo Boe. Certainly Cluain dá an Dobair of Mo Boe is listed among the episcopal properties, along with Dísert Cellaig (Cellach), Cell Uscaidi (Bicliu) and seemingly Senchill (Berchán; above, p. 280, 282-3). This degree of continuity is all the more remarkable when one considers that quite a number of the sites in question are located in Uí Enechglaiss and in Fortuatha Laigen, adjacent to Wicklow where there was a high level of Norse activity, not to mention settlement (above, p. 116).

In the final analysis, it must be stressed that in spite of the continuity here indicated, the overall picture was far from static. The early and apparently diffuse *familia Coemgeni* which, as suggested above was probably created through dynastic contact with stranded Laigin segments before Greater Leinster had entirely receded into history, would seem to have contracted by (perhaps) the ninth century. Later, with the advent of Uí Muiredaig to political and ecclesiastical power, Glendalough gained many possessions. A convergence of dynastic and ecclesiastical interests may be noted, with most of the new gains located within the overkingdom of Uí Muiredaig.

It would of course be misleading to infer that the "monastic paruchia", although it would appear by the twelfth century to have been virtually confined within diocesan bounds, ever became a territorial unit. Clearly, it did not. Although some probable Glendalough possessions in Uí Fáeláin and in Uí Fáilge became properties of the Bishop of Kildare,[149] the fate of many outlying dependencies is not recorded. The possibility that some sites may have remained subject to the abbot of Glendalough, even though not reckoned among the

[149] Franciscan Library, Killiney, MS A 31, a 17th C list of the possessions of Kildare by Bishop Mac Eochagáin includes several likely instances; see above, n. 127.

abbatial possessions, cannot be precluded. Moreover, while some foundations within Glendalough's sphere of influence that formerly belonged to other *paruchiae* were apparently absorbed (including Dísert Diarmata and Maen), others were not. Kildare, as observed above, had many possessions in Cos. Dublin and Wicklow, while in the same area a number of dedications to Moling and Máedóc of Ferna (to name but two other patrons) can be traced. Some of these foundations may have ceased to exist by the twelfth century, but not all. Two churches dedicated to Moling and at least five associated with Brigit are listed c.1280 for the Co. Wicklow and Co. Kildare deaneries of Dublin archdiocese.[150] Presumably they were extant in the twelfth century, but there is no record of their affiliation.

This and many other issues cannot be satisfactorily resolved at present, in the absence of more precise documentation. However, the overall picture presented, certainly in relation to Glendalough, is one of a "monastic paruchia" that, short of becoming a territorial unit, underwent a process of "pseudo-territorialisation" as the Uí Muiredaig kings (and later their overlords) moulded it into line with their sphere of influence. As the writer has argued in regard to its origins, *Paruchia Glindelachensis* in its developed form had a dynastic, rather than a political, basis.

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[150] Cr. M., CXLVI, p. 142-3; the Deanery of Bray included Tech Moling, Glais Moling, Tulach, Tech Lorcáin and Cell Brígte. Other sites called Cell Brígte are listed for the deaneries of Arklow and Ballymore.

Summary and Conclusions

7.1 : The Aim of the Study Re-stated

The political dimension of the Early Irish Church is an area that, as noted in the introduction above, has attracted much historical inquiry in recent decades. The starting point of this particular study has been the established view of the relationship between church and polity in Ireland up to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans; an image that has undergone considerable modification especially in the last few years. The reality of dynastic intervention at many of the larger ecclesiastical settlements has long been understood, even if its full extent may yet have to be realised. It is widely accepted that ruling lineages commonly sought to exploit the economic resources of ecclesiastical settlements, in some instances using them as political powerbases. One outcome of this was the marked politicisation of the abbatial office that has been observed at several major ecclesiastical centres. The relationship between dynastic interest and the *paruchia*, however, has received rather less attention. Central to this issue has been the problem of defining what is meant by *paruchia* in an early-medieval Irish context.

In ecclesiastical terminology, it generally means a territorially defined administrative unit and that, indeed, is what Old Irish canon law implies. In practice, the term is often equated with a bishop's diocese. Difficulties arose largely because assumptions were made to the effect that episcopal authority in Ireland was supplanted by a "monastic order" in the sixth or seventh century. Granted, ecclesiastical centres of non-episcopal origin did emerge and these, having certain monastic features, tended to be grouped by historians under the convenience-term of "monasteries", even if that has meant describing the whole in terms of a part. It was mainly from hagiographical sources relating to such foundations that the classical understanding of a "monastic paruchia"

developed. This notion, popularised mainly by Hughes (see above, 0.2), envisaged a federation of churches established by a common founder; these were understood to have been scattered throughout the country and to have had no discernible politico-geographical basis. Recent reassessment of early Irish ecclesiastical administration has, however, highlighted a degree of overlap between foundations ascribed to certain patron saints and the spheres of influence enjoyed by dynasties which had vested interests in promoting the cults of the saints concerned. Hence, Mc Cone has pointed to a concentration of Brigidine dedications in the realm of Uí Dúnchada, while Herbert has charted the extent of overlap between the Columban *paruchia* and the political ambitions of the Uí Néill (above, 4.2.2, 6.1.1). Following on Sharpe's illustration of continuity from the era of early Irish canon law with the apparent survival of a considerable degree of episcopal authority, Etchingham has examined the practical implications of this for ecclesiastical administration in Ireland of the eighth century and later (above, 6.1.1). His argument regarding the apparent survival of a territorial dimension in the seemingly scattered *paruchia* of the "monastic" foundations raises new issues for the study of church-polity relationships in early medieval Ireland.

It was largely in the light of this on-going re-assessment that it was deemed appropriate to focus on a case study; the selection of Glendalough, as noted in the introduction above, owing much to the extensive (and hitherto relatively unexploited) documentation of the site, as discussed in the opening chapter. The importance of the annal record, which becomes increasingly detailed from the tenth century onwards, is that it does not confine itself to chronicling the affairs of the ecclesiastical settlement, but documents the ruling dynasties of the region. In this way, it has been possible to view developments in regard to abbatial succession and paruchial expansion (or contraction) in a political context. In addition, the survival of a substantial corpus of hagiographical data, not to mention the late twelfth century charters confirming the abbatial and episcopal

possessions, has facilitated an examination of Glendalough's dealings with other foundations and a detailed assessment of the extent and distribution of its network of dependencies.

In the process, various points have emerged which may be worthy of further comment. To begin with, it was considered useful to set down some general principles aimed at codifying a methodology for an inquiry of this nature. On more specific issues, however, observations have been made in relation to the polity of early Leinster, to the pursuit of political ambitions through ecclesiastical channels and to the character of the *paruchia*. These points will now be dealt with sequentially.

7.2 : Implications for Methodology

The above-mentioned steps towards codifying a methodology were taken primarily because of the volume and diversity of the available corpus of source material (Chapter 1). While the annals are generally relied upon to provide a chronological framework, the Leinster record for the earlier period (i.e. prior to the tenth century) is somewhat less than impressive. The earliest surviving internal chronicle is apparently a Clonard-based record dating from the latter part of the eighth century, and even external notices are not too plentiful. Not until the tenth century does the record become fuller with what seems to be a Barrow Valley chronicle (preserved in A.F.M.), along with more comprehensive external coverage from Clonmacnois and other locations. The overall impression, therefore, is that of a record which is relatively late and rather discontinuous. There are, as discussed above (1.1.1, 1.2.3), retrospective entries relating to Leinster for the period prior to the commencement of a contemporary record. However, in view of the limits that clearly apply to the memory of any community of people, the value as historical testimony of some retrospective data (such as the

strata which purport to document the Laigin Uí Néill conflict of the fifth-sixth centuries), may be open to question.

An important outcome of this shortfall in early chronicle record is that the historian is obliged, certainly for the period up to the eighth century and to a lesser degree as far as the tenth, to accord a far more central role than might otherwise be conceded to the testimony of other sources. Included here are genealogies and literature, particularly the rich body of hagiographical data that survives in relation to Glendalough. The diversity of this material alone, which includes Lives of the Saints, martyrologies, litanies and tracts which purport to record connections between saints, other persons and places, has already been discussed in Chapter 1.

It will readily be accepted that each of these sources has its own particular complexities, and that any effort to obtain an overall picture from them is likely to face interpretational difficulties. The absence of an internal chronology prompted stratification as a way forward, with a view to establishing which source might be acceptable as testimony to any given period. In the knowledge, however, that most of the materials considered here are composite products which assumed their present forms over time, it was clearly insufficient merely to sequence these works according to date of initial composition. The key would instead lie in distinguishing layers within these sources, through the identification of what Doherty and Ó Corráin have respectively called "points of change" or "nodal points"; the advice offered many years ago by Ó Briain to use the annals as a "controlling source" was, where possible, followed (above, 1.1.2, 1.2.3).

Aside from issues of chronology, however, it was understood that the variety of reasons for which these works were produced could pose further difficulties. For the most part, they were not intended as historical records, but were compiled for a range of motives including entertainment, education, academic or spiritual exercise, or on occasion, for some apologetic purpose. Especially where there may be reason to consider that the latter might be the case,

it is clearly essential to ascertain (as far as possible) what the work most likely meant to its compilers. It is generally agreed that Lives of the Saints often reflect relationships with other ecclesiastical foundations that prevailed at the time of writing or redaction; sometimes they serve the purpose of a pseudo-charter. A pedigree can, in effect, be a "legal title" to kingship or to abbatial office, while genealogical ramifications can fossilize political agreements or the linking together of saints within the one kindred (as in the case of Dál Messin Corb; above, 1.1.5) can represent an ecclesiastical federation.

It seemed clear that any approach to resolving even some of the difficulties posed would require the widest available extent of background knowledge; the fullest possible understanding of the persons and lineages involved, their position in the political context of the time, the concerns, ambitions and priorities that are most likely to have lain behind their actions or attitudes. For this very reason, many practitioners presently working in the field of early Irish history use, and indeed advocate, integrated approaches to the sources. It has become increasingly acceptable to admit evidence from other disciplines (notably archaeology and field-survey, place-name study and, on occasion, folklore), although it is recognised that there may be difficulties in reconciling evidence from these fields with historical testimony. The approach taken here is essentially that proposed several decades ago by Ó Briain (above, 1.2.4); based on the principle of heuristic method, it seems to offer the most structured alternative. It demands immersion in the widest available range of sources, but the central role is accorded to annals and to other such works the principal purpose of which was historical record. By way of further refinement, the present writer considers that it is possible to significantly reduce the difficulties of reconciling evidence from other disciplines. The line followed in this study is straightforward in that regard; where the purpose of the inquiry is essentially historical (i.e. concerned with apprehension of human intentionality in the past rather than with reconstruction

of socio-economic conditions), primacy is accorded to historical evidence (see above, 1.3.5).

7.3 : The Relevance of the Political Background

The general trends in the political development of Leinster from the sixth to the twelfth century, the fortunes of the great dynasties and the careers of the principal rulers, have been adequately covered elsewhere and were not the main concern here. The political section of this study set itself more limited aims; to assess (insofar as that would prove possible) the likely extent of the early over-kingdom of the Laigin (around the time of the establishment of Glendalough) and to chart the timescale of its decline. Then, from the eighth or ninth century onwards, to focus on the dynasties of north-eastern Leinster that were known to have had an association with Glendalough; primarily Uí Máil and the Uí Muiredaig lineage of Uí Dúnlainge. The object of the exercise was to obtain a picture of the earliest ascertainable network of dynastic contacts, and to establish the political context in which the later dynasties secured their dominant position at the ecclesiastical settlement, which in turn may help to illuminate their motives.

It has long been recognised that the regnal poems and even the kinglists, if allowance is duly made for efforts at manipulation, preserve a reasonably authentic picture of the dynastic interests involved in the early overkingship (above, 2.1.1). While it is well precedented for those who lose out in the political powerstakes to gravitate towards ecclesiastical office, it is nonetheless ironic that the very dynasties which shared the overkingship at the dawn of the historical period would later feature at Glendalough. Perhaps the most relevant point, however, to emerge from the present inquiry into the background of early dynastic politics is the reassessment of the geographical extent and chronology of the overkingdom of the Laigin.

Mainly on the basis of genealogical evidence, which for the most part appears to be of eighth century date, a sprawling overlordship may be reconstructed (see Fig. 2C), which formerly extended over much of the midlands and over the greater part of north and east Munster. Aside from what appear to be Leinster strata in a number of Munster pedigrees, topographical accounts embedded in the genealogies preserve reference to numerous Laigin segments resident in parts of Munster and the midlands. An almost equal number of immigrant *forsluinte* from these same areas can be located in Leinster. This topographical data finds support from the toponomy of the regions concerned; the names of quite a number of townlands and parishes preserve reference to minor population groups (2.1.2).

Assessing the probable extent of this quondam Laigin overkingdom is one matter; the task of assigning a chronology to it is quite another. Traditional accounts have tended to place the conquest of the midlands by the Uí Néill in the fifth century and the loss of Laigin suzerainty over Osraige in the sixth. Indications abound, however, that tradition may have back-projected both of these political changes by some time. The very profusion of Laigin material in the genealogies would seem to suggest that a number of the connections represented were not far beyond recall at the time of initial composition in the late eighth century. Available annal evidence, though slim, tends to confirm this picture. Isolated references to Laigin activity in northern Munster up to the opening years of the eighth century, presumably derived from an extra-Leinster chronicle, have been indicated in this study. Smyth has pointed to a persistent Uí Fáilge interest in the Westmeath lakelands up to the same time. It is argued above (2.1.3) that the retrospective annal account of midland warfare between the Uí Néill and the Laigin may represent a genuine recollection of a territorial conquest, the timescale of which extended into the late sixth or perhaps early seventh century. Such a revised chronology clearly has crucial implications for the study of dynastic relationships with the ecclesiastical establishment in the pre-Viking period.

The indications are, therefore, that the overkingdom of the Laigin extended well beyond the boundaries of the later medieval province of Leinster when Glendalough was founded. If one accepts that this was the political background against which the early ecclesiastical community initially plotted its ambitions, the possibility must be confronted that many of the Glendalough dependencies, notably those in Araide or Fer Tulach, were established at a time when Laigin overlordship over these areas was still maintained. This political scenario, of course, prompts further questions in relation to the character of the paruchia. It also sets down wide parameters for contact between Glendalough and various dynasties outside of immediate Laigin circles. Clearly, a range of Munster (and perhaps certain midland) lineages came within its ambit. Moreover, the likelihood indicated by Byrne that Ulster overlordship still extended to the Boyne c.600 or later would surely have facilitated contact with dynastic interests from that direction, along the lines proposed by Mac Niocaill (above, Ch. 2, esp. 2.1.4, 2.1.5).

The above-noted tendency to back-project historical reality would seem to have been carried into the era of contemporary record. The observations of Walsh in regard to the kinglists, which cast serious doubt on claims for an Uí Dúnlainge overkingship in the sixth century, may not have fully uncovered the extent of the falsification. There are, as mentioned earlier, subtle hints in the record that the achievements of Fáelán mac Colmáin are perhaps overstated, that the real "arrival" of Uí Dúnlainge as a provincial power dated from the Battle of Allen in 722, and that the dynasty's influence thereafter extended gradually. More to the point, the annals preserve several indications that the contraction of the earlier dynasties of Uí Máil and Uí Garrchon was also a more protracted process than subsequent "established doctrine" cared to admit (above, 2.2.1). It appears, indeed, that rulers of these lineages were still exercising a considerable degree of power at regional level into the latter part of the eighth century. In that event, the political schema reflected in the Laigin genealogies and in the poem

Timna Cathaír Máir, both of which probably date to the end of the eighth century, may be significant. The dynasties in question are depicted as being politically insignificant or isolated, which may well have represented a recent development at the time of composition (2.2.2). Again, there are implications for the politico-ecclesiastical relationships of Glendalough. If Uí Máil (and perhaps at a more modest level, Uí Garrchon) retained meaningful political power in the region up to the end of the eighth century, the dynasty had ample opportunity to establish its interests at the growing ecclesiastical settlement before Uí Dúnlainge, which subsequently dominated Glendalough, arrived on the scene.

It seems that Uí Dúnlainge faced a constant uphill struggle in their efforts to retain the overkingship of Leinster, or at least that of the northern portion. From the ninth century onwards, the dynasty was challenged by the Southern Uí Néill and by the rise of the Norse kingdom of Dublin. This latest addition to the political equation became a more serious threat, as Byrne and others have shown, from the early tenth century; especially for the lineage of Uí Dúnchada whose patrimony lay adjacent to Dublin. As emerges from this study, however, the impact of the Norse from the perspective of Glendalough would seem to have been less significant (above, 2.2.3). Notwithstanding traces of Norse rural settlement in the area, the continuity of local ruling lineages and of ecclesiastical properties subject to Glendalough is enough to suggest that the local polity remained intact. The most serious threat for the ecclesiastical settlement and for Uí Muiredaig, at this time struggling to secure primacy among the lineages of Uí Dúnlainge, came from Osraige. For much of the tenth century, the rulers of this Barrow Valley kingdom strove with varying degrees of success to enforce their lordship over Leinster. In the process, they would become yet another factor in the dynastic connections of Glendalough.

The political focus of this study narrows considerably from the eleventh century, by which time the documentary record has become considerably more detailed. Certainly, available evidence for the opening years of that century

reveals an Uí Muiredaig presence at Glendalough, and the indications are that this was achieved in conjunction with the lineage's efforts to secure the over-kingship of Leinster at this time (3.1.2, 3.1.3). Presumably, it is no coincidence that Uí Muiredaig dynasts are recorded, generally in relation to political conflict, at several other ecclesiastical settlements in northern Leinster that are known to have had Glendalough connections. Again, it may be noted that record of such interventions ceases abruptly from 1042, with the discomfiture of Uí Muiredaig at the battle of Mag Muilchet.

The years that followed saw northern Leinster suppressed, as Ó Corráin has shown, under the strong rule of Uí Chennselaig overking Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó. The record for this period includes reference to Uí Muiredaig dynasts in exile and implies uncertainty in the succession to their patrimonial kingship (3.2.1). A certain restoration of fortunes apparently occurred under the overlordship of Muirchertach Ua Briain, but very much on his terms with divisions between the family lines of Ua Lorcáin and Ua Tuathail exploited to the full. There are signs that the Ua Tuathail line commenced to assert itself after the death of Ua Briain (3.2.2) , but it probably in fact owed its regional ascendancy to the rise of Diarmait Mac Murchada. It appears that, in spite of periodic setbacks, a *modus vivendi* was maintained with the latter until his death in 1171. The evident power that these overlords wielded over the local dynasties underlines the need to view later eleventh and twelfth century developments at Glendalough in this changed political context.

The final section of the political outline addresses itself to the fate of the Uí Muiredaig lineage after the dismantling of the Leinster kingship by King Henry II of England (above, 3.2.3). Unlike their Uí Dúnchada cousins who quickly adapted to Anglo-Norman rule and became absorbed into the Feudal system, the rulers of Uí Muiredaig resisted the Dublin government and, in 1178, paid the price of dispossession. It appears that the remnants of the lineage became broken and scattered after this. However, as Price observed, there are indications that some of

the line managed to preserve a faded royal dignity on ecclesiastical lands around Glendalough and Glenmalure, to re-emerge only when economic hardship or the threat of secondary dispossession seemed to present them with no other choice.

7.4 : Political Impact on Ecclesiastical Affairs

In the light of the political background sketched in the second and third chapters above, patterns which emerge in the record of the ecclesiastical settlement of Glendalough become easier to interpret. Again, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture for the period prior to the eighth century, when a contemporary record seems to have begun. However, a range of hagiographical and genealogical sources, dated from the late eighth century onwards, preserve reference to seventh century ecclesiastics who allegedly were members of the *familia Coemgeni*. The argument pursued in this study is that the real value of these references lies in their reflection of cult-diffusion, whereby they point to contacts between Glendalough and other ecclesiastical centres at an early date. It seems reasonable moreover, that such contacts should have involved mobility of clergy. In that event, the references which purport to associate certain saints with Glendalough may in fact give some indication of the composition of the community, even if it was not in fact made up of the individuals named. Given the evidence for Laigin involvement in Munster, and the pursuit of contacts with the ruling lineages of Brega and East Ulster, it is scarcely surprising that several of the ecclesiastical figures associated with Glendalough should be traced to such lineages as Corco Loígde or Dál nAraide.

Dynastic contacts with northern Britain, perhaps via Ulster, are again paralleled by the diffusion of saints' cults (4.1.3) between those regions and Glendalough. Commemorations in the martyrologies, supported by the evidence of placenames which Nicholaisen maintained were demonstrably early, merit attention here. They suggest the establishment of cults of saints with Dál Messin

Corb or Glendalough associations, some apparently representing "re-exports" of southern British origin, in Strathclyde and in adjacent parts of Scotland. It is equally clear from hagiographical tradition that several British saints, notably Mo Chonnóc and Petróc, were culted at Glendalough, while placenames in the vicinity such as Cell Bretan and Tech Bretan may point to the actual establishment of British communities within the extended *familia Coemgeni*.

In the light of the political background, which indicates early eighth century activity on the part of Uí Máil around Glendalough and their apparent survival as regional rulers until the end of the century, this study considers the evidence for that dynasty having dominated the ecclesiastical settlement before Uí Dúnlainge. Various indicators are noted, including the role claimed for Dimma mac Fiachnae (who is traced in the genealogies to Uí Máil) in the transfer of the Glendalough community to the lower valley, and the adoption by at least one line of the dynasty of the personal name Máel Cóemgin. It is strongly argued above that the "Leinster episode" of *Betha Adamnáin*, especially in view of Herbert's proposed ninth century original, probably represents an authentic picture of an eighth century situation. The account of the meeting at which Cellach Cualann and Abbot Dubgualai are confronted by Adomnán and his party is clearly a contrivance. It is quite possible that, as inferred by the story, the Uí Máil overking of the Laigin really did appoint this abbot of Glendalough; the latter does appear to have met a violent end. More to the point, however, is the extent to which the alignments of political and ecclesiastical interests represented in the episode would have made sense in an eighth century context.

It is remarked above (4.2.1) that a certain Eterscél mac Cellaig, who died in 814 as abbot of Glendalough, could have belonged to an Uí Máil line given the occurrence of both these personal names in the genealogies of that dynasty. However, such a circumstantial link is not enough to make a conclusive case. Certainly, Uí Dúnlainge was the dominant political force at provincial level for some time prior to this and it appears that this dynasty, which had virtually

monopolised the administration of Kildare, did assert its authority over Glendalough. The Fáelán mac Colmáin episodes in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* are generally interpreted as evidence in support of an Uí Dúnlainge supremacy. It may indeed be reasonable, as argued above in the light of Sharpe's proposed date of c. 800 for the composition of the general corpus of Latin *vitae*, to assign the Uí Dúnlainge takeover at Glendalough to the closing decades of the eighth century. Hagiographers might be expected to have concern for developments that were current or in the recent past and the time of writing, and there seems to be an intention in this *vita* to convey a message regarding the future greatness of the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty. The apparent role of the petty rulers of Uí Enechglaiss in helping to extend the authority of Uí Dúnlainge into the coastal area east of the mountains, is the basis for the suggestion made in 4.2.2 that two ninth century Uí Enechglaiss abbots may represent the interests of their overlords.

It appears that the early tenth century political success of the Osraige kings, capitalising on the misfortunes of an Uí Dúnlainge dynasty already weakened by intensive Norse pressure, was paralleled in the ecclesiastical sphere as argued above. To begin with, the tenth century record includes several clerics whose names are particularly attested in Osraige genealogies, notably Abbot Flann ua hÁeduccáin during whose term of office an abbot of Saigir died on pilgrimage at Glendalough. More significance, however, might be attached to the record of one Dublitir mac Selbaig, *fer léiginn* of Glendalough, who was also abbot of Tech Moling. It is proposed in 4.3.1 that this individual, or at least the connection which he represented, may lie behind the curious claim in the *Vita S. Moling* that the latter saint ruled Glendalough. The probability that this Dublitir was a kinsman of Guaire mac Selbaig, who died as abbot of Dísert Diarmata in the *paruchia* of Glendalough, makes it all the more likely that they represented an intrusive interest. Indeed an interesting tenth century development which came to light in the course of this study, the record of a dual abbacy between Clonmacnois and Glendalough (perhaps the reality behind the story of the

Cóemgen/ Ciarán meeting in their respective Lives), may well have come about as a reaction to a prolonged intrusion of Osraige interests; an instance, perhaps, of Mc Cone's "Sletty syndrome" at work.

As observed above (5.1.1), there are indications in the record that Uí Muiredaig, parallel to a renewed dynastic ambition towards the overkingship of Leinster, had begun to establish a presence at Glendalough and at other ecclesiastical sites under its authority from the later tenth century onwards. At least two kings of the lineage die at the ecclesiastical settlement in the early eleventh century, while the adoption of the personal name Gilla Cóemgin would seem to suggest a Glendalough orientation. As appears from this study, however, events seem to have taken a decisive turn in 1031 with the violent intrusion of a dynastic candidate into the abbacy. The incumbent abbot was blinded by the reigning Uí Muiredaig king, and the next occupant of the office, Cináed mac Muiredaig, was apparently a member of that lineage. It seems likely, indeed, that the latter was a brother of Artúr mac Muiredaig abbot of Cluain Mór Máedóic, a foundation which subsequently features as a possession of Glendalough. Record of at least two concurrent abbacies within the *paruchia*, in conjunction with the various notices of dynastic activity at other related sites, helps to convey the impression of a coordinated initiative in relation to Glendalough and its dependencies.

If political ascendancy had marked the appearance of the first clearly recognisable Uí Muiredaig abbacy at Glendalough, the unscheduled eclipse of power that followed the battle of Mag Muilchet was paralleled by a decline in that lineage's ecclesiastical fortunes. The second half of the eleventh century witnessed the re-emergence of hereditary ecclesiastical families of Uí Máil and Uí Bairrche descent. It is suggested above that the latter group, which appears to have included the families of Ua Rónáin and more particularly Ua Mancháin, may have facilitated a link with the foundation of Glenn Uissen. Such a link could well lie behind the apparent transfer to Glendalough of the Rawlinson B 502

compilation, which Ó Riain in particular would identify with the lost *Leabur Glindi Dá Locha.*

The Ua Briain over-kings Toirdelbach and Muirchertach, who dominated Leinster in turn for some forty-five years from 1072, presumably exercised influence over Glendalough. The mother of Muirchertach died there on pilgrimage (noted above, 5.2.1) while the apparent inclusion of *Lebor na Cert* in the *Leabur Glindi Dá Locha* compilation may be another indicator. The appointment to the abbacy in 1106 of an Uí Muiredaig candidate Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail took place during the overlordship of Muirchertach Ua Briain and, as argued in this study, seems unlikely to have occurred without his permission. The kingship of Uí Muiredaig was at this time held by the rival line of Ua Lorcáin, which lent military support to Muirchertach, and it is distinctly possible that the abbacy was conceded to the Ua Tuathail line as compensation. It seems equally reasonable, indeed, that Ua Briain priorities should have lain behind the design of the diocese of Glendalough as outlined at the 1111 Synod of Ráith Bressail. The diocesan boundaries incorporated the kingdom of Dublin, which the Ua Briain kings had subdued, along with the territories of Uí Muiredaig.

If the cause of the re-emerging Ua Tuathail line was promoted by the rising Diarmait Mac Murchada in the 1130s, their relationship was clearly soured by the revolt of 1141 and its aftermath. An eventual reconciliation, cemented by the marriage of Mac Murchada c. 1152 to Mór, daughter of the Uí Muiredaig king Muirchertach Ua Tuathail almost certainly provided the context, as Roche and Flanagan have both contended, for the appointment to the abbacy of Lorcán Ua Tuathail, the future St. Laurence. The same convergence of dynastic interests would seem to have motivated the latter's promotion in 1162 to the archbishopric of Dublin. Notwithstanding his apparent support of another candidate at this time for the vacant abbacy at Glendalough, Diarmait Mac Murchada, as emerges from this study (5.2.2), ultimately acknowledged the appointment of Thomas, nephew of Lorcán, as abbot.

The evidence for learning, manuscript production and architectural enhancement at twelfth century Glendalough seems to testify to on-going royal patronage. There are indications, indeed, that the development of the site continued at least into the 1170s under the abbacy of Thomas. However, the dismantling of the kingship of Leinster by the English Administration, following the death of Diarmait Mac Murchada in 1171, and the dispossession of Uí Muiredaig seven years later left Abbot Thomas without secular political support. On the contrary, the apparent augmentation of Glendalough lands by Archbishop Lorcán at this precise time led Price to suggest, as noted earlier (5.2.3), that the abbot became the protector of the displaced remnant of Uí Muiredaig. Presumably, these were the "latrones" referred to in the testimony of Archbishop Felix Ua Ruadháin at the time of the diocesan union. This new role for Glendalough may well provide the context, as argued above, for the persistent struggle by Thomas to retain control of the abbatial possessions in the face of unyielding opposition from the combined forces of the Dublin archbishopric and the English Administration. A by-product of this mission to preserve the dignity of the fallen dynasts, and perhaps shelter them from the worst excesses of feudal dues, was the survival into the thirteenth century of the Glendalough abbacy, even after the forced union of the dioceses in 1216. It is appropriate, therefore, that the last recorded abbot should have been a certain Tadc Ua Tuathail, another Uí Muiredaig cleric (5.2.4).

7. 5 : The *Paruchia*

The recognition by Herbert and others of a marked overlap between the geographical distribution of certain *paruchiae* and the sphere of influence attained by patron-dynasties underlines the need for the study of paruchial extent "on the ground". In addition, the issues raised by Sharpe and more recently by Etchingham regarding the apparent survival of a territorial dimension

in so-called "monastic paruchiae", call for further reassessment of the character of the *paruchia*. On the basis of its already-noted rich heritage of source material, Glendalough appears to offer a worthwhile opportunity for exploration in these areas (6.1.1).

In this particular inquiry, the annals were clearly of limited assistance as a starting point. It was not their function to preserve lists of related ecclesiastical foundations, although they do record the obits of certain clerics whose origins or career-development can, in conjunction with other sources, suggest connections between one foundation and another. To obtain an overall picture, however, one must rely on the testimony provided by the corpus of hagiographical data, the multi-layered character of which poses methodological problems as outlined above. Allowing for these difficulties, it is argued in this study (above, 6.1.2) that the hagiographical sources, which for the most part are understood to date in their original forms to the late eighth or early ninth centuries, facilitate a reconstruction of the Glendalough *paruchia* as it may have been perhaps a century before that again.

The Litany of Irish Saints preserves a tract on the *familia Coemgeni* which, although it includes two or three individuals who would seem to have been historically associated with the community of Glendalough, is more likely to represent a catalogue of ecclesiastical settlements (personified by their patron saints) that were subject to the *comarba* of Cóemgen. A significant point to emerge from examination of the list is that several of its members are associated with the midlands, with northern and eastern Munster, or with east Ulster. There is a striking reflection here of the ambition of early historical Laigin overkings in Munster, of the survival of Laigin segments in the midlands (a heritage, perhaps, from an even earlier more extensive overkingdom) and of the relationship maintained with the ruling dynasties of the Ulstermen. It may also be noted that the annals record obits of several midland and east Munster abbots for the

seventh and eighth centuries who appear to be of Laigin, and in a couple of instances specifically Dál Messin Corb, origin.

The impression created by the Litany is generally confirmed by a tract in the genealogies (6.2.1, 6.2.3) which purports to record saints of Dál Messin Corb lineage. This tract, as Ó Briain many years ago recognised, is almost certainly a catalogue of foundations that were subject to Glendalough. Further incidental data is provided by notes or glosses in the martyrologies, although some of these may be of later date. The somewhat narrower focus of the *Vitae Sanctorum*, concerned more with foundations that were located within the bounds of the medieval province of Leinster, probably reflects the later re-working of these sources. Nonetheless, as observed above (6.2.4), the *Vita S. Coemgeni* seems to retain a faint echo of authority in Munster in the episode involving the young ladies of Cenél Dalláin, while the *Vita S. Monenna* preserves the story of a conflict between the foundress of Cell Sléibe and St. Cóemgen over the church of Glúnsalach in Dál nAraide.

If the Lives of the Saints emphasise the Leinster-centredness of the *paruchia Coemgeni*, it is only fair to point out that this dimension is very much present both in the Litany and in the Dál Messin Corb genealogical tract. There seems to be an inference, at the same time, of a gradual contraction; the paucity of reference in the Lives to places outside Leinster is emphasised all the more by the fact that the Sliab Fuait episode of *Vita S. Monenna* represents the loss of that possession to Cell Sléibe. Any such process of contraction, however, was apparently accompanied by consolidation. There are clear signs that other ecclesiastical settlements within Leinster were taken into the Glendalough federation, sometimes in spite of conflicting paruchial interests. A sequence of episodes in the *Vita S. Coemgeni*, which in the writer's view may represent an eleventh century layer, gives account of an apparent expansion into Fine Gall and of an alleged meeting at Uisnech between Cóemgen and Colum Cille, Comgall and Cainnech. A case is made above that the latter episode probably

reflects an acknowledgement (real or imagined) of the acquisition by Glendalough of properties formerly claimed by these other paruchiae.

The Laginocentric character of the charters is even more marked. They are, of course, products of the late twelfth century post-dating not only the period of initial diocesan reform but also the later Synod of Kells. Within a politico-ecclesiastical framework that was becoming increasingly territorialised, one might reasonably expect some overlap between church properties, diocesan boundaries and political divisions; nonetheless, one is struck by the close correspondence between the distribution of abbatial properties and the *mórtúath* of Uí Muiredaig (6.2.5). It might be added that traceable pre-Norman dedications to Glendalough saints, along with placenames and holy wells which admittedly may be of uncertain date, broadly complement this picture of a north-east Leinster distribution. Another factor to emerge strongly from the charters, despite the numerous indications of change, is the degree of continuity. It appears from the record of dedications to saints that apparently had no part in the earlier *familia Coemgeni* that a number of new acquisitions were made between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Nonetheless, the evident survival of foundations associated with such patrons as Daccán, Menóc, Mo Libbo and Mo Chonnóc, who are featured in the earliest Glendalough hagiography, testifies to a remarkable continuity.

7. 6 : Conclusion

The discipline of history, as emphasised above, is not a generalising science and it is perhaps unwise to maintain that conclusions which can be drawn from one particular inquiry should have general applicability in all comparable situations, especially over a long period of time. Moreover, it is clear that the scope of any single study effectively limits what can be learned from it. Constraints of this kind cannot be overlooked; yet reflection on the preceding

chapters prompts further comment on some issues which may have import for future inquiry in the field.

As available evidence would suggest that Christianity first became established in Ireland during the fifth century, it follows that the Irish Church interacted with a native polity (that in itself was constantly evolving) and sought to reconcile its administration with native dynastic interests for some seven centuries before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. Ideas and priorities change, as situations change, over time. It could, perhaps, be argued that notions of a static polity and of a constant relationship between church and ruler were responsible for generating the classical images of Irish ecclesiastical administration that recent scholarship has sought to reassess.

While integrated approaches to the sources have increasingly become accepted practice, it seems reasonable that, for the early period especially, the kind of immersion advocated by Ó Briain is required. However, it is essential to approach such a diverse corpus of material by stratifying the sources, taking account of redaction and accretion, and to accord priority to the witness of historical records over literary narratives and to written testimony over evidence derived from other disciplines. Application of this method to the political history of Leinster, with the dynastic connections and topographical detail of the genealogies as the main authority in this instance, results in a reconstruction of the early polity that is quite different from the familiar picture of the Classical period. The implication would seem to be that the Classical overkingdoms, discernible in contemporary sources from the late eighth century onwards, had taken shape only a short time before that. More to the point, the main expansion of the church in Ireland had taken place under the former polity. This scenario would have a particular relevance for the development of ecclesiastical administration in Ireland.

In regard to this study, a picture emerges of a Laigin overlordship which seems to have extended into parts of the south midlands and into north and east

Munster as late as the seventh century. The Laigin rulers maintained strong contacts with dynasties in east Ulster and in northern Britain. This forms the political context for the foundation of the original Glendalough community and for the early expansion of the *familia Coemgeni*. It also helps to explain the diffusion of the cult of Cóemgen beyond the realms of the Laigin, while at the same time, saints' cults from Ulster and from Britain were received into Leinster.

In recent years, the socio-economic considerations which appear to have motivated dynastic intrusion at ecclesiastical settlements have been investigated at length. Nonetheless, the focus on Glendalough in this study reveals a protracted sequence of interventions by ambitious dynasties, as they succeeded in turn to the paramount kingship within the province. It seems that Glendalough had come under the control of the Uí Máil kings by the early eighth century. Subsequently, by the end of the eighth century (or, at the latest, by the opening years of the ninth) the dynasty of Uí Dúnlainge succeeded in bringing the site under their sway. The pretensions of these dynasties in relation to Glendalough are clearly reflected in the *Vita S. Coemgeni* which, in the writer's view, suggests that a version of the Life was produced c.800. This, indeed, is the period to which Sharpe would assign the production of the general corpus of Latin Saints' Lives. It may be noted, however, that the *Vita S. Moling* expressly advances a claim to supremacy at Glendalough. This seems to correspond with an historical reality of the tenth century, when the intrusive Osraige rulers aspired to overkingship of Leinster. According to Sharpe the original Life of Moling, like the rest of the collection, was probably an early ninth century product. In that event, the claim levied against Glendalough may represent an instance (several of which are examined in the course of this study) of the kind of "intermediate redaction" the existence of which Sharpe would deny. Unwelcome attentions from West Leinster politico-ecclesiastical interests may well have inspired, the writer would argue, the *óentad* between Glendalough and Clonmacnois which is clearly reflected in the record for the tenth and eleventh centuries.

For the post-Clontarf period, when sources become more detailed, the circumstances in which dynastic interests were asserted at the site can be examined. In the case of Uí Muiredaig, which secured control of the abbacy at Glendalough and perhaps at other foundations within the *paruchia*, it is possible to chart in the annals the endeavours made by the lineage in the context of its campaign to achieve overkingship. From the record, the impression which emerges is that of a co-ordinated initiative to dominate Glendalough and its dependencies in conjunction with a bid for provincial dominance. Ultimately defeated in the provincial power-struggle, Uí Muiredaig would later feature in the Glendalough abbacy, but probably due in these later instances to the favour or patronage of over-lords. The final phase of the abbacy, which apparently lasted somewhat longer than was previously realised (at least until 1228, as the writer indicates), is characterised by a struggle to preserve the remaining abbatial possessions against Anglo-Norman encroachment perhaps in an effort to shield the remnants of the Uí Muiredaig dynasty.

Another, and indeed no less significant, dimension to this study is the opportunity it provides for further reassessment of the apparently scattered and non-territorial "monastic paruchia", especially in the form proposed by Hughes. An apparent overlap between dynastic and paruchial ambition was noted by Mc Cone in the case of Kildare, and more recently explored by Herbert in relation to the *paruchia Colum Cille*. At various stages throughout this period, images of the Glendalough *paruchia* (almost certainly incomplete) can be traced in early hagiographical sources and in later charters, supplemented by the evidence of placenames and dedications. The overall impression is of a distribution which is thin at the periphery and more dense within the heartland of Leinster, towards which the focus appears to shift in the course of time. The apparent overlap between the early distribution of foundations associated with Glendalough and the scatter of Laigin segments represented in the genealogies is quite remarkable. The level of geographical correspondence would seem to suggest that the

paruchia expanded within areas which, if they did not still form part of the Laigin overkingdom in the seventh century, retained a strong residual Laigin influence. The abbatial possessions of later times, as observed above, appear to reflect the *mórtúath* of Uí Muiredaig.

In view of the argument of Etchingham which, based on canon law of the eighth century, raises the issue of a territorial dimension in paruchial organisation, some important questions still remain. It is clear from the work of Doherty in particular, as discussed above, that ecclesiastical settlements included lands and tenantry. On that account, one might presume that the caput of a *paruchia* controlled the extended community and properties of its subject foundations. Beyond that, the case for authority over wider population groups is less clear-cut. One recalls, however, the claim made for Glendalough in relation to Araide; account should perhaps also be taken of concentrations of *familia Coemgeni* dedications in specific areas such as Araide and Fer Tulach and of the genealogical traditions which would link population groups in these regions to the Laigin. Conclusive evidence for a territorially delimited *paruchia* may, therefore, be wanting. Indeed, the extent to which *túatha* or overkingdoms had become territorialised prior to, perhaps, the eleventh century is open to debate. Nonetheless, as highlighted here, there are strong indications that the paruchia may have had a territorial, or at least a dynastic, dimension. Numerous problems, of course, remain. It seems clear that *paruchiae* were not territorially exclusive. Even if one accepts that the Glendalough and Kildare *paruchiae* within Leinster both represent the political interests of the same dynastic group (that of Uí Dúnlainge) from the late eighth century onwards, it is evident that other, at times conflicting, interests remain. One need only mention the *familia Moling*, or the Uí Chennselaig-dominated foundation of Ferns both of which extended their politico-ecclesiastical interests into northern Leinster. There is also the issue of sáer, or unfederated, foundations. Presumably, like overkingships, *paruchiae* did not remain static, but shifted and were re-aligned. It may be reasonable to

suggest that the present study, in conjunction with the on-going re-assessment of recent decades, has managed to advance inquiry into Church and polity in pre-Norman Ireland some distance along the way. It is equally clear, however, that a great deal more remains to be done.

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Appendix 1: The Genealogical Tradition of Dál Messin Corb

The most familiar genealogical tradition relating to Dál Messin Corb, the dynasty with which Cóemgen and so many of the other Glendalough saints were associated, is that which represents the eponymous Mess Corb as a son of Cú Corb (above, Fig. 2B). The Dál Messin Corb lineages are therefore traced to an alleged brother of Nia Corb from whom, through Cathaír Már, all the free dynasties of the Laigin are descended.[1] The Leinster genealogical schema arising from this particular contrivance finds a close parallel in the poem *Timna Cathaír Máir* which, as argued above (2.1.1), seems to isolate Dál Messin Corb and so probably forms part of a framework worked out towards the latter end of the eighth century in the interests of Uí Dúnlainge, the new political masters.

The persistence of vague, and at times confused, alternative traditions regarding the origin of Dál Messin Corb raises the distinct possibility that recasting of the dynasty's official genealogy took place. Traces of genealogical *senchas* survive, which hint at Munster origin; tracts on the Corco Loígde and the Calraige attempt to associate Dál Messin Corb, through an alleged ancestor called Lugaid Corb, with their own dynastic group of Síl Lugdach Meic Itha. However, as indicated earlier (above, 2.1.2), the account has all the hallmarks of an artificial construct, with contradictory versions giving different numbers of brothers all of whom are conveniently named Lugaid.[2] Such efforts at establishing a Munster ancestry for Dál Messin Corb do not seem to have been taken too seriously by the pre-Norman genealogists; certainly, an attempt to link the dynasty to Clann Ebir, alongside the Ciannachta, Delbna and Déissi was given little credence by the compilers, who qualified these particular claims with

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[1] Rawl. B. 502, 118 b; LL 311b, 312 a; *Corpus*, p. 24-5; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1331-2.

[2] Compare the versions in Rawl B 502, 143 a 44, 47; 155 a 8; and BB 196 e 11; see above, p. 80, nn. 34, 35.

'ut alii aiunt' and 'ut quidam putant'.[3] It seems reasonable that such traditions should reflect confused memories of a former Leinster overlordship of these Munster territories, associated with the ascendancy of the line of Mes Corb (above, 2.1.2). A similar explanation may in fact lie behind the apparent absorption of elements of Laigin tradition into the Déissi genealogies. The pedigree of the rulers of Déissi Muman features a certain Mes Corb son of Mes Gegra.[4]

Another tradition, accorded less focus in the genealogical compilations, but which may in fact be worthy of more attention, is that highlighted by Smyth which traces the Uí Garrchon lineage of Dál Messin Corb through Eochu Inmete to Nuadu Necht (see Fig. 8A), an alleged brother of Mes Delmonn.[5] As observed many years ago by Dobbs, the name-element Mess seems to be particularly associated with the ruling lineage of the proto-historic Domnainn; Mes Delmonn is credited with four sons including Mes Domnann, Mes Dana, Mes Roída and Mes Gegra.[6] In this connection, it is probably significant that another, albeit minor, Domnainn lineage was apparently featured among the allies of Dál Messin Corb in the historical period. A ruler of the petty lordship of Cenél Uchae, which was located around Fid Cuilinn (By. Connell, Co Kildare) and derived its name from Óengus Ucha, another alleged brother of Mess Delmonn, was slain in *Bellum Righe* of 781 along with Uí Garrchon king Cú Congalt.[7] Given the likelihood,

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[3] Rawl B 502 147b 27; LL 319b 50; *Corpus*, p.191; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p.1374.

[4] Genelach na nDési, LL 327g 16, has Art Corp mac Mes Gegra mac Cuirp; cf Lec. and BB variants insert Art Corb mac Misi Cuirb mac Misi Geadra; *Corpus*, p. 394; S. Pender (ed), *Déissi Genealogies*, p. 3.

[5] Rawl B 502, 118b 24; *Corpus*, p. 24; LL 311c 45, *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1331; A.P. Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 18; see above, p. 68-9, n. 4.

[6] LL 311b 30; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1329; M. C. Dobbs. "The Prefix *Mess*", 147-9; see above, p. 44, n. 144.

[7] Rawl B. 502 118a 38, 41, assigns a Domnainn origin to Cenél Uchae; the location of its lordship and its role in the Battle of the Rye is discussed above (2.2.1, esp. p. 109, n. 123); the ruler of

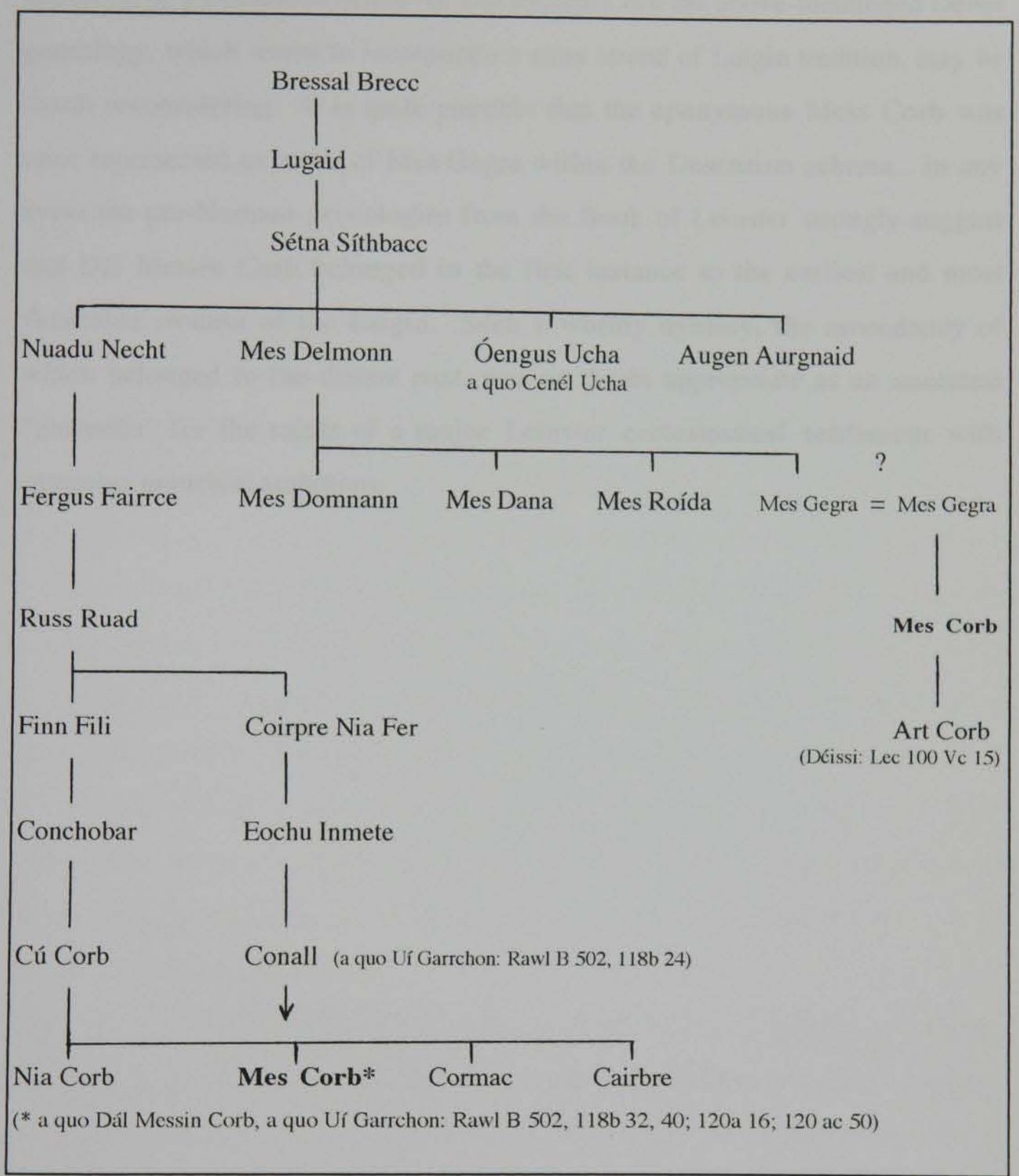


Fig. 8A : Domnainn and Dál Messin Corb - LL 311b 20, 311c 40 + supplements

Cenél Uchae on this occasion is Fergal mac Ailella, probably the individual whose line is traced to Uí Manchíni of Uí Dúnlainge; LL 316 b 20; *Corpus*, p. 341.

therefore, of a Domnainn origin for Dál Messin Corb the above-mentioned Déissi genealogy, which seems to incorporate a stray strand of Laigin tradition, may be worth reconsidering. It is quite possible that the eponymous Mess Corb was once represented as a son of Mes Gegra within the Domnainn schema. In any event the pre-Norman genealogies from the Book of Leinster strongly suggest that Dál Messin Corb belonged in the first instance to the earliest and most venerable stratum of the Laigin. Such a worthy dynasty, the ascendancy of which belonged to the distant past, was no doubt appropriate as an ancestral "umbrella" for the saints of a major Leinster ecclesiastical settlement with extensive paruchial ambitions.

Appendix 2: Faithche in an Ecclesiastical Context

It is suggested above (p. 235, esp. n. 32) that the soubriquet accorded to Uí Muiredaig dynast Gilla Cóemgin *na Faitche* mac Gilla Comgaill, slain by Muchad son of Diarmait mac Maíl na mbó in 1056, may have ecclesiastical associations. As explained by Kelly, the *faithche* features in several Old Irish law tracts (of perhaps eighth century date), in clearly secular contexts. Commonly, it is a green area around a typical farmhouse, or a yard attached to a house; in *Di Chetharslicht Athgabála*, the *faithche* may be used as a pound in which to distrain property against a defendant; in *Din Techtugad*, a *féich faithche* or trespass fine is imposed on a vagrant who fails to pay for or secure judgement for the land he occupies. From the *Bechbretha*, it appears that bees may be kept in the faitche adjacent to a house, and theft from there is more serious than from an outlying field.[8] The same law-tract, in setting down the entitlement of one who finds a stray swarm of bees on a lawful green, defines the extent of that green: 'is sí ind faithche théchtae la Féniu ní ro-saig guth cluicc nó gairm cailig cercc'. The editors observe that 'guth cluicc' is suggestive of a monastic environment and, while such a definition is not found elsewhere in the text of the laws, it is repeated in a commentary.[9]

From the eighth century onwards, however, Irish hagiography and canon law refer to the *platea* as courtyard area in which the faithful took part in formal religious ceremonies; the term occurs at least twice in the Life of St. Colum Cille.[10] It was the second most holy area of an ecclesiastical site, and only lay people of

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[8] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988), p. 178, 188; Ibid., p. 147.

[9] Thomas Charles-Edwards and Fergus Kelly (eds), *Bechbretha*, Early Irish Law Series, I (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), p. 82-3, 154-5; the editors point to a commentary in *Corpus Iuris Hiberniae*, 57. 18, 1753. 11.

[10] *Vita S. Columbae*, I, § 50; III, § 6, p. 90, 190; Aidan Mac Donald, "Aspects of the Monastery and Monastic Life in Adomnán's Life of Columba", *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 291-2, 295-6.

good reputation were allowed to enter it. The ninth century Cormac's Glossary equates *platea* with the the Irish *faithche* and, as Herity points out, a corresponding feature may be discerned adjacent to the principal church at a great many ecclesiastical settlements.[11] In the light of the above, it may be noted that at least two location names featuring the term *faithche* in a clearly ecclesiastical context occur in the Sheading of Ayre, Isle of Man.[12]

On the grounds, therefore, that *faithche* was well attested in ecclesiastical usage, it is possible that the individual whose soubriquet is of concern here may indeed have had some ecclesiastical role; especially in view of the connection his lineage had with Glendalough.

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[11] M. Herity, "Layout of Irish Early Christian Monasteries", p. 109; see also L. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints*, p. 76.

[12] P.M.C. Kermode, ed. *Manx Archaeological Survey*, III, p. 13, 31, notes Faaie ny Cabbal (Tr. Carmodal, Par. Ballaugh) and Faaie Cabblagh (Tr. Cranstal, Par. Kirk Bride).

Appendix 3: Glendalough, Co. Waterford

Glendalough in the Parish of St. Mary's, Barony of Glenahiery, Co. Waterford, represents the only other recorded instance of that placename in Ireland, which might lead one to expect an association with the north Leinster ecclesiastical settlement. There are, however, several factors which cast doubt on any such association; there are marked uncertainties in relation to the topography and historical tradition of the area. The modern Irish version of the placename is the rather improbable Gleann dá Lachan, although Power considers that the original was probably Gleann dá Loch.[13] There is no local memory of lakes there, but the river flowing through the valley forms two confluences, each of which occurs in a hollow. It is distinctly possible that two small lakes existed in former times, before the level of the water table became lowered.

While there is no church remains, there are two depressions near the lower confluence known as Com na Leacht and Com Faoláin.[14] The first is probably a burial ground, the second is perhaps a commemoration of Fáelán, an Uí Máil saint with Glendalough associations (above, 4.2.1). As noted earlier, Kilmacumma in the adjacent parish is possibly a dedication to Mo Chonnóc; it is certainly clear, as outlined above, that the *paruchia Coemgeni* had close associations with Munster. It will also be recalled that various Laigin segments can be located particularly in the east of that province, extending in a chain down to the modern county of Waterford.

The territory in which this Glendalough is located is that of Uí Fothaid a dynasty which, as noted earlier (above, p. 82), is accorded a Dál Messin Corb origin by the genealogists. In the light of this circumstance, it may be noted that a

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[13] P. Power, "Placenames of the Decies: Barony of Glenahiery", *Jnl. Waterford and Sth East Arch. Soc.*, 10 no. 4 (1907), 280-1.

[14] Ibid.

gravestone inscription which formerly existed at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, was read as: 'Ór do Muircher h U Chathala i do Thigerna U Foſ'. Smyth suggested that it may have commemorated a ruler of Uí Fógartaigh, although he could not explain why a member of an Ele dynasty should have been buried at Glendalough.[15] However, the pedigree of Uí Fothaid includes a Cathalán whose floruit would probably have been in the early tenth century.[16] If the dynast commemorated in the inscription represents a descendant of the latter, an historical connection between the pseudo-Dál Messin Corb Uí Fothaid and the "real" Glendalough may have prompted a deliberate echoing of Cóemgen's foundation in this remote east Munster valley.

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[15] A.P. Smyth, Celtic Leinster, p. 53.

[16] Rawl B 502, 156 a 5; LL 325 d 58; *Corpus*, p. 266; *Bk Leinster*, VI, p. 1410.

Appendix 4 : Glendalough Charters

4A : Charter of Confirmation to Abbot Thomas

Cr. M. xliv, f. 89b-90; A.R. I, f. 21b; II, f. 92.

Sciant presentes et futuri quod ego Ricardus, comes, vices regis Anglie in Hibernia agens, omnibus [sic] dedi et concessi et hac mea carta presenti confirmavi Thome clerico meo dilecto et speciali, abbatiam et personatum de Glindelacha, integre cum omnibus suis pertiniciis et terris et dignitatibus in ipsa civitate, et in omnibus eccleliis et villis ejus extra civitatem in perpetuam elemosinam.

Hec sunt terre que pertinent jure antiquo ad predictam abbatiam, scilicet Fertir et Magmersa et Umail cum omnibus suis pertinenciis circa ipsam civitatem;

Et in terra de Wykinglo: Celmolibbo, Credmochae, Glennfadli, Rubastolage, Achad-caracane, Inbernaeli, Cullenn, Cellbrittonn, Cellmaccubuadan, Baccnaseri, Cnocloignsechane; et in terra de Arclo: Ballivmeill, Carrac-cochaill, Cellbicsigi, Cellmodicu, Cellfinmaigi, Cellimpodi, Cellcassaille, Chriachane, Cennturc, Achadcruachane; in terra de Uuceinnselaige: Cellached;

in terra de M'Dalbaig: Techimbeochaire; in terra de Umurethaige: dimidiam partem de Umaill scilicet Lessnahuinnsenn cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Cellnamanache, Balitarsna, Domnachmore, Muinsuli hicotlud, dimidiam partem de Locheleig, Raffann, Ardm'crebane, Cluaindarcada; in terra de Ufelann: Balivcutlane, Dundaemane, Raithedagain, Lathracheuabroon, Cellchemilli, Tegmochua in arusna; et in terra de Macgillamochalmoc: Tegdologga, Celladgair, Glennmuneri, Deirgni, Cellmaccabuirinn, Cellmomothenoc [sic], et villa de Udunetha, Cellescoibsilleain, Balliuodrain; et ex altera parte montium: Dunbuoci, Elpi, Ardmeicbrein, Balilommann, Cellbelat, Achadbudi, Dunarde, Balimenaig, Cellchuachi, Rathsallache, Dunmeillobain, Ballivmail, Topor, Bali ingini brain, Cellfreime, Balivnennendig, Cellinvlugair; omnia terra de Umeilgille,

Balivdaldehinsa, Balivmelain, Balliulaccuane, Baliudaluig, Cellboedain, Cellugarrconn.

Quare volo et firmiter precipio quatinus predictus abbas habeat prenominatas terras integre et libere et honorifice in terra, in mari, in bosco, in plano, in aquis, in molendinis, in piscaturis, in pascuis, in pratis, in silvis, in venationibus, in foro et elemosinis et oblationibus et suam curiam et justiciam de omnibus pertinentibus ad predictam abbatiam et sine tributo et judicio et hospitatu et omni servicio laicali persone sicut mihi in verbo veritatis Diarmicius Rex testatus est.

Testibus: L[aurentio] Archiepiscopo Dublinensis; Eva Cometissa; Rand Constabulo; Roberto de Brumarde; Waltero de Ridell[sford]; Meilero filio Henrici; Johannis de Clohall; Adam de Hereff[ord]; et Domnall M Gellmochomoc [sic]; et Nicolo clerico qui hanc cartam sigillabit.

4B : Charter of Confirmation to Bishop Máel Calainn [Malchus]

Cr. M. iii, f. 81, 81b; A.R. I, f. 1b; II, f. 48.

Alexander Episcopus, servus servorum Dei, venerabili fratri Malcho, Glendalachensi episcopo ejusque successoribus canonice substituendis in perpetuum. In eminenti Apostilice Sedis specula disponente Domino, constituti fratres et coepisciops nostros tam vicinos quam longe positos fraterna debemus caritate diligere, et ecclesiis sibi a Deo commissis paterna sollicitudine providere. Eapropter, venerabilis in Christo frater episcope tuis justis postulationibus clementer annuimus et Glendalachensem ecclesiam cui auctore Deo, preesse dinosceris, sub Beati Petri et nostra protectione suscipimus et presentis scripti privilegio communimus. Statuentes ut quascunque possessiones quecunque bona eadem ecclesia in presentiarum juste et canonice possidet aut in futurum concessione Pontificum, largitione regum vel principium, oblatione fidelium, seu aliis justis modis, prestante Domino, poterit adipisci, firma tibi tuisque successoribus et illibata permaneant. In quibus hec propriis duximus exprimenda vocabulis:

Ipsam Glendalachensem civitatem, in qua cathedralis sedes est, cum ecclesiis et aliis pertinenciis suis. Salvo jure abbatis ipsius Glendalachensis ecclesie, cum territorio suo, a Dulgen usque Tegfledi, [a] Oathcarr usque ad Hundchenn; continue, Disserdiarmada cum suis pertinenciis, Cenneche, Mugnam cum suis pertinenciis, Riban cum suis pertinenciis, Cluaindaanuair, Cluandatrata, Maen cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Foracha ecclesiam, Cellculind cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Donaghmorunatechda, Domnachimcleche cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Tehcheli cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Cellusailli ecclesiam, Techtua cum omnibus pertinenciis suis, Lachrachbriuin cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Techcumni cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Letconfi cum omnibus pertinenciis suis, grangias Geallincemg[in], Cellgnoe, Cellepscupedain, Athincip, Senchel, Baliurodrach, Ballenfuid, Thehugonaill, Achacloinmalechain, Crinan, Desert

Cellaig cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Inisboethen cum omnibus suis pertinenciis, Lecppadric cum suis pertinenciis, Cellmantan, Cellochtair, Cellusquedi ecclesiam, Cellpichi ecclesiam, Inverdeli cum pertinenciis suis, Cellcassil ecclesiam, Cellbicsigi ecclesiam, Domnachrignagi, Celltamlacha, Cellfiunnagi, Cellgormayne, Inismocholmoc cum omnibus pertinenciis suis, Celltagain, Lath Cluanamor Moedoc, et Domnachmor Umaill ecclesia.

Decernimus ergo, ut nulli omnino hominum fas sit prefatam ecclesiam temere perturbare aut ejus possessiones auferre, vel ablatas retinere, minuere seu quibuslibet vexationibus fatigare, sed omnia integra conserventur eorum pro quorum gubernatione et sustentatione concessa sunt usibus omnimodis profutura. Salva Sedis Apostolice auctoritate et Dublinensis archiepiscopi debita reverentia. Siqua igitur in futurum ecclesiastica secularisve persona hanc nostre constitutionis paginam sciens contra eam temere venire temptaverit, secundo terciove commonita, nisi reatum suum digna satisfactione corexerit, protestatis honorisque sui dignitate careat, reamque se Divino judicio existere de perpetrata iniquitate cognoscat et a Sacratissimo Corpore ac Sanguine Dei et Domini Redemptoris nostri, Jesu Christi, aliena fiat, atque in extremo examine Divine ultioni subjaceat.

Cunctis autem eidem loco sua jura servantibus sit pax Domini Nostri, Jesu Christi, quatinus et hic fructum bone actionis percipiant, et apud districtum Judicem premia eterne pacis inveniant. Amen.

Datum Laterani, per manum Alberti, Sancte Romane Ecclesie presbiteri cardinalis et cancellarii, iii Idus Maii, Indictione xii, Incarnationis Dominice anno Mclxxviiii, Pontificatus vero Domini Alexandri Pape iii. anno xx.

4C : Charter of transaction from Abbot Tadc to Archbishop Luke.

A.R. II, f. 455.

Certu[m] sit presentibus et absentibus Abbat[em] Glindelacen[sem] Tadeum Otothyll concensu cleri[corum] pop[u]lique quandam villam nomine Killmacabyrn liberam salutamque omni heridate ac tributo dedisse ad deservien[dum] Archiep[iscop]o Lucas; Celuloque Deserti , hac condicione ut cella sit sub D[o]m[in]o Archiepi[iscopi].

et cetera.

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