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Towards a Relative Chronology of The Milesian Genealogical Scheme

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures

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ABSTRACT

As a result of Christianization, the Irish of the early historical period found a need to locate the history of their own people within that of the Bible. The result of their efforts is a body of what is termed 'pesudohistorical' doctrine. An integral aspect of this project was the creation of a genealogical framework meant to explain the origins and genetic relationships between the various peoples of Ireland. According to this framework, the free peoples of Ireland descended from a set of legendary ancestors collectively known as 'the sons of Míl' (*meic Míled*). The complex web of relationships by which the various peoples of Ireland were held to be connected to one another can be termed the Milesian genealogical scheme, and it underwent significant changes and reformulations. The genealogical relationships described by the scheme should not be understood as expressing actual genetic relationships, but rather as descriptions of political relationships at the time they were written coded by the familial and social relationships of legendary ancestors. Since legitimacy to rule was overtly based upon one's putative ancestry, a small industry of genealogists and propagandists fabricated the appropriate pedigrees and origin legends for their patrons.

This study attempts to discern the broad trends of the changes under which the scheme went and finds that the critical period for the scheme's development was c. 650, when Isidorian texts were transmitted to Ireland, to c. 750, by which point we have evidence of the early compilation of the genealogical corpus. Traces of the pre-Isidorian organization of the scheme are also identified.

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Abbreviations

AFM	Annals of the Four Masters
AU	Annals of Ulster
BB	The Book of Ballymote
CGH	Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae
CMM	Cath Maige Mucrama
CnG	Comúamm na nGenelach
DFU	De Forslointib Ulad Íar Coitchiund
LGE	Lebor Gabála Érenn
MSE	Mínigud Senchais Ébir
GEC	Genelach Éoganachta Caissil
GC	Geneamuin Chormaic
GCL	Genelach Corca Laidhe
GO	Genelach Osrithe
GRM	Item de Genelogiis Regum Muminensium
Laud.	Laud Misc. 610
Lec.	The Great Book of Lecan
LL	The Book of Leinster
LU	Lebor na hUidre
MCC	Mínigud na Cróeb Coibnesta
Rawl.	Rawlinson B 502
SEC	Scéla Éogain ⁊ Cormaic
SSI	Senchas Síl nÍr

I. Introduction

The arrival of Christianity to Ireland brought not only a new faith to the Irish but also a new awareness of the outside world from their greatly expanded access to Classical and ecclesiastical sources of literature, history, and cosmology. Although it is clear that some cultural interchange between the Irish and their Roman(ized) neighbors must have existed before the general conversion of the country,[1] there is no direct evidence, as yet, that Latin literature, secular or ecclesiastical, was known or circulated in prehistoric Ireland. It would be difficult, therefore, to overstate how revolutionary this rapid expansion of access to foreign learning must have been. This new learning would have radically altered the Irish perception of their place in the world and their relationship to the other peoples of the world. A problem must have soon become apparent, however. Even if the scholars of the early Christian period had had access to a greater number of Classical and ecclesiastical historical sources than they likely had, they would have found little more than a few scattered references to their country and even less concerning their history or origins. It is easy to imagine that these scholars, while learning Biblical, Roman, and Greek history, found themselves wondering "how do we fit into all of this? Where were my ancestors during the fall of Troy, the Egyptian captivity, or Caesar's time as dictator?" Perhaps the most important of these questions was "if all mankind is descended from Adam and Eve, then how do the Irish relate to the other peoples of the world?" Not content to leave these questions unanswered, regardless of the silence of their recently acquired literary sources, Irish scholars began a centuries-long project of attempting to synchronize indigenous historical material with the canonical history of the church and Mediterranean civilization. The result of this attempt at finding the place of the ancestors of the

[1]There is, for example, a general consensus that the inventors of *ogam*, the epigraphic alphabet which was apparently created in order to inscribe Primitive Irish, had a knowledge of not only the Latin alphabet but probably also of Latin grammatical didactic practices of Late Antiquity (Damian MacManus, *A Guide to Ogam*, Maynooth Monographs 4 (Maynooth: An Sagart), 1991, 19–36).

Irish in foreign historical tradition is typically termed 'synthetic history' or 'pseudohistory' and is generally composed of a blend of (possibly) pre-Christian, Biblical and Late Classical histories, and a truly marvelous amount of inventiveness.

An indispensable component of the pseudohistorical project was the development of an elaborate genealogical scheme by which the various Irish population groups, their ruling families in particular, were linked to one another. Though the means of relating these various groups are putatively genetic, they are in fact coded descriptions of power hierarchies and alliances amongst these groups. Various ruling dynasties in close alliance with one another, the Uí Néill in the north and the Éoganachta in the south most notably, were provided with a common ancestor regardless of whether or not they actually bore any actual genetic relationship to one another. Descent from certain ancestral figures indicated the relative status of the population group in question. Powerful peoples and dynasties were provided with prestigious lines of descent from legendary provincial kings or high-kings of Ireland. Less powerful peoples, on the other hand, were correspondingly furnished with less important ancestral figures. Because the political relationships coded by these putative genealogical connections were constantly in flux, the scheme had to be adjusted frequently so as to provide newly ascendant dynasties/population groups with prestigious ancestors befitting their elevation in status. This dissertation is intended to be a first step towards a holistic account of the development of the Irish genealogical scheme. Relevant data are to be found in virtually every genre of medieval Irish literature and so, to keep the size of this investigation manageable, the investigation has focused primarily upon the pre-Norman genealogical corpus with other, relevant sources consulted to corroborate the observations and conclusions made herein.

I.A. Irish Pseudohistory and the Milesian Scheme

The pseudohistorical texts cover the entire range of human history as it was then understood, i.e. all the way back to the Garden of Eden; and, gradually, an account of the settling of Ireland by several waves of immigrants was developed. The genealogical framework constructed to accommodate the latest arrivals, the Gaels, who were termed *meic Míled* ('[the] sons of Míl'), is the subject of this inquiry. *Lebor Gabála Érenn* – literally 'Book of the Taking of Ireland,' but more generally known in English as 'The Book of Invasions;' hereafter LGE[2] – is the earliest extant source in which the totality of the synthetic history of Ireland is compiled. LGE was probably first assembled in the eleventh century – although many of its constituent tracts can be shown to have been first composed some time earlier – and served as a major touchstone for the early portions of later Irish pseudohistorical documents, particularly such sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works as Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (literally 'Foundation of Knowledge Concerning Ireland,' but usually known in English as '(Keating's) History of Ireland') and *Annála na gCeithre Máistrí* ('The Annals of the Four Masters'; hereafter AFM) also known in Irish as *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann* ('The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland').

The main 'narrative' of LGE is concerned with a number of successive settlements in Ireland. The four main recensions do not all agree on the number and exact nature of these settlements, so the summary of LGE which follows is not necessarily accurate for all extant versions. The later

[2] R.A.S. Macalister (ed. & tr.), *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, 5 vols. Irish Texts Society 34, 35, 39, 41, 44 (Dublin: ITS, 1938–56). As has been noted by Mark Scowcroft, the title *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, despite being employed generally by scholars to refer to this work, is of uncertain and probably late date. The earliest reference to the text, found in *Sanas Cormaic* refers to it as *Gabála Érenn* ('The Seizings of Ireland') (Kuno Meyer (ed.), "Sanas Cormaic," *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 4, ed. Osborn Bergin et al. (Halle, 1912), §1265). It is named *Leabar Gabála Glind da Locha* in a scribal colophon heading the Rawlinson B 512 redaction of the text. The title popularized by Macalister in his edition of the text is nowhere used as a title for the text, at least in the Middle Irish form which he adopts (Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I: the Growth of the Text," in *Ériu* 38 (1987), 99–101). Nevertheless, I will refer to the text as LGE rather than LG, as Scowcroft does, as that is how the text is usually abbreviated. When referencing Macalister's edition, I will cite it as LGE followed by the volume number in Roman numerals.

invasions, however, i.e. the ones relevant to the present inquiry, are in more or less full accord across all remaining versions. The first two invasions, the first led by a woman named Cessair and the second by a man named Partholón, do not furnish the putative ancestors of any medieval Irish populations group. However, the tradition holds that there was a single survivor from one or both of these settlements, Fintan mac Bóchra and Túan mac Cairill respectively, who underwent many reincarnations during which they witnessed the whole of Ireland's settled history until finally they relayed their knowledge to the learned men of the historical period. After a period of abandonment, Ireland was resettled by a group of Scythians led by their prince, Nemed mac Agnomain. The settlement of Nemed's people was successful at first, but his people suffered two terrible calamities: first a terrible plague struck in which Nemed himself died and shortly thereafter the Fomoiri, a mythical race of monstrous raiders who perpetually ravaged the inhabitants of Ireland, imposed a massive levy of two-thirds of the Nemedians' total corn, milk, and children. Inevitably, Nemed's people rose up against this usurious imposition, and the rebellion culminated in a cataclysmic battle which resulted in the Fomoiri and all the race of Nemed, save a single ship of the latter's survivors, being drowned. Eventually, some of these survivors arrived in Greece where they were enslaved. (Pseudo-)history then repeats itself as these survivors rise up against their bondage and escape by floating away in bags of skin, eventually returning to the land of their forefathers where they became known as the Fir Bolg.[3] The control of Ireland by the Fir Bolg was also short lived, being cut short by the arrival of the Túatha Dé (Danann), a powerful race of sorcerers who had learned magic in the far north of the world and who were also descended from the survivors of Nemed's race. At first,

[3] The apparent meaning of this appellation is 'men of bags.' Within Irish tradition several possible origins of the name are presented: *Fir Bolc imorro do rada riu o na bolcaig criad no cuirsead for na lecaib loma*….*No Fir Bolc do rada riu dia fuaridar crich urchoideach sa Greic o rig Grec, lan do piastaib neme, co roba caemna doronsat for na piastaib, uir Erenn do tharrad leo i mbolcaib: co mbo Fir Bolc iad o na bolcaib uiri rucsad leo na curchaib* ("Now they were called Fir Bolg from the bags of clay which they used to place upon the bare rock-flags….or they were called Fir Bolg because they obtained a noisome territory in Greece from the King of the Greeks, full of venomous reptiles, and the protection against the reptiles which they made was to carry with them clay of Ireland in bags: so that they were Fir Bolg, from the bags of clay which they carried with them in their canoes" (R.A.S. Macalister, LGE III, 146, 147)). Scholarly views of the matter will be discussed presently.

the Túatha Dé proposed a division of Ireland between themselves and their distant cousins, but the Fir Bolg kings refused. The matter was settled at the First Battle of Moytura (*Cath Maige Tuired*) in which the Fir Bolg were defeated and sent to live across the Shannon in Connacht. Like Nemed's people, the Túatha Dé were said to have been oppressed by the Fomoiri following the abdication of Núadu Argetlám from the kingship and the accession of Bres, a beautiful half-Fomorian youth who became a tyrannical ruler. Fed up with his capricious despotism, the Túatha Dé eventually rebelled against Bres and his Fomoiri kinsmen and prevailed at The Second Battle of Moytura.[4]

The Túatha Dé retained possession of Ireland for some time following these events until the arrival of the *Goídil* (Gaels), i.e. 'The Sons of Míl' (*meic Míled*). The various versions tell the same general story: the Gaels were descended from a group of Scythians who had taken up residence in Egypt during the Biblical Captivity but who were expelled from the country at roughly the same time as the Exodus. Following the Exodus, these proto-Gaels accompanied the Israelites for a time until they eventually set off on their own wanderings before finally conquering and settling in Spain. Bregan, a descendant of their eponymous leader, Gáedel Glas, constructed a massive tower in Brigantia, now A Coruña in Galicia.[5] From this tower, Bregan (or his son Íth according to some accounts) espied Ireland on an exceptionally clear day. Íth then leads an expedition to Ireland but is quickly slain by the kings of the Túatha Dé after his arrival. Íth's family is understandably upset by his murder and another expedition to Ireland is prepared, this time by the sons of Íth's brother, Míl Espáine. Under the leadership of these brothers, the Gaels land in Ireland and, after some chicanery on the part of the Túatha Dé, seize control of the country. Thereafter, the Gaels are sole masters of Ireland until the arrival of the Normans in 1169.

[4] Elizabeth Gray (ed. & tr.), *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Moytura*, ITS 52 (Dublin: ITS, 1982).

[5] The name Bregan, spelled Bregaind or Breógan in many sources, and the myth of his tower are clearly derived from the Roman maritime settlement of Brigantia and its prominent lighthouse, which probably dates to third-century CE.

Overall, the material found in LGE appears to be a creative blending of a (presumably) native legendary tradition and Christian, Latinate learning. There is broad agreement that the first two waves of settlers in LGE are entirely inspired by Christian learning; as Cessair is said to be a granddaughter of Noah; and it is believed that Partholón is an adaptation of the name Bartholomaeus/Bartholomew.[6] Conversely, the leader of the third settlement, Nemed, appears to preserve a reflex of a genuinely pre-Christian tradition however obscured it may be in the sources we have.[7] The OIr. word *nemed* encompasses a semantic range of 'holy, privileged, consecrated' and appears to be of Common Celtic origin so that there is little, if any, reason to believe that traditions concerning him and his settlement had their origins in Biblical or Classical sources.[8] Scholarly consensus regarding the origin of the legends concerning the Fir Bolg has not yet been achieved, although there is general agreement that the Fir Bolg preserve some vague memory of a people who were once powerful in Ireland but who were eventually subjugated by later arrivals. The central controversy regarding their origin is concerned with the interpretation of their name. LGE's explanation, that their name means 'Men of Bags' due to their having floated to Ireland from Greece in leathern bags, seems like a flimsy rationalization of the name. T.F. O'Rahilly, in *Early Irish History and Mythology,* argued that the Fir Bolg, whose name he claimed was etymologically related to the Continental Celtic people known as the Belgae, were devotees of Bolg, a Celtic god who wielded lightning much like Zeus or Indra.[9] There are several problems, especially linguistic, with O'Rahilly's argument. John Carey, in a 1988 article, rejects O'Rahilly's identification of the name 'Bolg' as a

[6] John Carey, "The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory," Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Medieval Gaelic History 1 (Cambridge: Dept. of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 1994), 9.

[7] John Carey, "The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory," 8.

[8] J. Vendryes, *Lexique Étymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien: lettres M–P* (Dublin: DIAS, 1960), s.v. 'nemed.'

[9] T.F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin: DIAS, 1946), 43–84.

reflex of the Indo-European root **bhelg-/bhleg-* ('shine, flash'), reflexes of which are, as he notes, "(with one possible exception) lacking in Celtic."[10] Instead, Carey suggests that 'Bolg' is a reflex of Indo-European **bhelĝh-* ('to swell') and notes, among other examples, that the depiction of the *furor heroicus* of Cú Chulainn, who himself wields the *gae Bolga*, O'Rahilly's putative lightning weapon, includes physical swelling and distension.[11] He further notes that this metaphor for battle-fury is quite well attested in Germanic languages, that words derived from **bhelĝh-* with this meaning are also well attested in those languages (OE *bolgnmód* ('furious'), *belgan* ('to swell with anger'), OHG *belgan* ('to be angry'), OFri. *ovirbulgn* ('angry'), et al.), and that this may well provide the link between the Fir Bolg of Ireland and the Belgae of the Continent.[12]

The Túatha Dé appear to be something of a contradiction. Many of them, such as Núadu, Lug, et al., are clearly euhemerized Celtic deities as can be seen by the presence of idols inscribed with their names found throughout the territories of the ancient Celtic speaking peoples as well as by their (at times selective) immortality. That being said, the collective name for these deities/supernatural figures, Túatha Dé Danann, is problematic, but has generally been understood as meaning 'Peoples of the God(dess) Danu.' The problem with this interpretation was first pointed out early by Ludwig-Christian Stern in 1900 who noted that the name Danu as well as the collective Túatha Dé Danann cannot be found in early sources and argued that Danann (or Donann as it is sometimes spelled) was an invention of the scriptoria.[13] Indeed, John Carey, who noted that Stern's objections had gone virtually unnoticed for decades, claimed that the phrase Túatha Dé Danann is not to be

[10] John Carey, "Fir Bolg: A Native Etymology Revisited," in *CMCS* 16 (1988), 80.

[11] John Carey, "Fir Bolg: A Native Etymology Revisited," 80–1.

[12] John Carey, "Fir Bolg: A Native Etymology Revisited," 81–3.

[13] Ludwig-Christian Stern, "Eine ossianische Ballade aus dem XII. Jahrhundert," in *Festschrift Whitley Stokes zum Siebzigsten Geburtstage*, ed. Kuno Meyer et al. (Leipzig: 1900), 17–19.

found in any source demonstrably earlier than the pseudohistorical poems in LGE.[14] Moreover, the name Danu itself is not properly attested other than in this phrase, but has frequently been explained as a result of conflation with Anu, a goddess whose name is attested quite early, on the basis of the genitive form of the latter's name, Anann.[15] Adding to this ambiguity is the earlier form of the name, Túatha Dé, which rather confusingly is virtually a direct cognate with *populus Dei* ('The People of God'), the title commonly given to the ancient Israelites in Christian writings. It is difficult to know what to make of all this, but thus far Carey's explanation has been the most plausible. He argues that the form Donann (>Danann) resulted from an appropriation of the mysterious population name 'Domnann' which "already in the ninth century...could be corrupted to Donann" and its combination with the preexisting designation for the old gods, Túatha Dé, so as to disambiguate them from the Israelites.[16]

As for Míl and his offspring, they are entirely the creation of pseudohistory, invention, and Isidorian etymology. The name Míl Espáine is most transparently an almost direct phonetic transposition of the Latin *miles Hispaniae* ('soldier of Spain') into Irish. Irish sources do not explicitly explain where this 'doctrine of Spanish origin' came from, but it is generally agreed that one or more of the writings of Isidore of Seville furnished the notion more or less directly.[17] Isidore's various works

[14] John Carey, "The Name *Tuatha Dé Danann*," in *Éigse* 18/2 (1981), 292.

[15] Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, trans. Myles Dillon (Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1982), 38–9; T.F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 309n.; Joseph Vendryes, *La Religion des Celtes*, Les Religions de l'Europe Ancienne, vol. 3, ed. Albert Grenier (Paris: P.U.F., 1948), 277; Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967), 209, 359; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1970), 76, 85.

[16] John Carey, "The Name *Tuatha Dé Danann*," 294.

[17] J.N. Hilgarth, "The East, Visigothic Spain and the Irish," in *Studia Patristica* 4 (1961), 442–56; Hilgarth, "Visigothic Spain and Early Christian Ireland," in *PRIAC* 62 (1962), 167–94; idem, "Ireland and Spain in the Seventh Century," in *Peritia* 3 (1984), 1–16; Michael Herren, "On the Earliest Irish Acquaintance with Isidore of Seville," in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 243–50; Marina Smyth, "Isidore of Seville and Early Irish Cosmography," in *CMCS* 14 (1987), 69–102.

were greatly influential in the Early Middle Ages, particularly in Ireland. Indeed, his *Etymologiae* (or *Origines*), a sort of early encyclopedia which represented the culmination of Late Classical learning, was so highly regarded in Ireland that it was often referred to as the *cuilmen* (from Latin *culmen* 'summit, acme') and, according to legend, was acquired and brought to Ireland in exchange for the complete *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, medieval Ireland's great epic tale.[18] That Isidore refers to Spain as 'mother of all races' in the first sentence of the prologue to his *Historia de Regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum, et Suevorum*[19] seems very likely to have inspired the notion in Ireland that the Irish were of Iberian origin, although it must be admitted that there is no direct evidence that that particular Isidorian text circulated in Ireland. Moreover, Isidore's style of etymological analysis plainly influenced Irish folk etymologies such as that which inspired the linkage of Latin *Scotti* ('Irish') to *Scythia* as a means of explaining the origin of the name other than by Scotta, the Egyptian princess. A passage from *Historia de Regibus Gothorum* in which he explains how Getae ('Goths') is derived from Scythia encapsulates the methodology behind Isidore's etymologies:

> *Gothi de Magog Iafeth filio orti cum Scythis una probantur origine sati, unde nec longe a uocabulo discrepant. Demutata enim ac detracta littera Getae, quasi Scythia, sunt nuncupati [sic].*[20]
>
> "The Goths, descended from Magog son of Japhet, are shown to have the same origin as the Scythians, from whom they do not differ greatly in name. For if one letter is changed and another dropped they are called Getae (that is, Scythians)."[21]

It should be noted, however, that Isidore does not address the alteration of declension which this etymology also requires. This same method of "dropping one letter and changing another" may also have influenced Isidore's linking *Iberia* ('Spain') and *Hibernia* ('Ireland'), although the first impetus for

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[18] Tomas Ó Máille, "The Authorship of the Culmen," in *Ériu* 9 (1921/3), 71–6; Kuno Meyer, "Die Wiederauffindung der Táin Bó Cúailnge," in *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie* 3 (1907), 2–6; John Carey, "Varia II: The Address to Fergus's Stone," in *Ériu* 51 (2000), 183–7; Kevin Murray, "The Finding of the Táin," in *CMCS* 41 (2001), 17–23; Johan Corthals, "Why Did Fergus Rise From His Grave?," in *CMCS* 55 (2008), 1–9.

[19] *Omnium terrarum, quaeque sunt ab occiduo usque ad Indos, pulcherrima es, o sacra, semperque felix principum, gentiumque mater Hispania*

[20] Isidorus, *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum, et Suevorum*, I.66.

[21] John Carey, "The Irish National Origin-Legend," 12.

this etymological gymnastics may have come from the mistaken, though widely accepted, bit of geography in Orosius's *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri*, in which Orosius asserted that "*Hibernia insula inter Britanniam et Hispaniam sita*..."[22] At all events, although the foregoing discussion regarding the impetus for the invention of the Gaels' Spanish origins is illustrative of the methods and reasoning which undergirded the development of the pseudohistorical tradition, the issue is essentially irrelevant to the central inquiry of this dissertation: my concern here is not why the Milesian genealogical scheme was created; but, rather, alterations made to it during the development of the pseudohistorical material in the Early Middle Ages.

The Milesian genealogical scheme's main purpose lay in both assigning the status of 'Goidelic' (i.e. Milesian) to various Irish population groups (groups claiming descent from Míl and his offspring were reckoned Gaels; those whose putative ancestry was otherwise – or, more typically, simply not important enough to warrant a fabricated ancestry of any kind – were reckoned non-Gaels) and providing a framework by which all the 'Goidelic' peoples shared a single, apical ancestor. Most peoples of importance were reckoned to descend from one of two of Míl's sons: Éremón or Éber. In theory, the free peoples of the northern portion of Ireland descended from Éremón and those of the south from Éber, although in actual practice the situation is far more complicated as the scheme was reworked to reflect contemporary political realities. This is to say that as other peoples became powerful, or at least important enough to merit an explanation of their origins, ancestral figures were created for them and grafted onto the existing framework of the scheme to validate the status of these groups. In many cases, this grafting was accomplished by the creation of other sons of Míl. As Byrne puts it: "soon, however, other dynasties of local importance were provided by the

[22] "Ireland is an island situated between Britain and Spain" (Orosius, *Historia Adversum Paganos Libri*, i.2.80). It should be noted that Orosius was not the first Latin historiographer to make this claim (Tacitus, *Agricola*, 24). For a full discussion, see: Rolf Baumgarten, "The geographical orientation of Ireland in Isidore and Orosius," in *Peritia* 3 (1984), 189–203.

synthetic historians with a line of descent from other sons of Míl, whose family underwent an alarming, if posthumous, increase."[23]

This sort of *post hoc* reorganization of the scheme was accomplished not always by the creation of ancestral figures at such a remove, but rather by the fabrication of additional sons or brothers of already well-established ancestral figures. One of the more famous examples of this second type of genealogical fabrication was the creation of a high status ancestor for the Dál Cais in the eleventh century, following the rise of the kindred to political preeminence in Munster and, under Brían Bóroimhe, most of Ireland. The Dál Cais – a group name which itself was fabricated sometime in the tenth- or eleventh-centuries – attached themselves to the Éoganacha line of descent, and thereby validated their right to rule by bloodline through the creation of a younger brother of Éogan Mór (the eponymous ancestor of the Éoganachta), namely Cormac Cas. In this example, one can see that there was something of an attempt not to stretch credulity to too great an extreme. Cormac was not made a direct descendant of Éogan Mór but, rather, a younger brother, thus explaining why the Dál Cais had been excluded from the kingship since the third century (at least according to the pseudohistorical synchronisms) while also providing a justification for their contemporary ascendancy.

I.B.The Genealogical Corpus

The various redactions of the great pre-Norman genealogical corpus are the most comprehensive and complete sources for Irish genealogy, but they were not created in a vacuum. The corpus's constituent tracts developed alongside other pseudohistorical texts so that, as Kelleher noted: "The corpus [of Irish genealogies] could never be presented wholly apart from Lebor Gabála on the one

[23] F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), 9.

hand and the annals and regnal lists on the other, which is but another way of observing that all Irish history and prehistory was ideally intended, and to a considerable degree actually composed, as one self-consistent body of information."[24] For this reason, although this dissertation will primarily investigate the genealogical corpus, a diverse range of other sources will also be referenced as necessary.

The pre-Norman genealogical corpus is comprised of a mixture of several different forms: strings of pedigrees, tribal histories, king lists, genealogical poems, et al. The two earliest extant redactions of the corpus are contained in two twelfth-century codices: Dublin, RIA, MS H 2.18 (cat. 1339) ('The Book of Leinster'; formerly known as *Lebar na Núachongbála* [=LL]) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 502 [=R]. M.A. O'Brien used the redactions found in these two manuscripts as his primary texts in his 1962 *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae Vol. I* (=CGH).[25] O'Brien's edition also includes variants from several later redactions of the corpus: Dublin, RIA, MS 23 P 12 (*Leabhar Bhaile an Mhóta*; 'The Book of Ballymote' [=BB], late fourteenth century); Dublin, RIA, MS 23 P 2 (*Leabhar (Mór) Leacáin*; 'The (Great) Book of Lecan' [=Lec.], early fifteenth century); and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud 610 ([=Laud], first half of the fifteenth century). Another large, and early, redaction of the corpus is contained in Dublin, TCD, MS H.2.7 (cat. 1298)(mid fourteenth century). Unfortunately, O'Brien died before he could complete the second volume of CGH – that he intended to publish at least one more volume is made clear by the full title of the existing volume – and, while F.J. Byrne strongly implies in his review of CGH that O'Brien intended to edit the

[24] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish genealogies," in *Irish Historical Studies* 16 (1969), 138–53.

[25] M.A. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae Vol. I* (Dublin: DIAS, 1962).

genealogical material in H.2.7 for the second volume, this material is, even fifty years later, unedited and unpublished.[26]

In addition to the well-known repositories of genealogical material enumerated above, various other sources also exist in other, less conspicuous, and generally later manuscripts. A full accounting and bibliography of these sources has never been produced, and those interested in finding these other caches of genealogical material must painstakingly comb through the various "Descriptions of Manuscripts" volumes in order to locate them. Fortunately, a former graduate student of Nollaig Ó Muraíle undertook that laborious task and determined that:

> "…there are in the Royal Irish Academy more than thirty manuscripts containing significant amounts of genealogical material, while more than two hundred others contain smaller, scattered genealogical items (many of them, admittedly, copied from the manuscripts [mentioned above], although some are independent). There are about a dozen manuscripts with significant genealogical material among those in the published catalogues of the National Library of Ireland collection, plus scores of other with lesser amounts, about half a dozen in Maynooth (and up to fifty others with lesser quantities), and a few other in Trinity College, in the British Library and in the Bodleian, Oxford."[27]

Despite this abundance of primary sources, the greater part of this material has not yet been edited and published and, therefore, remains inaccessible to most scholars. Indeed, the possibility of successfully meeting the goals of the present inquiry would seem low but for the fact that the descriptions of the vast majority of these manuscripts indicate that they are concerned with the families of Gaelic and Anglo-Norman lords of the later Middle Ages and for that reason are extremely unlikely to contain information relevant to the current investigation. Nevertheless, Kelleher wrote that the BB and Lec. redactions contain "a considerable number of early pedigrees not found in either of the older books. Often, too, their readings of the common material are older

[26] F.J. Byrne, "Review of *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*," in *ZCP* 29 (1964), 381-5.

[27] Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "The Irish Genealogies–An Overview and Some Desiderata," in *Celtica* 26 (2010), 134.

and better."[28] If BB and Lec. contain unique material which may be more archaic than that presented in R and LL – this assessment has not been challenged, to my knowledge, and has been recently reaffirmed by Nollaig Ó Muraíle[29] – then there is a strong possibility that this is also the case with at least some of the larger, unedited genealogical collections. Later genealogical compendia, most notably Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's seventeenth-century *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*,[30] are also extremely useful sources in that they preserve the culmination of the received genealogical tradition and, like BB and Lec., may have drawn upon variant sources now lost to us.

I.B.1. The Organization of the Corpus

The first edition of O'Brien's *Corpus* provided little in the way of introduction to the structure, nature, and arrangement of the corpus. Subsequent printings, however, included a more detailed introduction by John Kelleher,[31] whose article "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies"[32] had served that purpose for the first printing. In that article Kelleher describes the broad organization of the corpus:

> "Comparison with Bk Lec., B.B., and the O'Clery Book of Genealogies (*Anal.Hib.*, no. 18) shows that all the principal parts of the corpus are represented in Rawl. B 502, though much of what properly belongs to any individual part may be omitted there. In broad outline,though not necessarily in this order, the complete corpus appears to consist of Síl Éremóin, Síl Ébir, Síl Ír, Síl Lugdach maic Ítha, and various tracts and passages of *senchus* on the inter-relationships and temporal harmonizing of

[28] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 139.

[29] Nollaig Ó Muraíle, *The Celebrated Antiquary Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*: *His Life and Learning*, Maynooth Monographs 6 (Maynooth: An Sagart, 2002), 151.

[30] Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh, *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach: The Great Book of Irish Genealogies*, 5 vols., ed. & tr. Nollaig Ó Muraíle (Dublin: De Búrca, 2004).

[31] John V. Kelleher, "Introduction," in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae, vol. 1*, 2nd ed., edited by M.A. O'Brien (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), ix–xvi.

[32] Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 140–141.

> the different major genealogies and their connections with Lebor Gabála and with Irish prehistory and early history generally."[33]

Although the broadest genealogical groupings – i.e. Síl nÉremóin, Síl nÉbir, etc. – do indeed provide the corpus with its highest level of organization, albeit with some complications, these larger blocs are constituted from smaller, separable groupings of genealogical material. In Rawl., for example, the portion of the text which deals with Síl nÉremóin can be broken down into two sections, namely a section dealing with the Lagin and a section dealing with Síl Cuind.[34] These two sections may be broken down still further. The Lagin genealogies occupy pages 1–116 of CGH, but only pages 1–79 contain genealogical material about the Lagin. The remainder of this section deals with the Osraige, a people who were acknowledged to be kin of the Laigin and occupied a buffer state between Munster and Leinster, and the *fortúatha* and *forslointe* (a group which did not reside in the same location as their ancestors, hence 'strangers,' 'immigrants,' 'aliens' and typically of subordinate status) which resided in or beside the territory of the Lagin and which were, at least in theory, subordinate to them; these are the Fothairt and the Loíchsi. Similarly, the pedigrees of *fortúatha* of Síl nÉbir extraction living in Leth Cuind, such as the Cíannachta and Gailenga, are included in the Dál Cuinn section.[35] To some degree, then, the principle of the corpus's organization is not only genealogical but also geographical.

The corpus's organization is also, as implied above, hierarchical. At the highest level is the redaction of the corpus itself. Each redaction may then be divided by the largest Milesian genealogical unit, i.e. Síl nÉbir, etc. With the exception of Síl Lugdach meic Ítha which (generally, but not always) includes only the Corco Loígde, these 'Milesian' units are then subdivided into the various *túatha*

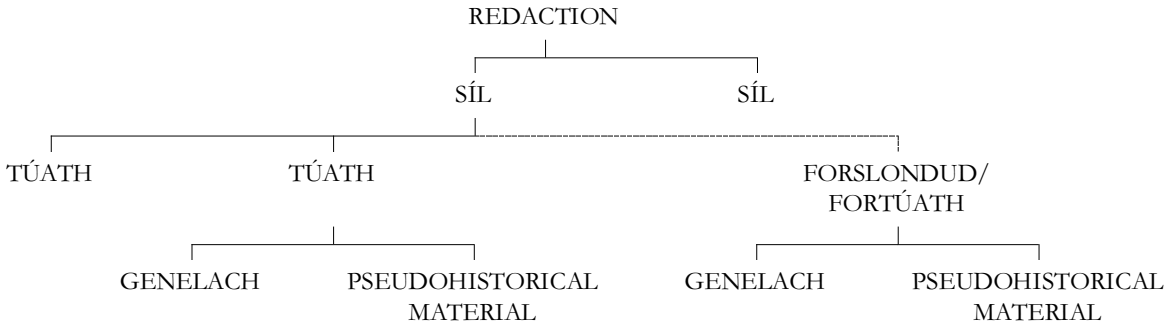
[33] Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 142.

[34] Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 140.

[35] These two groups, among others, are traced back to Cían m. Ailella Auluimm in these pedigrees (CGH, 168–169).

which they embrace as well as non-related groups in subordinate status to the group under consideration, the *fortúatha* and *forslointe* mentioned above. Finally, these sections on individual *túatha* are comprised of the pedigrees, usually entitled *genelach* in the corpus, and other pseudohistorical items concerning the important dynasties and septs of the *túath*. The general structure may be visualized in the following way:

FIGURE 1.1 – ORGANIZATION OF A CORPUS REDACTION



Despite the usefulness of the hierarchy sketched above in visualizing the general organization of the corpus's material, it is an oversimplification, since a very large proportion of the items contained in the corpus are not pedigrees.

I.B.2. The Nature of the Corpus

A description of the sources and makeup of the various redactions of the corpus, such as the foregoing, does not provide a nuanced picture of the corpus's nature. "The (genealogical) corpus" is best thought of conceptually as the totality of the traditional genealogical and pseudohistorical material from which the individual redactions have been assembled. All of this traditional material would have existed extratextually, that is outside the written text of the corpus's redactions, as an interrelated nexus, and the individual redactors would have drawn from this repository of *senchus* (historical lore) in compiling and arranging the various redactions of the corpus. This is an important point for terminological and methodological reasons. Viewed as a portfolio of

genealogically important *senchus*, "the corpus" does not exist as any single text, and it is neither possible nor desirable to reconstruct an *urtext* from the extant redactions, each of which is merely an arranged selection of the material which would have been available.[36] When speaking of "the corpus" in general terms, therefore, what I am concretely referencing is the sum total of the information contained in the extant redactions and, more abstractly, to the extratextual nexus of genealogical items which furnished the material comprising these redactions.[37] Obviously, this is to some degree a useful fiction, since it is ontologically impossible to determine what material has not been preserved in the extant redactions, but affecting the attitude that the extant material represents the totality of what would have been available to the contemporary redactors would be intellectually dishonest and methodologically indefensible. While it is impossible to know the full extent of material which informed the corpus's redactions, one can compare how the source material was adapted to the extant redactions and, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, glimpse the broad contours of the corpus's development, i.e. the motivations and priorities of those who refined the scheme through the centuries of its development in order to satisfy shifting political exigencies.

The corpus is comprised of what may usefully be termed "items" aggregated into larger tracts which deal with individual dynasties, *túatha*, larger genealogical units, geographic areas, etc. An item is the

[36] Scowcroft makes a similar point about the redactions of LGE; all of which demonstrate clear signs of cross-contamination with one another and, possibly, with oral sources: "we must be prepared to allow that apparently direct relationships [between the recensions of LGE] may be complicated in reality by any number of lost but identical MSS, that the growth of LGE may involve far more intermediate steps than the extant MSS suggest, and that the tradition may antedate these by several centuries, allowing for so much inter-recensional contact – *contaminatio* as the textual critics call it – that any version could have influenced any other. The interaction between a text like this and a living oral tradition – a form of *contaminatio* that they do not take into account – establishes a third explanation, besides textual relationship and *contaminatio*, for similarities among recensions and MSS" (Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I: The Growth of the Text," 89.)

[37] To avoid confusion, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* will be referred to as either "O'Brien's *Corpus*" or CGH rather than "the corpus."

smallest separable unit within the corpus and so any discussion of the contents of the corpus necessarily centers upon either a single item, a comparison between multiple items, or the context which one item provides to another. The forms of these items are diverse, and it is useful to devise some system of classification for discussing them:

(a) *Pedigrees*

Pedigrees are distinguished from other item types in that they provide only genealogical information and are, generally the simplest type, since they are neither discursive nor narrative in nature. Almost uniformly, they provide the members of a single patrilineal line of descent, but fraternal and sororal collateral branches are also mentioned in some rare cases. There are two distinct subsets of pedigrees:

(a.i.) *"String" Pedigrees*

String pedigrees, as I term them, are the simplest pedigrees and contain the bulk of the corpus's raw data. The final member of the line of descent – that is the most recent member of the pedigree rather than the originator of the line – is named and his patrilineal ancestry is then traced back. String pedigrees can be schematized as "*A mac B meic C meic D meic*…" and so on until the line of ancestry terminates with an important ancestral figure.[38] String pedigrees are almost always entitled *genelach* in the corpus.

[38] Owing to this format, only the most recent member of the pedigree is given in the nominative case, and all other members of the line are given in the genitive. The matter of correctly forming the nominative forms of names for which only the genitive is provided is an important one. For a discussion of this problem, see: Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "The Irish Genealogies–An Overview and Some Desiderata," 136–7.

(a.ii) *Verse Pedigrees*

Some pedigrees are versified. Without additional context, however, it is easy to confuse these with versified regnal lists (see below), since patronymics are generally absent from the versified pedigrees. Often these are formed of quatrains with each line consisting of a member or two of the pedigree and a brief indication of their personal qualities or accomplishments.[39]

Sometimes pedigrees are introduced or followed by a short commentary; no doubt many of these originated as glosses. Although a comprehensive editorial review and collation of the items which comprise the redactions of the corpus would almost certainly treat these short commentaries, which can be either prose or verse, as separate items, there are instances in which it is best for present purposes to view the pedigree and commentary as forming a single item in the corpus and classify them as special forms of string or verse pedigrees, i.e. "string pedigree with prose introduction," "verse pedigree with junctures," etc. Wherever possible, however, these commentaries will be considered as separate items.

(b) *Verse*

The corpus encompasses a large body of extended verse in addition to the short and fragmentary verses mentioned above which tend to recapitulate or gloss adjacent material. A large number of these extended verses are properly categorized as versified forms of other item types, namely

[39]Two of the so-called "early Leinster poems" are of this type: *Núadu Necht ní dámair anfhlaith* (CGH, 1–4); *Énna, Labraid lúad cáich* (CGH, 4–7). Corthals makes the important point that these encomia do not entitle us to interpret these verses as panegyrics composed for contemporaneous rulers, "[r]ather they are to be regarded as pieces of historical poetry, bound up with narrative tradition" (Johan Corthals, "The Rhymeless Leinster Poems: Diplomatic Texts," in *Celtica* 24 (2003), 82. Corthals is pushing back against the previous assertions of Campanile (Enrico Campanile, *Die ältestse Hofdichtung von Leinster, Alliterierende reimlose Strophen* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988) and Dillon, who proposed that versified royal pedigrees, such as *Énna Labraid lúad cáich* and *Cú cen Máthair maith clann* (CGH, 199–202), were recited at the installations of new kings and other important monarchical occurrences (Myles Dillon, "A Poem on the Kings of the Éoganachta," in *Celtica* 10 (1973), 13–4).

pedigrees (see above) or regnal lists (see below), but a substantial number do not fit into these categories.

(b.i) *Legendary/Pseudohistorical Poems*

Some of the poems in the corpus are concerned with the remote past and the doings of important ancestral figures. The first item encountered in the Rawl. corpus, *Móen óen ó ba nóed*, is an example of one of these, praising the martial skill of Labraid Loingsech and the seizing of Leinster by the Lagin.[40]

(b.ii) *Panegyric*

Panegyrics, a very well attested style of verse and the primary occupation of court-poets, such as *Níbu cráeb crínfaeda*, a poem celebrating St. Columba and his ancestry, are also occasionally encountered.[41] The pseudohistorical poem mentioned above, *Móen óen ó ba nóed*, could also be considered panegyric.

O'Brien chose to omit a number of these longer poems from CGH. All but one of these poems, *Temair Breg baili na fían*, which occurs between the sections rubricated as *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibneasta* and *Mínigud Senchais Síl Chuind Inso Sís*,[42] come at the end of the Rawl. genealogical corpus and follow the Síl Luigdech m. Ítha genealogies which terminate at the bottom of Rawl. 162. These poems are: (1) *Cétri ro gab h-Érind uill*, (2) *In eól dúib in senchas sen*, (3) *Mide maigen clainne Cuind*, (4) *Síl nÁeda Sláine na sleg*, (5) *A fhir théit i mag Medba*, and (6) *A chlann Chóelbad meic Chruind chrúaid*, and (7) *Ulaid úaisle*

[40]CGH, 1.

[41]CGH, 56.

[42] The omission of this poem from CGH is noted on p. 132. For text and translation see: Maud Joynt, "Echtra mac Echdach Mugmedóin," in *Ériu* 4 (1910), 92–111.

Inse Fáil.[43] All of these poems are concerned with the kings of various Dál Cuind territories and should, therefore, be categorized as versified regnal lists (see below).

(c) *Regnal Lists*

As a type of item in the corpus, regnal lists are fairly straightforward; they list in chronologically progressive order[44] the putative kings of Ireland, one of its provinces, or a *túath*. Some regnal lists include the number of years during which each king reigned, the circumstances of his death, and other major occurrences during his reign; but the inclusion of these details is not compulsory. Regnal lists often resemble either string pedigrees, i.e. the names of the kings are given one after another without any other information,[45] or verse pedigrees, i.e. quatrains consisting of lines or couplets with the name of each king and a quick comment on his qualities,[46] but can also be comprised of discursive prose.[47]

(d) *Branchings and Hierarchies*

The principal feature of these items is that they detail the relationships between various populations groups. Usually, these relationships are genealogical and list the pseudohistorical ancestral figures at which various kindreds and/or population groups are supposed to have diverged from one another. The most extensive of these are entitled *comúammann*, 'junctures,' or *cróeb coibneasta*, 'the branching of

[43] These poems occupy Rawl.163a1–166b33.

[44] It is interesting to note that even when a regnal list is presented as a "string" they are ordered in progressive chronological order, as opposed to pedigrees which are always ordered retrogressively.

[45] CGH, 123–124.

[46] CGH, 8–9.

[47] CGH, 117–122.

relations,'[48] but these are quite rare. More typically, these items are found interspersed among other item types, particularly discursive passages (see below). The importance of such items for the present investigation is self-evident, since they theoretically provide the critical framework of the Milesian scheme.

In contrast to the *comúammann* which detail genetic relationships between different population groups, items which I have termed 'hierarchies' detail the political relationships between these groups. These relationships are often expressed in terms of tribute due from subordinate groups or the fixed honor price for these groups. For example, the item which begins "*hit é trá cethri prímslointi Lagen*" explains the prerogatives and honor-prices of the four chief (i.e. noble) kindreds of the Lagin: Dál Níad Cuirp, Dál Messin Corb, Dál Cormaic Luisc, and Dál Cairpri Loingsig Bic.[49] These descend from the four sons of Cú Corb: Nía Corb, Messin Corb, Cormac Losc, and Coirpre Crúaid. As is typical with hierarchies, the order in which the kindreds are listed indicates the relative precedence accorded to each of them. Thus, Dál Níad Cuirp is the highest ranked, and this is unsurprising since this reflects the historical reality of the pre-Norman period in which the Uí Dúnlainge and the Uí Chennselaig, both of which traced their origins to Nía Corb, were the most powerful Leinster dynasties. A mulct (*díre*) paid to Dál Níad Cuirp as a whole is to be rendered in red gold, and every individual commoner (*aithech*) is entitled to have it rendered in bronze. By comparison, a mulct paid to the second highest kindred (*in prímshluinniud tánaisse*), Dál Messin Corb, is to be paid in refined silver (*argat bruinte*). One does not encounter these items as discrete, separable items – there are, for instance, no items entitled "Hierarchy of the Peoples of Munster/Leinster" or

[48] CGH, 129–132, 137–140, 358.

[49] CGH, 24–25.

the like. Like branchings, hierarchies are usually to be found mixed into discursive passages (see below).

(e) *Sagas*

The corpus includes a group of pseudohistorical sagas (*scélshenchasa*) detailing the putative origins and legendary histories of the Lagin. This is not immediately apparent in CGH, however; since, as with the versified regnal lists beginning on Rawl., p. 163, O'Brien chose not to include them in the edition. These sagas are: (1) *Orguin Denna Ríg* (The Destruction of Dind Ríg),[50] (2) *Tairired na nDéssi* (The Expulsion of the Déssi),[51] (3) *Esnada Tige Buchet* (The Melodies of Buchet's House),[52] (4) *Comram na Clóenfherta* (The Triumph of the Sloping Mound),[53] and (5) *Orguin Tri mac Díarmata meic Cerbaill* (The Destruction of the Three Sons of Díarmait mac Cerbaill).[54] The first five sagas are grouped together at the end of the Leinster portion of the corpus and are followed by an acephalous redaction of *Do Fhlaithiusaib Érenn*, a semi-independent collection of pseudohistorical material concerning the kings of Ireland and which constitutes a major portion of LGE.[55]

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[50] Whitley Stokes (ed. & tr.), "The Destruction of Dind Ríg," in *ZCP* 3 (1901), 1–14; David Greene (ed.), "Orgain Denna Ríg," in *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories*, Mediaeval and Modern Series 16 (Dublin: DIAS, 1955), 16–26.

[51] This tale has survived in several manuscripts (Rawl. B 502, Lebor na hUidre, H 2.15, H 3.17, Laud 610, Leabhar Ua Maine, and the Liber Flavus Fergusiorum) and two quite different versions: Kuno Meyer (ed. & tr.), "The Expulsion of the Dessi," in *Y Cymmrodor* 14 (1901), 101–135; idem (ed.), "The Expulsion of the Déssi," in *Ériu* 3 (1907), 135–142; idem (ed.), "Tucait indarba na nDéssi," in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 1, ed. Osborn Bergin et al. (Halle, 1907), 15–24; Séamus Pender (ed.), "Two unpublished Versions of the Expulsion of the Déssi," in *Féilscribhinn Torna*, ed. Seamus Pender (Cork: UCC Press, 1947), 209–217 (corrections by Vernam Hull can be found in pp. 270–271 of: Vernam Hull, "The Book of Uí Maine Version of the Expulsion of the Déssi," in *ZCP* 24 (1954), 266–271); Vernam Hull (ed. & tr.), "The Later Version of the Expulsion of the Déssi," in *ZCP* 27 (1958–9), 14–63).

[52] Whitley Stokes (ed. & tr.), "The Songs of Buchet's House," in *Revue Celtique* 25 (1904), 18–39; David Greene (ed.), "Esnada Tige Buchet," in *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories*, 27–44.

[53] Brian Ó Cuív (ed. & tr.), "Comram na Cloenfherta," in *Celtica* 11 (1976), 168–179.

[54] Kuno Meyer (ed. & tr.), "The death of the three sons of Diarmait mac Cerrbeóil," in *Hibernica Minora* (Oxford 1894), 70–3; David Greene (ed.), "Orgguin Trí mac Diarmata mic Cerbaill," in *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories*, 48–51.

[55] See: Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I: The Growth of the Text," 115–123.

(f) *Discursive Passages*

The corpus contains a significant number of passages, both short and long, which cannot be readily or satisfactorily placed into one of the categories described above. In contrast to the defined item types above, these passages are defined by the absence of an exclusive focus and their miscellaneous nature. Although genealogical information is often the organizing principal of these passages, they cannot be classified as pedigrees, since the information is not arranged in the '*A mac B meic C meic D*…' format of a string pedigree. When a single line of descent is the overall unifying feature of these passages – a by no means universal attribute – siblings, typically male, of the members of the main line are frequently also provided. The overall effect, is that these items contain data which would otherwise be considered to be junctures or hierarchies except for the fact that such data is not the primary focus of passages of this type. Moreover, when additional information about the members and collaterals of the main line of descent is included, the means of presenting this information is quite varied, including – but not limited to – short or fragmentary poetry, short asides in prose, or passages of legendary material. Some of these passages of legendary material are fairly sizable and at times resemble synopses of sagas which may have existed at the time. In sum, these items are best thought of as agglomerations of other items, whatever the type or format, which usually focus upon certain families or *túatha*. An extended selection from a long passage of this type should make this clearer:

> *Fergus Fairrce dano mac Núadat Necht. Mac do suide Russ Rúad; is é-side ar-ránic cuibdius i ndeud na* [*comrac*[56]].
>
> *Trí meic íarum la Rus Rúad nó a cethir ut alii dicunt .i. Cathbad druí aite Conchobuir meic Nessa in cethramad; Find Fili ⁊ Ailill mac Máta ⁊ Cairpre Nía Fer.*
>
> *Ailill dano mac Rossa qui et mac Máta .i. Máta Muirisc ainm a máthar do Feraib Ool nÉcmacht; do suidib do-gairder Connachta indiu ⁊ ro-ngabsat-side hi rríge forthu ara máthre .i. do-luid Medb ingen Echach Feidlich hí co Feraib ool nÉcmacht impi hi crích Lagen co mbertsatar Ailill leo do rígo forthu ar ba díb a máthair ⁊ dano ná fríth ét ná omun inna chridiu ⁊rl. ⁊ do*

[56] Lec., BB.

dénam óentad eter in dá cóiced do grés ⁊ do chocud fri cúiced Conchobuir conid Ailill íarum do-acht Táin Bó Cúailnge cona tríchait cét Galeán.

Corpre didiu hi Temair, Find i nAlind, Ailill hi Crúachain, ut Senchán dixit:

Trí meic Rúaid ruirig flaind,
fíangal Find, Ailill acher, cóem Corpre.

Caíne dind dem i foat
Alinn cruind, Crúachu, Temair tóebglan.

⁊ ut Orthanach dixit: Can trí macco Rúaid din rind, ⁊rl.[57]

"Fergus Fairrce son of Núadu Necht. Russ Rúad was his son; it is he who brought about peace after the battles.

Thereafter, Russ Rúad had three sons, or four as others say, i.e. Cathbad the druid, the foster-father of Conchobor mac Nessa, was the fourth; Find File and Ailill mac Máta and Cairpre Nía Fer.

Ailill mac Rossa, who was also the son of Máta, i.e. Máta Muirisc was the name of his mother [who was] of the Fir Ool nÉcmacht; they are called Connachta today, and they took him as king over them on account of his maternal kin, i.e. Medb, the daughter of Eochu Feidlech, went with the Fir Ool nÉcmacht accompanying her into the territory of the Lagin and they took Ailill back with them to be king over them because his mother was one of them, and neither jealousy nor cowardice were found in his heart etc., and to make an alliance between the two provinces permanently and to make war upon the province of Conchobor, and it is Ailill who conducted the Cattle Raid of Cooley with his thirty hundred Gaileóin.

Corpre, then, in Tara, Find in Allen, Ailill in Crúachu, as Senchán said:

Three sons of Rúad, red provincial kings,
Find of *fían*-battlings, fierce Ailill, beautiful Corpre.

A beautiful, fortified place in which they reside
Well-built Allen, Crúachu, Tara of pure-sides.

And as Orthanach said: "From whom are descended three of the family of Rúad from the promontory(?)..."

Although it is obscured by the mass of information which is appended to it, a pedigree undergirds this passage: Núadu Necht > Fergus Fairrce > Russ Rúad> Find File, Ailill mac Máta, Cairpre Nía

[57] CGH, 22–23.

Fer [, Cathbad].[58] As is typical with passages of this nature, the pedigree provides a frame to which a great amount of additional material has been appended: a short aside mentions the ability of Russ Rúad to bring about peace; and a more extensive passage marshals together an assortment of information about Ailill mac Máta, how Medb acquired him as a husband, the old name for Connacht, that Ailill led the attack on Cúailnge, and that he brought a battalion of Leinster troops with him on the raid. Further demonstrating the passage's patchwork nature is the quatrain and verse fragment concerning the three sons of Russ Rúad which finishes this section of the passage.

After considering several approaches to analyzing and categorizing these sorts of passages and their contents, I think that the best solution is to consider these discursive passages as "dossiers" into which the redactors of the corpus have collated items of various types on a particular subject. The sample passage above, for instance, can be thought of as part of a larger dossier of *senchus* concerned with the major ancestral figures of the Lagin, their chief dynasties, and the *fortúatha Lagen*.[59] Discussion of information contained within a discursive passage requires reference to the larger passage in which it appears in order to contextualize it properly.

I.B.3. Issues of Dating

Even a cursory examination of the corpus quickly reveals it to be comprised of several strata which frequently contradict one another, so that one surmises without much difficulty that the genealogical scheme laid out in the corpus is the result of several redactions of earlier exemplars and, perhaps, of at least one compiler's attempt to synthesize several conflicting traditions. Dating the material contained by the corpus is, therefore, extremely difficult and imprecise. Some of the longer

[58] The item continues with material concerning the reign of Cairpre Nía Fer and his children, further demonstrating the genealogical underpinnings of this item type.

[59]This passage occupies pp. 17–26 of CGH – just over a single folio page of Rawl.

discursive passages may provide enough of a linguistic sample to estimate the time of their composition; but this is by no means certain. Moreover, it would probably only be possible to ascertain a very broad chronological range for the composition of these passages through linguistic analysis, such that the amount of overlap and uncertainty regarding the relative dates of composition for these items would be unlikely to provide much insight into the development of the Milesian scheme.

It *is* possible, though, to date the composition of many of the corpus's pedigrees in instances where the terminal individual (the one who heads the pedigree) can be identified in the annals and his death dated. Such an analysis has been conducted by Diarmaid Ó Murchadha on the Rawlinson redactions of the corpus and is discussed below; but considering that only a small percentage of the pedigrees extend enough generations back to provide data relevant to the current inquiry, it is improbable that the dating information which may be gleaned from the pedigrees will provide much insight into the Milesian scheme's development. For the reasons given above, it seems best to contextualize any relevant data from the corpus by comparison with the canonical form of the scheme, i.e. to apply the general methodology decided upon for this project which assumes that material incompatible with the canonical formulation of the scheme is representative of earlier and/or competing formulations which were gradually suppressed and to construct a relative chronology to account for the presence of these variants and their exclusion from the canonical scheme. Nevertheless, a *terminus post quem* for the first compilation of the corpus is desirable and may be estimated though, admittedly, only within a fairly wide date range.

(a) Scholarly Discourse

When, then, was an Irish genealogical corpus first compiled? Several scholars have advanced hypotheses on this point. Eoin Mac Neill, the first reliable scholar to engage with this topic, asserted that at least some of the material found in the Laud redaction was of eighth-century date,[60] and John V. Kelleher similarly maintained that the genealogical corpus was first compiled into a recognizable form "at or not long before the middle of the eighth century."[61] The assertions made by Mac Neill and Kelleher have largely been left unchallenged, although Pádraig Ó Riain has expressed some skepticism.[62] Ó Riain's primary objection stems from Kelleher's claim that the corpus of Irish saints' lives was first compiled around the middle of the eighth century and that this indicated that the secular genealogical corpus was compiled some time shortly before then.[63] Kelleher later revised his estimate for the compilation of the corpus of Irish saints' lives to the ninth century,[64] but Ó Riain, having edited the corpus of Irish saint's lives, came to the conclusion that it was first compiled in the middle of the tenth century.[65] Nevertheless, although Ó Riain has convincingly shown that one leg of Kelleher's argument cannot be relied upon, he does not propose an alternative date for the compilation of the secular corpus. Moreover, Ó Riain leaves completely unaddressed Kelleher's main reason for dating the existence of the corpus to the middle of the eighth century, namely that the geographical distribution of Síl nÉremóin generally, and Dál Cuind specifically, in the corpus reflects a political disposition in which the Uí Néill were firmly in control

[60] John MacNeill, "Notes on the Laud Genealogies," in *ZCP* 8 (1912), 411-412.

[61] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 143.

[62] Pádraig Ó Riain, "Irish Saints' Genealogies," in *Nomina* 7 (1983), 24.

[63] John Kelleher, "Irish History and Pseudohistory," in *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963), 118–9.

[64] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 143.

[65] Pádraig Ó Riain, "Irish Saints' Genealogies," 24.

and that the corpus treats this state of affairs as "natural, inevitable, and fore-ordained."[66] Although Byrne does not explicitly state his agreement with Kelleher's assessment of the corpus's dating, his general agreement is indicated by the following: "The genealogies are fullest for the eighth century...By the twelfth century...they are disappointingly meagre in their references to the persons who figure most prominently in the annals."[67] Or, put another way, Byrne agrees with Kelleher that the corpus shows signs of having been most robustly maintained and redacted in the eighth century but, in Kelleher's words, had fallen "by the twelfth-century [into] a state of partial desuetude and considerable disrepair."[68]

Ó Corráin, who has made much use of the genealogical corpus for historical inquiry, appears to be of the opinion that some form of the genealogical corpus came into being during the course of the seventh century (probably the latter half) and has noted several corpus items, as well as separate, genealogically significant pseudohistorical origin legends, which can be assumed with some degree of confidence to have had their genesis in the seventh-century.[69]

(b) Ó Murchadha (2004)

In a study published in 2004, Diarmuid Ó Murchadha conducted a close examination of the string pedigrees in an attempt to identify their members with people mentioned in the annals and, from

[66] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 142.

[67] J.F. Byrne, "Tribes and Tribalism in Early Ireland," in *Ériu* 22 (1971), 165.

[68] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 139.

[69] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Creating the Past - The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," in *Peritia* 12 (1998), 178, 191, 194–6; idem, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. D. Ellis Evans, John. G. Griffith, and E.M. Jope (Oxbow Books: Oxford, 1986), 148–50; idem, "Legend as Critic," in *The Writer As Witness*, ed. T. Dunne, Historical Studies 16 (Cork, 1987), 26–7; idem, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy - Recurrent Aetiologies," in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg et al. (Odense: Odense University Press, 1985), 52.

this information, give a rough estimation of when the pedigree was assembled.[70] Essentially his methodology is as follows:

> 1. He first attempts to calculate an average number of years between generations. He does this by identifying 30 pedigrees[71] which contain at least ten consecutive generations which appear in the annals and which can, therefore, be relied upon as generally accurate chronologically. His calculations result in an average of 33.38 years per generation which perfectly substantiates Eoin Mac Neill's claim that "the dated genealogies give an average of three generations to the century."[72] Ó Murchadha also shows several examples demonstrating the efficacy of this average generational gap in detecting doctored genealogies.[73]
>
> 2. Ó Murchadha then examines each pedigree separately and attempts to determine the century in which each pedigree was compiled by "taking the name at the head of each [pedigree] to indicate the time of its compilation, and using the formula, three generations per century, to provide an approximate date for any which has at least one constituent mentioned in the annals."[74] Regrettably, his investigation indicates that only about half of the roughly 600 pedigrees found in R can be analyzed in this manner.[75]
>
> 3. His results are:

[70] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," in *Cín Chille Cúile*, eds. John Carey, Máire Herbert, and Kevin Murray (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2004), 316–33.

[71] Three of these pedigrees were later found to be faulty and omitted from his calculations.

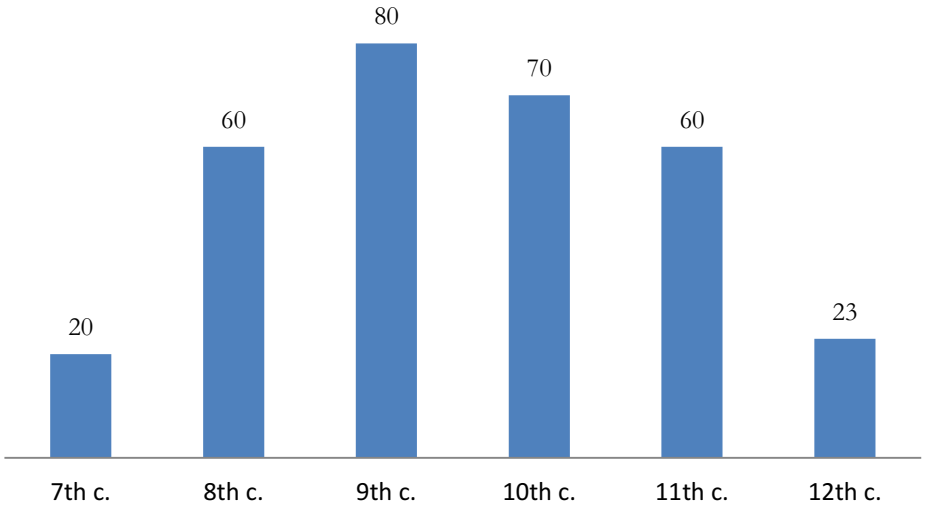
[72] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 319; Eoin Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland*, ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Academy Press, 1981), 159.

[73] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 322.

[74] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 324.

[75] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 324.

FIGURE 1.2 – DISTRIBUTION OF DATEABLE PEDIGREES



He concludes from this that: "While the compilation as a whole can be dated to c. 1131, and a number of pedigrees were obviously updated for inclusion at that time, the bulk of the assemblage must have been painstakingly gathered from borrowed manuscripts, themselves, no doubt, of miscellaneous dates and provenances."[76] Ó Murchadha also argues that Kelleher's earlier guess that the genealogical corpus was first compiled in the eighth century is strongly supported by the large number of eighth-century pedigrees and that "the average date for the sixty [eighth-century pedigrees is] A.D. 726."[77]

I summarize Ó Murchadha's study here because it: 1) demonstrates very clearly the multiple strata present in even the earliest extant redactions of the corpus; 2) supports the belief of Mac Neill, Kelleher, Byrne and Ó Corráin that a workable corpus of genealogical material had been assembled by the first half of the eighth century, although some of the material which formed the corpus or was closely related to it probably dates to the second half of the seventh century; and 3) provides a

[76] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 324.

[77] Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, "Rawlinson B.502: Dating the Genealogies," 328.

rough guide to dating a pedigree in which one or more members of the lineage can be dated but the terminal entry cannot.

(c) The "early Leinster poems"

Among the pre-eighth-century genealogical material which found its way into the genealogical corpus is a body of verse, the antiquity of which has attracted the attention of scholars for nearly a century, conventionally referred to as the "early Leinster poems." These poems, which primarily relate the putative ancestry of the Leinster ruling dynasties of the early Christian era, were first edited and translated (into German) by Kuno Meyer in *Über die älteste irische Dichtung*.[78] In total, these verses consist of three long poems – (I) *Núadu Necht ní dámair anfhlaith* (II) *Énna, Labraid lúad cáich* (III) *Nidu dír dermait* – and about twenty verse fragments.[79] The archaic verse fragments are generally laudatory or pseudo-historical and relate to small prose narratives about the glories of the ancient Leinster kings which they follow in the tracts.[80] They do not contain any information which sheds light upon the state of the Milesian scheme during the period in which they were composed. The three longer poems, on the other hand, do contain relevant information which will be discussed in the second chapter.

That these poems are archaic was recognized at an early stage of their study. Kuno Meyer's edition, mentioned above, places them among the earliest extant Irish poetry. Myles Dillon assigned them to

[78] Kuno Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung I/II* (Berlin: Verlag der Königl. akademie der wissenschaften, 1913–4).

[79] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin legends and Genealogies – Recurrent Aetiologies," 57.

[80] I follow Ó Corráin's identification of these archaic fragments. Those which are present in Rawl. B 502 (and occasionally elsewhere) are to be found at: CGH, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 70, 71, 72–3, 243. Those fragments which are present in other recension of the corpus but not in Rawl. are present in the Lec. recension (and occasionally elsewhere) at 92rb49, 92va4, 92va8.

the sixth century, though without providing his reasons for doing so.[81] James Carney, who took up the matter of their dating in 1971, held that there was an older "nucleus" in these poems which dated to the fifth century and reflected pre-Christian thought[82] and that this core was edited and expanded c. 630 by Senchán Torpéist as part of the (no longer extant) *Cocangab Már*.[83] Besides his linguistic analysis, Carney marshaled four pieces of information in support of his hypothesis.[84] 1) He noted that none of the Leinster poems refers to any personage who was thought to have had their *floruit* in the sixth century. 2) In two of the fragmentary verses which exalt heroic Leinster ancestral figures, the present tense is used.[85] 3) The lexical items which have been adopted from Latin in these poems are non-ecclesiastical. 4) Labraid Loingsech appears to be considered one of the pre-Christian gods of Ireland.

Unfortunately, closer scrutiny reveals that a late fifth- or early sixth-century dating for these poems is extremely improbable. To begin with, the language and meter of the poems have, upon reexamination, been less diagnostic than Carney thought. As Ó Corráin points out, the use of non-ecclesiastical Latin borrowings does not mean that the Church was not firmly established by the time the poems were composed.[86] Moreover, there *are* Latin borrowings whose presence might indicate an ecclesiastical influence. §8 of I contains a verb, *ordaigsius*, which appears to be a denominative

[81] Myles Dillon & Nora Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 226. In a later publication, however, Dillon assigns them to the sixth century: Myles Dillon, "The Consecration of Irish Kings," in *Celtica* 10 (1973), 7.

[82] James Carney, "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," in *Ériu* 22 (1971), 73.

[83] Although depending upon several assumptions no longer widely agreed upon, the fullest discussion of the references to the *Cocangab Már* may be found in: Carney, "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," 68, 73–4, 80.

[84] The four points made by Carney which follow are to be found in: "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," 69-71.

[85] These verses can be found in: Kuno Meyer, *Über die älteste irische Dichtung II*, 22 I; CGH, 71.

[86] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 58.

formed from O.Ir. *ord*, itself a borrowing from Latin *ordo*.[87] The presence of the word *bar* in the phrase *Nad-Buidb bar hEirc* (III, §21) undercuts Carney's argument still further. Although he does not explicitly accept the derivation, Carney offers no rebuttal to the notion that this strange word, *bar*, appears to be a borrowing from the Aramaic word for "son," an interpretation which would point to an ecclesiastical context for the poem's composition. Even more problematic is the possible Anglo-Saxon borrowing, *beithir*, in §17 of III, since it is extremely unlikely that any such borrowing would have taken place by the fifth century.[88]

Ó Corráin also applies a historical analysis to the poems in order to narrow the range of years in which the poems were likely composed. He notes that after Cathaír Már all of the kings of Leinster mentioned in III are drawn from three kindreds which claimed descent from him: the Uí Bairrce, the Uí Dega, and the Uí Enechglais. Excluded from this list, however, are the names of other kings of Leinster descended from Cathaír Már but not belonging to those three kindreds. Among these excluded kindreds are the Uí Chennselaig and the Uí Dúnlainge who, Ó Corráin notes, "were to monopolize the kingship of Leinster in later times and they had history thoroughly rewritten in their favour. It is inconceivable that their own eponyms and early ancestors should be omitted if they had risen to power by the time that the poem came to be written….All the evidence, linguistic and historical, would point to the early decades of the seventh century as the date of the poem (if the annalistic dates are sound)."[89] The final caveat is an important one; the early annal entries are not to

[87] Although I agree with his conclusion regarding Carney's argument, I must admit that I'm not sure that Ó Corráin is necessarily correct in his interpretation of the ecclesiastical significance of *ordaigsius*. As far as I am able to ascertain, the use of the term *ordo* to describe a religious order or ordination can only be traced to as early as the eighth-century (see: R.E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London: OUP, 1973), 324), and the use of *ordaigsius* in the poem is clearly martial.

[88] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 58.

[89] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 59–60.

be taken as fact. Nevertheless, the preponderance of the evidence that Ó Corráin presents provides a compelling reason to accept an early seventh-century date for III.

He also attempts to demonstrate that the older portion of II – he agrees with Carney that there are two strata in the poem – cannot predate the early seventh century since it is "a versified pedigree of Énna Cennselach or, if we accept an emendation put forward by Professor Carney, it is to be taken as a pedigree of Énna Nía, ancestor of Uí Dúnlainge, and of Labraid, father of Énna Cennselach."[90] If the text is correct as it exists in the manuscript, then a composition date of the first half of the seventh century appears likely, since that is when the Uí Chennselaig began to expand their influence from their territory centered around Ráith Bile in Carlow under the leadership of Brandub mac Echach.[91] Ó Corráin also argues that even if the emendation offered by Carney were to be adopted,[92] then the poem was likely composed slightly later since "their rise to power was correspondingly later."[93] He also concludes that most of the archaic fragmentary verses were probably composed at a similar date.[94]

I, Ó Corráin states, is the most difficult of these verses to date with any confidence. It is in I that the non-ecclesiastical borrowings from Latin are present, and the presentation of Labraid Loingsech as a warrior-king who marauded the British and Continental coasts seems to preserve a dim memory of the fourth- and fifth-centuries when Irish sea-raids upon the Roman coastal regions were very

[90] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 60.

[91] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 60; F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 148–149.

[92] James Carney, "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," 65.

[93] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 60.

[94] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 60.

common.[95] Adding to the exceptionally archaic feel of the poem is that many of the population groups and place names mentioned do not appear to have survived long into the historical period; some are even unidentifiable.[96] This evidence is all completely circumstantial, of course; and, as Ó Corráin astutely observes, Ireland's Christian scholars, even those of a comparatively later period, had no difficulty in imagining or glorifying the remote, pagan past.[97] One need only refer to the Ulster Cycle tales to exemplify this tendency. Moreover, Ó Corráin demonstrates that the population name *Fir Morca* and the place name *Alpéoin* are far more likely to be the result of learned invention than pre-Christian oral tradition.[98] He concludes that there is no compelling reason to date I earlier than the first half of the seventh century, although he does concede that the genealogical material contained within it may have been first recorded in the later part of the previous century. Ó Corráin's dating has, generally, become the *communis opinio*.[99] These three longer poems, then, are thought to have their origins in the first half of the seventh century.

There is a further complication, however. As has been mentioned above, Carney noted that these poems are comprised of two strata; and, notwithstanding the challenges to his dating, he has been followed in this interpretation by most scholars who have examined the poems. In both cases, the first, original section of the poem, that which Carney terms the "nucleus," deals with Leinster kings who occupy important nodes in the genealogies and then traces their ancestry back to Labraid Loingsech, the ancestor of all the Lagin. The second section in each poem, on the other hand,

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[95] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 61.

[96] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 61.

[97] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 61.

[98] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 61–62.

[99] Liam Breatnach, "Poets and Poetry," in *Progress in Medieval Irish Studies*, ed. Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (Maynooth: St. Patrick's College, 1996), 75–76.

traces the ancestry of Labraid Loingsech all the way back to Adam, by means of the learned invention of the Milesian genealogical scheme. Ó Corráin argues that the second parts of I and II, reflect a familiarity with Isidore and, perhaps, other late-Classical historiographers and that the differences between the two poems in these sections indicate that they were composed by at least two different men.[100] Therefore, he proposes a composition date of *circa* 650 for the latter parts of I and II, since that is roughly the time in which Isidore's *Etymologies* became widely known in Ireland;[101] *but*, crucially, he adds: "there is no compelling linguistic or historical reason why they should not belong to the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth."[102] The wide range of possible dates suggested for the sections most relevant to investigating the development of the Milesian scheme is somewhat frustrating. Even so, the latter half of the seventh century or first quarter of the eighth provides a reasonable period in which it can be assumed that the fundamental contors of the Milesian scheme were first codified.

I.C. Other pre-Norman Sources

Although the genealogical corpus is primary text upon which research will be conducted, a number of other pre-Norman pseudohistorical texts will be consulted. These other sources are didactic pseudohistorical poems, *Leabhar Gabhála* (*Érenn*), and *Historia Brittonum*.

I.C.1. Pseudohistorical Poems

Judging from surviving material, the ninth to eleventh centuries saw the composition of an extensive body of pseudohistorical poetry, probably for didactic and mnemonic purposes. This

[100] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 66.

[101] J.N. Hilgarth, "Ireland and Spain the Seventh Century," 9-11.

[102] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy – Recurrent Aetiologies," 67.

verse is best exemplified by the products of five Irish scholastic poets, praised in annal entries and encomia for their wide knowledge and impressive compositions. These are: Máel Muru Othna (d. 887), Eochaid Ua Floinn (fl. 984, d. 1004), Flann Mainistrech (d. 1056), Gilla Cóemáin (fl. 1072), and Eochaid Éolach úa Céirín. Their work, spread over a period of two centuries between the (probable) compilation of the early genealogical corpus and the earliest redactions of LGE, provides invaluable testimony to the intermediary steps of the scheme's development and refinement. The content of the verses ascribed to these four poets will be discussed in Chapter III, but it is appropriate to provide some context regarding these men and a general description of their work here.

(a) Máel Muru Othna

Three poems are ascribed to Máel Muru Othna, an ecclesiastic who appears to have been trained at the monastery at Fahan, co. Donegal. His death is recorded in the Annals of Ulster for the year 887 in which he is called "chief/royal poet of Ireland" (*righfiled Érenn*) and which also contains a two-quatrain encomium in dedication to him (*Ni forlaig talam togu*). Likewise, the entry in Chronicon Scotorum which also records his death in 887 describes him as "the learned poet of the Gaoidil" (*an file eolach Gaoidel*). If the three poems attributed to Máel Muru were indeed his own work, then his contributions to the development of the Irish synthetic historical tradition would certainly entitle him to such lofty appellations. The most important of these works for present purposes is *Can a mbunadus na nGáedel* (Whence are the origins of the Gaels?)[103] which has been described by John Carey as "the earliest surviving extended account of Gaelic origins and which was a text of

[103] J. Todd and A. Herbert (eds. & tr), *Leabhar Breathnach* (1848), 220–71.

considerable importance in the development of the Irish pseudo-historical tradition."[104] *Flann for Éirinn*,[105] another of Máel Muru's poems, was probably composed sometime in the 880s,[106] since it addresses Flann Sinna mac Maíle Sechnaill as high-king of Ireland, a title he would likely have claimed after he successfully took hostages from Leinster,[107] Munster,[108] and the Northern Uí Néill.[109] As a piece of panegyric and propaganda, the poem is unlikely to provide any data of interest. The poem's exhortation of Flann Sinna to act like Túathal Techtmar, one of Dál Cuinn's putative ancestors, however, may provide insight into the development of the puzzling pseudohistorical account of the revolt of the vassal-peoples (*aithech-thúatha*) of Ireland. The last of the three poem ascribed to Máel Muru, *Áth Líac Find, cid día tá?*,[110] is a *dindshenchas* poem explaining that the ford is so-called as the result of a Fenian battle and Otherworld encounter and provides no information pertaining to the Milesian scheme or Irish pseudohistory.

(b) Eochaid Ua Flainn/Flannacáin (fl. 984, d. 1004)

Thurneysen first proposed in 1913[111] that the poet Eochaid Ua Flainn, to whom five of the poems

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[104] John Carey, "Máel Muru Othna (d.887)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17769, accessed 11 Nov 2014]).

[105] Lec., 8*v*b, 296*v*a; Dublin, RIA, MS D.iv.1., 7*v*b; Dublin, RIA, MS 23 K 32, 207. The poem remains unedited and unpublished, but O'Rahilly has described its contents (T.F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, 154).

[106] Some portion of the poem may, in fact, be an earlier composition which Máel Muru incorporated into his own work since one quatrain of *Flann for Éirinn* is cited in *Félire Óengusso*, a work thought to date from earlier in the ninth-century.

[107] CS 880.

[108] CS 882.

[109] CS 882.

[110] E.J. Gwynn (ed. & tr.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, vol. 4, Todd Lecture Series 11 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1924), 36–9.

[111] Rudolf Thurneysen, "Zu irischen Handschriften und Literaturdenkmälern; zweite Serie," *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* [Philologisch-historische Klasse, neue Folg], 14/3 (1913), 5.

which have been incorporated into LGE are attributed, should be identified with Eochaid Ua Flannacáin, an officeholder at the monastery of Armagh[112] and at the church at Clonfeacle (*Clúain Fíachna*),[113] and this identification has been accepted by subsequent scholars interested in this figure and his work. Annal entries recording the death of Eochaid Ua Floinn describe the poet and monk in similarly exalted terms to those applied to Máel Muru Othna. Two obit entries for Eochaid are present in the annals. In his AU 1004 obit, he is termed a "sage of poetry and history" (*suí filidechta ocus senchasa*), and in his AFM 1004 obit he is termed the "sage of the history of the Irish" (*suí senchasa Gaídel*). The poems attributed to him which were incorporated into LGE are: (1) *Éistet, áes ecnai oíbinn*,[114] which treats of the history of Ireland from the earliest times until the reign of the prehistoric king Óengus Olmuccaid; (2) *A Emain idnach oíbinn*,[115] dealing with the origins of Emain Macha; (3) *Úgaine úallach amra*,[116] which details the division of Ireland by the sons of Augaine Már; (4) *Éirinn oll oirdnit Gáedil*,[117] which focuses upon Nemed's settlement, their oppression by the Fomoiri, their abandonment of the country, and their return as the Fir Bolg; (5) *A chóemu cláir Chuinn choímfhinn*,[118] concerning the settlements of Cessair and Partholón; and (6) *Ériu co n-úaill, co n-idnaib*,[119] which relates the conquest of Ireland by the Túatha Dé Danann. Although the contents of the last two of these poems are extremely important for reconstructing the development of the

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[112] CS 1004.

[113] AU 1004.

[114] Peter Smith (ed. & tr.), *Politics and Land in Early Ireland: A Poem by Eochaid Úa Flainn. Éitset áes ecna aíbind* (Berlin: Curach Bhán Publications, 2013), 37–94; R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 252–83.

[115] LL 21a.

[116] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 466–71.

[117] R.A.S. Macalister and Eoin mac Neill (ed. & tr.), *Leabhar Gabhála - The Book of the Conquests of Ireland. The Recension of Míchéal Ó Cléirigh, Part I* (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis, 1916), 92–115; R.A.S. Macalister, LGE III, 166–81.

[118] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE III, 42–53.

[119] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 212–9; Gustav Lehmacher (ed. & tr.), "*Ériu co núaill co nidúaib* von Eochaid úa Flainn," in *ZCP* 14 (1923), 173–178.

pseudohistorical 'invasions/settlements' scheme enshrined in LGE, they are unlikely to contain any information concerning the Milesian scheme. The first four, on the other hand, are quite likely to shed light upon the state of the Milesian scheme in the late tenth century.

(c) Flann Mainistrech (d. 1056)

Flann Mainistrech, who is described as *airdfer leighinn ⁊ sui senchusa Érenn* ("chief/high lector and sage of history of Ireland") in his AU 1056 obit, is the next to be considered. Flann's (surviving) output far outstrips that of his fellow ninth- to eleventh-century pseudohistorical poets, and a great deal of this work has still not been edited or translated. One series of poems attributed to him concerns several Uí Néill dynasties, namely the Cenél nEógain, Síl nÁeda Sláine, and Clann Cholmáin Móir, and contains no useful information for present purposes.[120] Another series of poems attributed to him is a versification of Eusebius's scheme of world history and has been partially edited by Sean Mac Airt.[121] Like Flann's dynastic poems, this adaptation of Eusebius is of no relevance to the current investigation, since he simply creates a versified version of his source material and refrains from inserting material from the Irish pseudohistorical tradition where it would be expected. *In éol dúib in senchas sin*, a versified regnal list of the Christian kings of Munster perhaps composed by Flann after 1053, is unlikely to contain any information of interest.[122] *Augaine Mór mac ríg Érend*, a poem of seven quatrains by Flann does not contain relevant information.[123] Ultimately, it seems that only a

[120] For text and translation see: John MacNeill, "Poems by Flann Mainistrech on the dynasties of Ailech, Mide and Brega," in *Archivium Hibernicum* 2 (1913), 37–99; E. Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, vol. 4, 100–07, 401–2.

[121] S. Mac Airt, "Middle-Irish Poems on World-Kingship," in *Études Celtiques* 6 (1953–4), 255–80; 7 (1955–6), 18–45; 8 (1958–9), 98–119, 284–97. One of these was also previously edited by Thurneysen: Rudolf Thurneysen, "Flann Manistrech's Gedicht 'Rédig dam, a Dé do nim, co hémig a n-innisin,'" in *ZCP* 10 (1915), 269–73, 396–397.

[122] The poem is unedited and can be found in LL (150a1–150b25) and in Rawl. B 502 (163a30-163b17). In Rawl. it is incorporated into the genealogical corpus. It is one of the genealogical poems which O'Brien chose to omit from CGH.

[123] This poem is also unedited. Both copies are incorporated into *LGE*: LL 35b20–35b38; Lec. 303*v*a.

selection of the verses attributed to him, all of which are incorporated into LGE, will prove useful for the current investigation. These are: (1) *Éistid, a éolchu cen on*,[124] which attempts to euhemerize the Túatha Dé Danann by enumerating all of them who died; (2) *Éister, aes écna aibind*,[125] which is something of a synopsis of the invasion scheme and the early history of the Goídil in Ireland; (3) *Cruithnig cid dus farclam*,[126] a single quatrain which appears to be a truncated form of a longer poem concerning the origins of the Cruithin; (4) *Toísig na loingse dar ler*,[127] concerning the deaths of the first Gaels in Ireland; and (5) *Anmand na táiseach*,[128] which enumerates the Milesian chieftains who came on the expedition to Ireland and their fortresses. A sixth poem by Flann which is incorporated in LGE, *A Gillu gairm n-ilgrada*,[129] lists the members of the *tromdám*, the burdensome company of poets who afflict the generous Connacht king Gúaire Aidne, and does not add to the current investigation. Two other poems ascribed to Flann, *Rig Themra día tesband tnú*[130] and *Rig Themra toebaige íar tain*,[131] appear together in LL between compositions by Gilla Cóemáin and Máel Muru. These last two are versified regnal lists. The first gives the kings of Ireland from Eochu Feidlech up to Nath Í, and the second lists those from Lóegaire mac Néill up to Máel Sechnaill (d. 1022).

(d) Gilla Cóemáin (fl. 1072)

Five poems are consistently attributed to Gilla Cóemáin in manuscripts dating from the eleventh

[124] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 225–41. See also: Eystein Thanisch, "Flann Mainistrech's *Götterdämmerung* as a Junction Within *Lebor Gabála Érenn*," in *Quaestio Insularis* 13 (2012), 68–93.

[125] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 253–83.

[126] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 427.

[127] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 105–11.

[128] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 133–5.

[129] LL 27b53–28a47.

[130] LL 131b37–132b4.

[131] LL 132b5–133b10.

century until the end of the manuscript tradition in Ireland and are generally believed to have been his compositions. These are: (1) *Hériu ard inis na rríg* (2) *At-tá sund forba fessa* (3) *Annálad anall uile* (4) *Góedel Glas ó tát Goídil* (5) *Tigernmas mac Follaig aird.* Peter Smith edited and translated (1), (2), and (3) in *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin*, a monograph version of his 1997 PhD dissertation.[132] (4) has been edited and translated by G. Lehmacher,[133] and (5) has been edited and translated by R.A.S. Macalister in his edition of LGE.[134] (4) and (5) are only found as constituent poems of LGE; whereas (1), (2), and (3) can all be found either integrated into copies of LGE or as separate compositions and thus appear to have had an independent existence before their inclusion into LGE.[135] (1) *Hériu ard inis na rríg* is a versified regnal list of pre-Christian Ireland which will probably be useful in assessing the state of the scheme in the latter half of the eleventh century.[136] (2) *At-tá sund forba fessa* is a versified regnal list of the Christian kings of Ireland – and hence a continuation of (1) – beginning with Lóegaire mac Néill and ending with Brían Bóroma and is unlikely to provide any material bearing on the issue of the Milesian scheme.[137] (3) *Annálad anall uile* is primarily a synchronistic composition and may contain useful information, though this is doubtful.[138] (4) *Góedel Glas ó tát Goídil* provides the genealogy of the Gaels before they arrived in Ireland and narrates their wanderings from Egypt to Scythia to Spain and, finally, to Ireland.[139] (5) *Tigernmas mac Follaig aird* celebrates the martial career of Tigernmas m. Follaig, an early, legendary Síl

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[132] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin: A Critical edition of the Work of an Eleventh-Century Irish Scholar*, ed. Erich Poppe, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie 8 (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2007).

[133] G. Lehmacher, "Goedel Glass," in *ZCP* 13 (1921), 151–63.

[134] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 432–7.

[135] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 25–8.

[136] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 26–7.

[137] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 27.

[138] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 27.

[139] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 27–8.

nÉremóin king.[140] As noted, neither (4) nor (5) are known in any medieval manuscript independent of LGE and, in the opinion of Peter Smith, "appear to have formed an intrinsic part of *Lebor Gabála* since their composition."[141] For this reason, these two compositions, which almost certainly contain important information about the state of the Milesian scheme at the time of their composition, are best considered as constituent parts of LGE.

Two other poems, *A éolcha Érenn airde* and *A éolcha Alban uile*, versified regnal lists of the pre-Christian kings of Ireland and the kings of Scotland up to Máel Coluim Cennmór (frequently referred to as Malcolm III, d. c.1093) respectively, are sporadically ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin in several later manuscripts.[142] The ascription of *A éolcha Érenn airde* to Gilla Cóemáin first occurs in two seventeenth-century manuscripts, NLI MS G 131 and RIA MS C iv 3 (#1192), but two other manuscripts of the same century, TCD MS H.5.28 (#1399) and RIA MS 23 K 32 (#617), lack the ascription, possibly indicating uncertainty even then about the assignation of the composition.[143] The attribution of *A éolcha Alban uile* to Gilla Cóemáin is similarly inconsistent. The earliest extant manuscript witnesses of the poem are found in Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh's *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach* (1649–1666), Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (1633–1634), and John Colgan's *Trias Thaumaturga* (1647); but none of these sources contain attributions to Gilla Cóemáin; and it is only in manuscripts dating from the nineteenth century that these attributions can be found.[144] *A*

[140] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 28.

[141] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 27.

[142] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 28–9.

[143] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin,* 28.

[144] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin*, 30.

éolcha Érenn airde has been edited and translated by Peter Smith[145] who dates the composition of the poem to the beginning of the Early Modern Irish period and asserts that the attribution to Gilla Cóemáin cannot be substantiated.[146] Nevertheless, the poem will prove useful for the present inquiry, since "it tells us which kings merited inclusion in the final, canonical *réim rígraide* of the pre-Christian kings of Ireland in the eyes of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Irish scholars."[147] *A éolcha Alban uile* has been edited and translated by Kenneth Jackson who dates its composition to the late eleventh century but refrains from endorsing the attribution to Gilla Cóemáin.[148] In any case, the issue of this attribution is irrelevant, as the poem contains no information of value for present purposes.

Gilla Cóemáin has also been connected to the creation of the *Lebor Bretnach*, a translation into Irish of the Cambro-Latin synthetic historical text, *Historia Brittonum* [=*HB*]. *Historia Brittonum* was probably first composed in the ninth-century, probably c. 830, and exists in several recensions.[149] *Lebor Bretnach* is believed to have been adapted from the so-called Nennian recension of *HB* in the latter half of the eleventh century.[150] Dumville has dated this recension to the middle of the same century.[151] The translation into Irish is attributed to Gilla Cóemáin in at least two manuscripts:

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[145] Peter Smith, "*A eolcha Érenn airde*: A Medieval Poem on the pre-Christian Kings of Ireland," in *ZCP* 60 (2013), 175–238.

[146] Peter Smith, "*A eolcha Érenn airde*," 193.

[147] Peter Smith, "*A eolcha Érenn airde*," 176..

[148] Kenneth Jackson, "The Poem *A eólcha Alban uile*," in *Celtica* 3 (1956), 150.

[149] David Dumville, "The Textual History of 'Lebor Bretnach': A Preliminary Study," in *Éigse* 16 (1975–76), 255–73; Thomas Owen Clancy, "Scotland, the 'Nennian' Recension of *Historia Brittonum*, and the *Lebor Bretnach*," in *Kings, Clerics, and Chronicles in Scotland, 500–1297*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000), 87.

[150] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin*, 30.

[151] David Dumville, "'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*," in *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975–1976), 94.

Dublin, RIA, The Book of Uí Maine, MS Stowe D ii 1 (#1225), f. 91*v*b (later fourteenth century);[152] and Dublin, TCD MS H. 3.17 (#1336) col. 806 (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries).[153] The saints' genealogies of Laud Misc. 610 seem to contain an attribution to Gilla Cóemáin as well.[154] Heinrich Zimmer believed that the ascriptions were accurate;[155] but after a good deal of scholarly debate,[156] the issue is still considered unresolved. The latest word on the matter would seem to come from Thomas Owen Clancy who rejects the attribution.[157] Fortunately, for present purposes the degree to which the attribution can be relied upon is less important than the fact that *Lebor Bretnach* is a valuable source for the state of development of Irish pseudohistory, including the Milesian narrative, in the eleventh century. For a study of the development of Irish genealogical theory, it will, in Peter Smith's words, "suffice to say that Gilla Cóemáin appears to have been linked with the *Lebor Bretnach* from an early period."[158]

(e) Eochaid (Eólach) úa Céirín (fl.?)

There are two extant poems attributed to Eochaid úa Céirín, a (probably) eleventh-century scholar about whom little is known. I have been unable to locate any reference to him in any of the annals,

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[152] *Sequitur leabur breatnach. Incipit de britania airte q*ua*m neni*us c*onstruxit. Gilla coemai*n *roimpai i Scotic.*

[153] *Incipit de Britai*n*ia ante q'q' Nemius construxit; in puer autem Cœcain conue*r*tid i Scotig.*

[154] *Cairnech mac Luitheich meic Dalann meic Ithachair meic Ata. Is amlaid sin innisus Gilla Caemain i stairib na m*B*retnach quod do Bretnaib Cornn do ⁊ is uime at-berar Cornech fris* (Daibhí Ó Cróinín (ed. & tr.), *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi* (Dublin: DIAS, 1983), 50.)

[155] Heinrich Zimmer, *Nennius Vindicatus. Über Entstehung, Geschichte und Quellen der Historia Brittonum* (Berlin, 1893), 14–49.

[156] Rudolf Thurneysen, "Zu Nemnius (Nennius)," in *ZCP* 20 (1936), 97–132, esp. 102; Hans Oskamp, "On the Author of *Sex Aetates Mundi*," in *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968), 127–40; David Dumville, "'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*," 87–9.

[157] Thomas Owen Clancy, "Scotland, the 'Nennian' Recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, and the *Lebor Bretnach*," in *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland 500–1297*, edited by Simon Taylor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 106–7.

[158] Peter Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin*, 31.

but he is mentioned by one of the interpolators (H1) of *Lebor na hUidre* (=LU),[159] who credits the collation of information regarding legendary figures buried at Crúachán which he adds to the end of *Aided Nath Í* to Eochaid and an unspecified Flann:

> *Fland tra ⁊ Eochaid eolach húa Cérin is íat ro thinolsat so a llebraib Eochoda hui Flandacan i nArd Macha ⁊ a llebraib Manistrech ⁊ asna lebraib togaidib archena .i. asin Libur Budi testo asin carcar i nArd Macha ⁊ as in Libur Girr boí i mManistir ⁊ is side ruc in mac legind leis i ngait dar muir ⁊ ní fríth ríam di éis. Conid senchas na relec insin*
>
> "Flann and Eochaid Eólach úa Céirín gathered this from the books of Eochaid úa Flannacán in Armagh and from the books of Monasterboice and from (the) other choice books, i.e. from the Yellow Book which is missing from the prison/strong-room(?) in Armagh and from the Short Book which was in Monasterboice which the pupil took away in theft over the sea and which has never been recovered. And that is 'The Lore of the Burial Places.'"[160]

The Flann mentioned may, perhaps, be Flann Mainistrech; certainly that would explain the access of the two scholars to the monastery's library. If this is the case, then the *floruit* of Eochaid úa Céirín was probably in the first half of the eleventh century. Given the paucity of information about Eochaid, however, it seems best to consider the works attributed to him on their own terms and contextualize them within the corpus of Middle Irish pseudohistorical texts.

Of the two works considered to have been composed by Eochaid Eólach, one, a *dindshenchas* poem on Loch Garman, has no bearing on the current inquiry, although it does contain some interesting tidbits concerning the Fir Bolg and Cathaír Már.[161] The other composition is rubricated as *Dúan in chethrachat cest* ("The poem of the forty questions") and begins *Apraid a éolchu Elga* ("Say, learned of Ireland").[162] It is a didactic text in which various questions requiring a knowledge of Irish synthetic

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[159] Our understanding of the paleography of LU has recently been greatly expanded by Elizabeth Duncan who has shown that the scribal hand described by Best and Bergin in the their transcription of the codex as 'H' or 'the interpolator' is in fact at least six separate hands (Elizabeth Duncan, "The Paleography of H in Lebor na hUidre," in *Lebor na hUidre*, Codices Hibernenses Eximii 1, ed. Ruairí Ó hUiginn (Dublin: RIA, 2015), 29–52).

[160] Richard Best and Osborn Bergin (ed.), *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin: DIAS, 1929), 94.

[161] Edward Gwynn (ed. & tr.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, vol. 3, Todd Lecture Series 10 (Dublin: RIA, 1906), 168–83.

[162] Rudolf Thurneysen (ed. & tr.), "Das Gedicht *der vierzig Fragen von Eochaid úa Cérin*," in *ZCP* 13 (1921), 132–6.

history are asked in verse with the answers following in prose. The Túatha Dé provide the predominant amount of the material, but references to the early Goídil and interactions between the Túatha Dé and the Ulaid are also present. It is unlikely to contribute much to an understanding of the development of the Milesian genealogical scheme; but that is not entirely clear from a cursory perusal; and further investigation might prove worthwhile.

I.C.2. *Leabhar Gabhála* (*Érenn*)

As mentioned above, LGE is the earliest extant compilation of Irish pseudohistory into a single cohesive text which attempts to cover the entirety of the country's history as well as that of the various groups of settlers who came to her shores. The earliest copy of the text, that found in LL, dates from the twelfth century, although a fragment of the so-called *míniugud* recensions is also incorporated into the somewhat earlier Rawl. B 502 genealogical corpus (c. 1130).[163] LGE was extraordinarily influential on the continuing development of the pseudohistorical tradition. Indeed, it provided the basis for all later pseudohistorical texts and was so popular that several important manuscripts necessary for a thorough editing of the various recensions were made in the eighteenth century, well after the demise of the traditional schools and traditional Gaelic society in Ireland generally.

LGE is not a text that can be said to have been 'rediscovered' by modern scholars, since the historiographical fictions it contained were still relied upon by Irish antiquarians and historians up to the nineteenth century, and Irish schoolchildren were still taught that they all shared a common

[163] CGH, 117–22.

ancestry in Míl Espáine until as late as the mid-twentieth century.[164] Modern critical analysis of LGE and its various recensions can only be said to have begun, like so many sources for medieval Irish history, literature, and intellectual history, in the very late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. H. d'Arbois de Jubainville gave his views on the mythological importance of LGE in *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology*,[165] whereas Thurneysen and van Hamel were first to tackle the issue of the relationships between the various manuscripts and recensions of LGE a short time later.[166] As Scowcroft notes, however, Thurneysen and van Hamel were unaware of several manuscript witnesses "that would have prompted the revision of their theories."[167] R.A.S. Macalister was the first to note several of these other witnesses, namely those found in the fourteenth-century Book of Fermoy, in RIA MS Stowe D.iii.1., which completes the Book of Fermoy versions, and RIA MS Stowe D.i.3., which completes the version Scowcroft terms Y.[168] Macalister's work on LGE continued for the next twenty years as he brought out an (incomplete) edition in five volumes.[169] Macalister's edition has been poorly received.[170] Although his reviewers

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[164] I was made aware of this through an anecdote told by Prof. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh's during a lecture for his "Early Irish Historical Tales" class for which I served as Teaching Fellow in the spring of 2013.

[165] H. d'Arbois de Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle and Celtic Mythology*, trans. with additional notes by R.I. Best (Dublin: 1903). Originally published as *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais et le Mythologie Celtic* (Paris: Thorin et fils, 1884).

[166] Rudolf Thurneysen, "Zu irischen Handschriften und Litteraturdenkmälern," vol. 2, (Berlin: Weidmannsche buchhandlung, 1913), 3–9; idem, "Zum Lebor Gabála," in *ZCP* 10 (1915), 384–95; idem, "Zur keltischen Litteratur und Grammatik," in *ZCP* 12 (1918), 283f.; A.G. van Hamel, "On Lebor Gabála," in *ZCP* 10 (1915), 97–197.

[167] Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála* – Part I: The Growth of the Text," 82.

[168] R.A.S. Macalister, "The 'Fermoy' Copy of Lebor Gabála," in *Ériu* 11 (1932), 172n.

[169] R.A.S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn:* The Book of the Taking of Ireland, 5 vols., ITS 34, 35, 39, 41, and 44 (Dublin: DIAS, 1938–56.) John Carey wrote a new introduction to the edition for its reprinting in 1993 which is invaluable to those wishing to consult the text: John Carey, *A New Introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland, edited and translated by R. A. Stewart Macalister, D.Litt.*, ITS Subsidiary Series 1 (London: Irish Texts Society, 1993). A sixth volume provides an index of names, which the original five volumes all lacked: Pádraig Ó Riain, *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland Part 6, Index of Names* (Dublin: DIAS, 2009).

[170] Paul Walsh, Review of *Lebor Gábala Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland,* vols. 1–3, in *Irish Historical Studies* 2 (1941), 88–91, 330–3; Macalister's reply can be found on pp. 208–10 of the same volume. He was denied the chance to respond to Binchy's review of LGE 4 (Daniel A. Binchy, "Review of Lebor Gabála Érenn: the Book of the Taking of Ireland. Part 4," in Celtica 2 (1952–4), 195–209), as the review was published after Macalister's death.

focused primarily on Macalister's linguistic errors, it is his eccentric critical apparatus and formatting which truly makes the edition almost impossible to use, so that most scholars simply consult and cite the manuscript witness directly rather than navigate the labyrinthine presentation of the text in Macalister's edition.[171]

The failings of the edition would be far easier to overlook if it had ever been superseded by a superior one; but no such improvement appeared in the nearly sixty years since volume 5 was printed; and study of LGE has been retarded as a result. To quote Scowcroft on the matter:

> "...most scholars citing LGE to date ignore Macalister's edition, referring instead to lines in one of the MSS (usually the Book of Leinster). In doing so, they limit themselves to one copy of a text that shows great variation from recension to recension–even from manuscript to manuscript–and unwittingly promote a misconception about LGE that would delight its authors, viz. that it represents a primordial and fixed tradition. Macalister's edition has thus inhibited rather than encouraged critical enquiry into LGE. Until a more serviceable edition appears, however, students of the tradition must still consult this one–which, if less intelligible than a single manuscript, is more convenient than sixteen."[172]

Indeed, the appendix to Scowcroft's article render the edition much more serviceable, allowing the reader to easily identify the recension and manuscript to which the text of any given portion of Macalister's edition belongs.[173]

(a) Recensions

Leaving aside the recension completed by Míchéal Ó Cléirigh in 1631, four main recensions of LGE have been identified. The table below indicates to which recension each manuscript witness belongs

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[171] Scowcroft's discussion of the editions editorial failings can be read in "*Leabhar Gabhála* – Part I: The Growth of the Text," 82–3. Despite his unforgiving assessment of the edition (one can sense the accumulation of frustrations which Scowcroft undoubtedly encountered in attempting to consult the edition), he does make a point of mentioning Macalister's "great industry and erudition" (p. 82).

[172] Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála* – Part I: The Growth of the Text," 83.

[173] Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála* – Part I: The Growth of the Text," 139–45.

(Scowcroft's *sigla* are given first with Macalister's in parentheses when they differ):

FIGURE 1.3 – LGE RECENSIONS AND MSS

a (R^1)	LL (L)	Book of Leinster, TCD MS H.2.18 (# 1339)
	F (F^1, F^2)	Book of Fermoy, RIA MSS 23.E.29 (# 1134) and Stowe D.iii.l (#671)
	–	Longford-Westmeath County Library (Mullingar), Gaelic MS 1 (represents an intermediate stage between LL and F)
b (R^2)	E	TCD MS E.3.5, no. 2 (# 1433)
	R	Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 512
	Y (V^1, V^2)	RIA MSS Stowe D.v.1 (# 537) and D.iv.1 (# 538)), thought to belong to the original Yellow Book of Lecan.
	L (Λ)	The Great Book of Lecan, RIA MS 23.P.2 (#535)
	P	NLI MS Phillipps 10266 (# G 10)
	D	RIA MS Stowe D.iv.3 (# 1224), RIA MS 23.H.28 (# 712)
c (R^3)	L (M)	The Great Book of Lecan, RIA MS 23.P.2 (#535)
	BB (B)	Book of Ballymote, RIA MS 23.P. 12 (# 536)
	B (β, $β^1$, $β^2$)	Three eighteenth-century copies of BB, which supply portions of the text that it has since lost: TCD MS H.2.4 (# 1295);TCD MS H.1.15 (# 1289); RIA MS Stowe D.iii.2 (#619)
	H	TCD MS H.2.15a (# 1316)
	–	RIA MS 24.P. 13
m (Mín/μ)	R	Bodleian MS Rawlinson B 512, follows *b*
	Y (V^3)	RIA MS Stowe D.i.3 (# 539), follows *b*
	L	The Great Book of Lecan, RIA MS 23.P.2 (#535), follows *b*
	–	A fragment incorporated into the Rawl B 502 genealogical corpus

As Scowcroft explains, however, all recensions demonstrate a significant degree of *contaminatio* with one another so that any stemma based upon them, including the one which he himself proposes, is to some degree simplified. He even proposes several subrecensions, the members of which, one should note, do not necessarily belong to the same recension:

FIGURE 1.4 – SCOWCROFT'S LGE SUBRECENSIONS

f	F and c
r	E and R
l	Y, Lb, Lm, and probably P
d	D, 24.P.13, and substantial portions of 23.H.28

As I have noted above Scowcroft's approach to LGE is similar to the one I endorse for the genealogical corpus, i.e. the material contained within any of the redactions of LGE should not be considered a 'fixed component' of any one recension but rather breadcrumbs on the track of medieval Irish historiographical/ethnogenetic thought. Paleographers working with Irish manuscripts have long recognized that older manuscripts do not necessarily contain the oldest material, and this is even more the case with the pseudohistorical material than with the sagas. Scowcroft explains that "once written, a pseudo-historical doctrine does not necessarily remain fixed, but evolves as the authors harmonize it with the many other voices of tradition. They innovate in their very efforts to conserve, forming a synthesis that other schools may refuse for centuries to accept."[174]

(b) The Constituent Tracts of LGE

LGE is a compilatory work comprised of several distinct tracts of long prose passages interspersed with extended verse such as those composed (supposedly) by the five pseudohistorical poets discussed above (I.B.2). From Scowcroft's discussion of these tracts,[175] I have composed the following outline of LGE in the order in which he presents the material and, with a few exceptions noted below, employed the titles he assigns to the various sections:

[174] Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála.* Part I: The Growth of the Text," 138.

[175] Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála.* Part I: The Growth of the Text," 101–23.

TRACT I: The Origins and Wanderings of the Gaedil
- A. Introductory Matter
- B. The Origins of Nations and Lineage of the Gaedil
- C. The Wanderings of the Gaedil [*De Imthechtaib Gaedel*]

TRACT II: *De Gabálaib Érenn*
- A. Introduction
- B. The Antediluvians
- C. Cessair
- D. Partholón
- E. Nemed
  - 1. *Gabáil Nemid*
  - 2. *Togail Tuir Chonaind*
- F. Fir Bolg
  - 1. *Gabáil Fer mBo*LGE
  - 2. *Immirgi Mac nUmóir*
- G. Túatha Dé Danann
  - 1. *Gabáil Túath nDé*
  - 2. Kings of the Túatha Dé Danann
  - 3. *Genelach Túath nDé*
- H. The Sons of Míl
  - 1. The Death of Íth
  - 2. *Gabáil Mac Míled*

TRACT III: Do Fhlathiusaib Érenn (The Monarchies of Ireland)
- A. Érimón and the Picts
- B. *Do Fhlaithiusaib Érenn* and *Réim Rígraide*
- C. The *dindshenchas* of Emain Macha[176]
- D. Túathal Techtmar and the *Bórama*

TRACT IV: *Comaimsera Ríg in Domuin ocus Gabál nÉrenn/fri Rígaib Érenn*

TRACT V: Christian Kings of Ireland
- A. *Do Fhlaithiusaib ⁊ Aimseraib Hérend íar Creitim*
- B. *Comaimsera Ríg nÉrenn ⁊ Ríg na Cóiced íar Creitim* (*b* only)
- C. Flann Mainistrech's king-list[177]
- D. The King-list in R*m*
- E. Provincial Kings (BB)

Since Tract I is concerned with the Milesians before the point at which they split into the various lineages from which the medieval Irish population groups traced their ancestry, it has little bearing

[176] This passage was omitted by Macalister in his edition.

[177] Consisting of: *Érimón is Éber ard*, *Ríg Temra día tesband tnú*, and *Ríg Temra taebaige íartain*; the first has no attribution but the others are attributed to Flann.

on the dynastic/political motivations behind the creation of the various Milesian lineages. When considered together with Tract II, however, the various recensions of the first two tracts shed a great deal of light upon the development of the various invasions and, crucially, upon the distinction drawn between the 'Partholonian,' 'Nemetian, and 'Milesian' settlers of Ireland.[178] Tract III is likely to contain a good deal of useful information, particularly as parts A and D are concerned with the relations between the prehistoric Milesians and other Irish population groups. Tract IV which consists of synchronisms between rulers of Ireland and the rulers of Ancient and Classical kingdoms is very unlikely to contribute much to a study of the Milesian scheme's development except insofar as this tract might diverge from other lists of pre-Christian Irish kings. The admittance of a larger number of Síl nÍr or Síl Luigdech meic Ítha kings into the regnal lists of Tract IV than in other regnal lists might indicate the survival of an early stage of the scheme reflective of a time in which the dynasties claiming descent from Éremón and Éber had not yet established exclusionary dominance. Tract V is unlikely to contain much, if any, information of use, as it is concerned with (more or less) historical rulers; and modification of the genealogical scheme is only made by the invention and sorting of prehistoric ancestral figures.

(c) Poems in LGE Attributed to the Pseudohistorical Poets

The presence of poems attributed to the poets listed I.B.2. in LGE, but which also have an independent existence elsewhere, requires one to consider these compositions both in isolation, as compositions based upon pseudohistorical doctrine current during the *floruits* of their respective authors, but also in context, as integral parts of LGE which supported the doctrines of the surrounding material in which they were placed. One of the most vexing and highly criticized

[178] This is discussed at length in by Mark Scowcroft in "Leabhar Gabhála–Part II: The Growth of the Tradition," in *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66.

aspects of Macalister's edition is that he separated the poems of LGE from the prose which surrounded them. The consequences of this editorial decision have been as severe as the eccentric arrangement of the prose text, since it requires a far greater degree of effort to consider the poems in their proper context than should be necessary.

I.C.3. *Historia Brittonum*

Though largely unconcerned with Irish matters, *Historia Brittonum* [=HB] does contain a passage which reflects a familiarity with some version of the learned myths which gave rise to LGE. In this passage an expedition to Ireland led by the three sons of a Spanish soldier (*tres filii militis Hispaniae*) i.e. Míl Espáine and their disastrous assault upon a glass tower rising from the sea is narrated.[179] These three sons are, regrettably, left anonymous in HB, but mention is made of other, earlier inhabitants of the country led by *Partholomus* (Partholón) and *Nimeth filius...Agnominis* (Nemed mac Agnomain). Slightly later, the reader is informed that the Irish descend from a Scythian prince who was expelled from Egypt shortly after the Exodus of the Israelites, an account which mirrors exactly that in LGE and other pseudohistorical works and which the author of HB asserts "was related to [him] by the most learned of the Irish."[180] HB, therefore, provides an important *terminus ante quem*, c. 830, for the doctrines of the Partholonian and Nemetian invasions and of the Scythian origins of the Irish.

[179] *Historia Brittonum*, ii.13.

[180] *sic mihi peritissimi Scottorum nuntiaverunt* (*Historia Brittonum*, ii.15).

II. TWO VARIANT SCHEMES

In its canonical formulation the Milesian scheme holds that all of Sil nÉremóin descended through Éremón's son Iarél Fáith and all of Síl nÉbir through Éber's son Conmáel. Close examination of the genealogical corpus, however, reveals two variant schemes wholly incompatible with the standard formulation and which were ultimately abandoned during the course of the scheme's development. In the first of these variants Núadu Argatlám is presented as an important apical ancestor of the Goídil. The second variant is only obliquely hinted at in our sources, but it involves having members of Síl nÉremóin and Síl nÉbir descend from sons of Éremón and Éber other than Iarél Fáith or Conmáel respectively.

II.A. Núadu Argatlám

Núadu Argatlám is best known in Irish pseudohistory as a king of the Túatha Dé Danann[181] and should, therefore, not have a place within the Milesian scheme. The name Núadu is not uncommon within the genealogical corpus or within the sagas – fourteen individuals bearing that name are listed in the index of CGH[182] – but the presence of a Núadu with the epithet Argatlám is immediately striking given his status as a non-Milesian figure within the pseudohistorical tradition. Núadu Argatlám appears in four items in the corpus.

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[181] J. Fraser, "The First Battle of Moytura," in *Ériu* 8 (1916), 1-63; Elizabeth Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*; R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 21, 33, 98, 99, 103, 104, 127, 131, 133, 159, 167, 171, 187, 195, 247, 296; LGE V, 7, 25, 27.

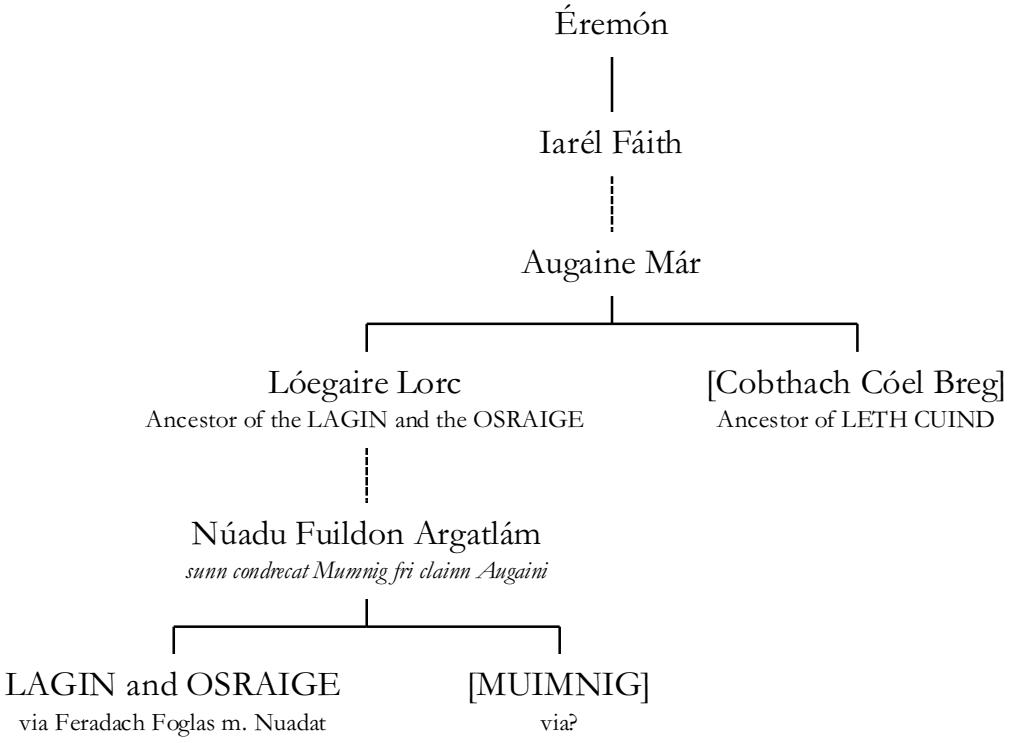
[182] As we shall see though, at least three more of these individuals – Núadu Fáil m. Ailcheda, Núadu Find Fáil m. Gíallchada, and Núadu Find Fáil m. Ailella Oalchloín – should be considered the same personage.

(a) *Genelach Osrithe*

The pedigree entitled *Genelach Osrithe* (=GO) is noteworthy for several reasons and will be revisited several times in the course of the current investigation. The immediately relevant entry reads: …*Núad[u] Fuildon Argatláim; sunn condrecat Mumnig fri clainn Augaini*.[183]

The children of Augaine Már are to be understood as the Laigin and Síl Cuind, i.e. the *sáerthúatha* of Síl nÉremóin in the canonical scheme. The importance of this passage is that it implies a scheme in which Síl nÉbir does not exist since the Munstermen descend from Éremón:

FIGURE 2.1 – NÚADU, GENELACH OSRITHE

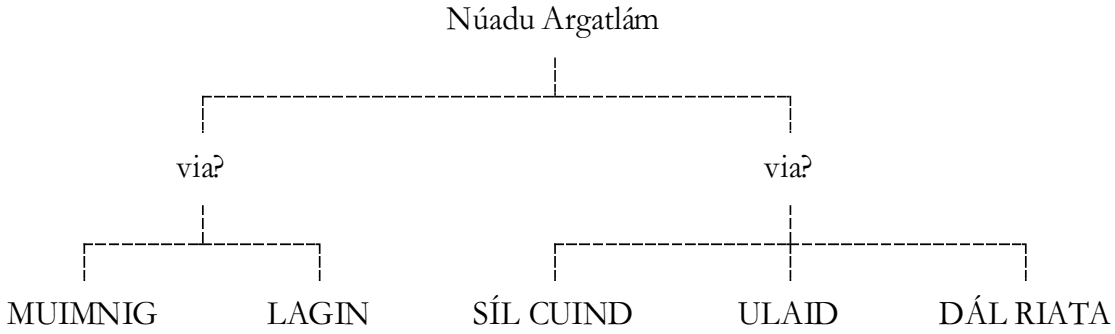


[183] "…Núadu Fuildon Argatlám; here the Munstermen join to the children of Augaine (Már)" (CGH, 16).

(b) The Airgíalla Genealogies

A juncture given in the Airgíalla section of the corpus reads: *Oc Núadait Argatláim con-drecat Muimnig ⁊ Laigin fri Síl Cuind co nUltaib ⁊ Dál Ríata.*[184] This juncture proposes a genealogical framework similar to that in GO, but closer analysis reveals an important difference.

FIGURE 2.2 – NÚADU, AIRGÍALLA GENEALOGIES



In GO, Núadu links the Munstermen to the Laigin *after* the split between the Leinstermen and Síl Cuind at Augaine Már. In this item, however, Núadu appears to serve the role normally assumed by Augaine in the genealogical framework by providing the linkage between the Leinstermen and Síl Cuind. Therefore, it is unclear where, if anywhere, Augaine should be placed within this framework as his role has apparently been obviated. Nevertheless, the framework suggested by this item resembles that in GO in two very important ways: (1) the Munstermen and Leinstermen are assumed to be more closely related to each other than either is to Síl Cuind, and (2) Síl nÉbir does not appear to exist.

(c) *Comúamm na nGenelach*

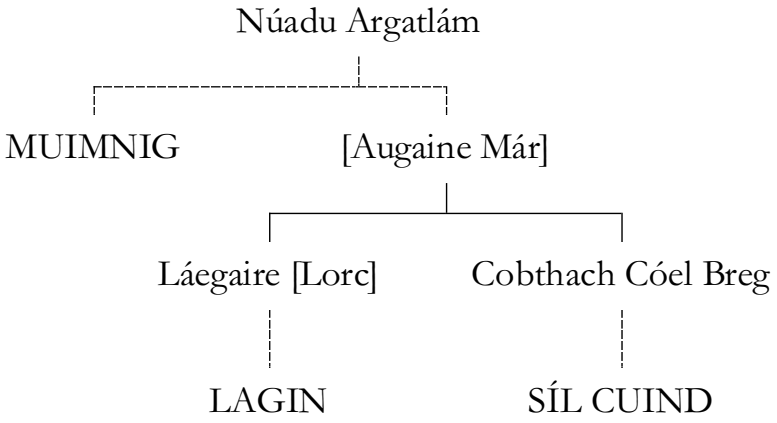
Comúamm na nGenelach (=CnG) is one of the few items in the corpus exclusively comprised of junctures. The relevant passage reads:

[184] "At Núadu Argatlám the Munstermen and the Leinstermen meet Síl Cuind along with the Ulstermen and Dál Ríata" (CGH, 153).

> *Dá mac Úgaine: Cobthach Cóel Breg a quo Leth Cuind ⁊ Láegaire a quo Laigin. Hic Núadait Argatláim [condrecat] Muimnig fri clannaib Úgaine. Dá mac oc Núadait Argatlám: Glass ⁊ Cú-oiss. Glass a quo sunt Síl Cuind ⁊ Dál Ríata ⁊ Ulaid ⁊ Laigin ⁊ Ossairgi; Cú-oiss a quo Muimnich nammá.*
>
> "The two sons of Augaine: Cobthach Cóel Breg from whom is Leth Cuind and Láegaire from whom are the Leinstermen. At Núadu Argatlám the Munstermen meet the children of Augaine. Núadu Argatlám has two sons: Glass and Cú Oiss. Glass from whom are Síl Cuind, and Dál Ríata, and Ulaid, and Laigin, and Osraige; Cú Oiss from whom are only the Munstermen."[185]

This passage is clearly the result of a failed attempt to harmonize contradictory genealogical schemes. The first sentence is perfectly straightforward and fully in accord with the standard version of the genealogical scheme. The second sentence, however, presents a problem. On its own, it would appear to reflect a scheme similar to that provided in the Airgíalla genealogies, namely that Núadu is the common ancestor of the Munstermen, the Leinstermen, and Síl Cuind. The reconstructed tree would look like this:

FIGURE 2.3 – NÚADU, COMÚAMM NA NGENELACH (1)

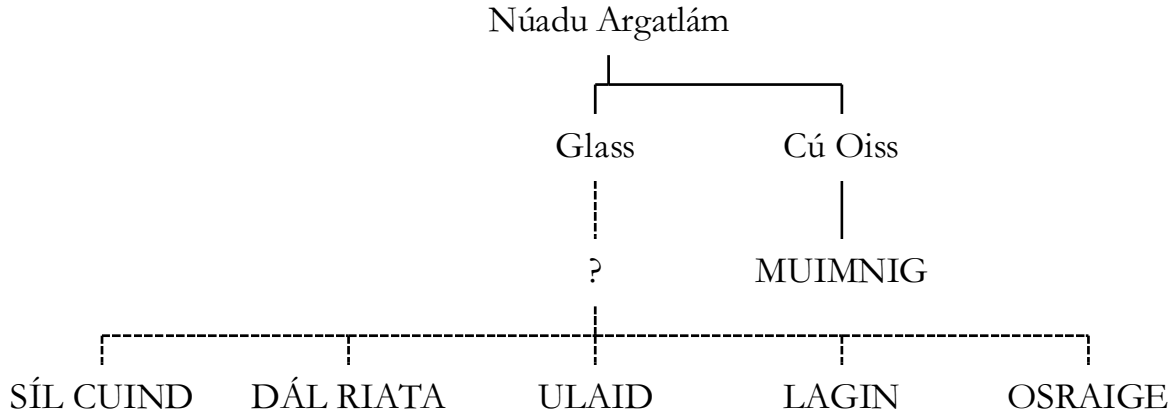


Within the corpus, however, the genealogical demarcation *clann(a) Augaini* is only found in this item and in GO. This would indicate that they shared a common source, or that one is the source of the other. In that case, we would reconstruct a tree for *Comúamm na nGenelach* essentially identical to that reconstructed for GO, but we must also allow for the possibility that the compiler of GO was faced

[185] CGH, 137.

with irreconcilable source material and had to ignore the apparent meaning of the term 'clann Augaine' in order to accommodate both Augaine Már and Núadu in the same pedigree. It is, regrettably, impossible to be sure which interpretation is correct. By contrast, it is perfectly easy to reconstruct a tree for the last two sentences of the passage, and doing so reveals a rather startling variant of the standard genealogical scheme:

FIGURE 2.4 – NÚADU, COMÚAMM NA NGENELACH (2)



Here, Núadu serves the same role as Míl Espáine in the standard scheme, and his two sons, Glass and Cú Oiss, serve the same roles as Éremón and Éber respectively. As in the Airgíalla genealogies, Núadu is presented as the common ancestor of most, if not all, of the Goidelic peoples of Ireland, though it differs in having the Laigin (and the Osraige) more closely related to Síl Cuind, the Ulaid, and Dál Ríata than to the Muimnig.

(d) *Genelach Éoganachta Caissil* (=GEC)

This item appears to preserve a transitional step along the process of splitting the Munstermen from Síl nÉremóin and the full elaboration of Síl nÉbir as a fixture of the scheme. The pedigree begins with Cathal m. Finguine, an Éoganacht king who died in 742,[186] and extends back through the

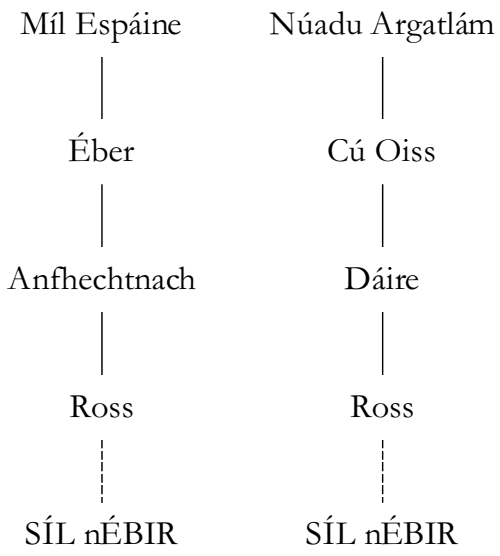
[186] AU 742.

familiar Éoganachta ancestral figures such as Ailill Aulomm, Dúach Dalta Dedaid, and shadowy figures such as Éllim Ollfhínsneachta who are often unknown outside of either the regnal lists or other extended pedigrees. The pedigree ends as follows:

> …[*Ross*] *m. Dáire m. Con-oiss m. Núadat Argatláim nó ita:* [*Ross*] *Anfechtnaig m. Ébir m. Míled Mórglonnaig Espáine qui et nuncupatur mac Nema m. Bili n. Bregaind las ro chumtacht Brigantia ,rl.*
>
> "…Ross son of Dáire son of Cú Oiss son of Núadu Argatlám, or thus: son of Ross Anfhechtnach son of Éber son of Míl of Great Deeds of Spain, who is also called 'the son of Nem,' son of Bile son of Bregand by whom Brigantia was constructed."[187]

After first noting that Ross and Anfhectnach are separate figures in every redaction of the pedigree besides that found in Rawlinson, the two, competing versions of the pedigree can be reconstructed as follows:

FIGURE 2.5 – NÚADU, GENELACH ÉOGANACHTA CAISSIL



As with CnG, it is apparent that the redactor found himself unable to harmonize radically different traditions regarding the origins of the Munstermen. Indeed, the scribe admits as much in an aside to the entry for Eochaid Fer Áine m. Dúach Dalta Dedaid: *is brecht trá fo-gabar in genelach-sa óthá so sís et*

[187] CGH, 199.

tamen sic inuenitur in Psalterio Caissil ("From here onwards, this pedigree is found to be inconsistent, however it is found thus in the Psalter of Cashel").[188] The first of these traditions asserts that they descend from Éber m. Míled. The second accords with the scheme presented in GO, the Airgíalla genealogies, and CnG, i.e. that the Muimnig are related to the other Goidelic population groups through Núadu Airgetlám. Moreover, although the absence of negative testimony cannot be a substitute for affirmative testimony, the scheme laid out in GEC does not explicitly contradict that found in CnG. Which is to say that, although the pedigree in GEC does not mention Glass m. Núadat and state that Leth Cuind descends from him, there is nothing in GEC which would necessarily gainsay such a scheme. Notwithstanding the omission of any reference to Glass m. Núadat, GEC does unequivocally preserve the trace of a scheme in which the Munstermen did not have Éber m. Míled as their apical ancestor.

It must still be noted, however, that both hypothetical ancestral lines for Cathal, the one passing through Cú Oiss to connect to Núadu and the other passing through Ross m. Anfhechtnaig to connect to Éber, diverge from the scheme as it was later formulated. All of Síl nÉbir *should* descend from Conmáel m. Ébir, but he is absent from this eighth-century pedigree entirely. This heterodox version of the Síl nÉbir line of descent is also found in the versified pedigree *Cú cen máthair, maith [a] chlann* which directly follows GEC in the Rawlinson, Lec., and BB redactions of the corpus.

Cú Cen Máthair was Cathal's grandfather and died in 665, so the supposition naturally follows that the poem, and the Síl nÉbir pedigree found within it, date to the 660s. Carney, however, argued that *Cú cen máthair, maith [a] chlann* and the bits of verse extolling other Munster figures of the seventh century which follow it were later imitations of the archaic Leinster genealogical poems and thus

[188] CGH, 198.

dismisses the possibility of a seventh-century date of composition for the verses.[189] He argues that "rhymes such as *móir : óir, óir : cóir, rían : Brían*, apart from other considerations, show immediately that they are not authentic. They borrow extensively from *Énna Labraid / lúad cáich*. I would suggest that they were written by Cormac mac Cuilennáin (†908) who is here tentatively regarded as the later Compiler of the genealogies."[190] While it can readily be conceded that this body of Munster genealogical verse was made in conscious imitation of the still earlier Leinster genealogical poems, there seems little reason to date *Cú cen máthair, maith [a] chlann* as late as the turn of the tenth century.[191]

As for the suspected involvement of Cormac mac Cuilennáin, it is entirely based upon his traditional association with the now lost Psalter of Cashel; but all such attributions are late.[192] In 1911 Eoin Mac Neill argued that the common core shared by the Laud 610, BB, and LL redactions of the corpus was comprised of several strata; none of which coincide with the reign of Cormac:

> "1. An early, chiefly eighth century, group corresponding to the older narrative matter.
> 2. A group about 975–1000.
> 3. A small group about 1050.
> 4. A small group about 1100–1125.
> Groups 1 and 2 may be regarded as forming the main original text, drawn up about the close of the tenth century. Groups 3 and 4 do not indicate a fresh compilation, and are sufficiently accounted for..."[193]

[189] James Carney, "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," in *Ériu* 22 (1971), 67.

[190] James Carney, "Three Old Irish Accentual Poems," in *Ériu* 22 (1971), 67.

[191] The other verses are not here considered. While not explicitly agreeing with Carney's proposed date for *Cú cen máthair, maith [a] chlann*, Byrne agrees that the other, smaller verses following it were probably composed later, perhaps in the late ninth century (F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 179).

[192] Padraig Ó Riain, "The Psalter of Cashel: A Provisional List of Contents," in *Éigse* 23 (1989), 116–7.

[193] Eoin Mac Neill, "Notes on the Laud Genealogies," in *ZCP* 8 (1911), 416.

Ó Riain, in his survey of the material associated with the Psalter, explicitly rejects Cormac's association with the Psalter and proposes that the material referred to in later sources was actually compiled under the direction of Brían Bórama in the early years of the eleventh-century.[194] More recently, however, Bart Jaski's excellent reappraisal of the material associated with the Psalter has made a very convincing argument that the records attributed to the Psalter fall into three date ranges: c.740, c.900, and c.1000.[195] He further notes that "there are some examples [of material] which suggest that the compilation of c.740 contained still earlier records."[196] Whether this core of eighth-century material was contemporaneously known as the Psalter of Cashel, or simply made up a part of it, or provided the nucleus to which scholars under the direction of Cormac m. Cuilennáin added new information, the preponderance of evidence points to Cathal m. Finguine as the king under whose authority the first major collection of Munster genealogical material was assembled. In this context, it seems likely then that *Cú cen máthair, maith [a] chlann* was composed during the reign of Cathal as part of an attempt to aggrandize his line of the Éoganacht Chaissil. If this is correct, then the genealogical doctrine which has Síl nÉbir descend from Ross m. Anfhechtnaig m. Ébir can be safely said to have been actively circulating in the first half of the eighth-century but may well have been introduced from even earlier genealogical material.

II.A.2. Núadu Déclám and Núadu (Find) Fáil

Additional data regarding Núadu's role in the early development of the genealogical scheme can be gleaned by expanding the investigation to include other personages of that name who appear in the corpus while still limiting the scope to those who have a son named Glas, Cú Oiss, or both. Three

[194] Padraig Ó Riain, "The Psalter of Cashel: A Provisional List of Contents," in *Éigse* 23 (1989), 127–8.

[195] Bart Jaski, "The Genealogical Section of the Psalter of Cashel," in *Peritia* 17/18 (2003), 309.

[196] Bart Jaski, "The Genealogical Section of the Psalter of Cashel," 309–10.

other figures named Núadu are said to have sons by those names in the corpus: Núadu Déclám, Núadu Fáil, and Núadu Find Fáil.[197]

(a) Núadu Déclám

Núadu Déclám appears in two item: *Mínigud Senchais Ébir* (MSE)[198] and *Item de Genelogiis Regum Muminensium* (GRM).[199] In MSE, a discursive passage introducing the Síl nÉbir genealogies, we are told that Núadu Déclám was the son of Conmáel m. Ébir and had a son named Glas – indeed, the pedigree in which Glas is included is identical to the portion of GEC in which Núadu Argatlám appears except that Glas, not Cú Oiss, is the son of Núadu from whom Síl nÉbir descends.[200] Moreover, we are explicitly told in MSE that "Síl nÉbir comes from Núadu"[201] and that "the kings who took [the kingship of] Ireland are of Núadu's race and from his race are all of the Éoganachta"[202] although the LL, Lec., and BB redactions of the item specify that it is only those kings of Ireland who are from Munster (*a mMumain*) who are descended from Núadu. GRM is a string pedigree which terminates with Muirchertach úa Bríain who assumed the kingship of Ireland in 1094 and so was probably composed shortly thereafter. In it Núadu and Cú Oiss have been integrated into the standard Síl nÉbir line of descent:...[*Ross*] *Rígairlid m. Dáire Deirg m. Con Oiss m. Núadat Décláim m. Echach Fáebair m. Conmaíl m. Ébir m. Míled*.[203]

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[197] These last two are clearly identical; but O'Brien has listed them separately in the index of CGH; so I am listing them separately here for the sake of ease of reference within the volume.

[198] CGH, 186–7.

[199] CGH, 250–1.

[200] CGH, 187.

[201] *Ónd Núadait sunt Síl nÉbir* (CGH, 186).

[202] *Clanna Núadat na ríg immorro ro gabsat hÉrinn ⁊ día chlainn na hÉoganachta huile* (CGH, 187).

[203] CGH, 251.

In all five manuscript sources, Núadu's epithet reads as Declam, without any mark of length, but O'Brien has analyzed the epithet as Déclám. Déclám would seem to be composed of two elements: *déc* (ten) + *lám* (hand); but I am at loss to explain to what personal quality or previous experience to which an epithet meaning 'ten-handed' is meant to refer. In later genealogical collections, such as *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*, however, his epithet is rendered as Deaghlámh, meaning 'best-hand.'[204] If we take Núadu Déclám and Núadu Argetlám to be the same personage, then the epithet Deaghlámh makes a great deal more sense and could refer to the prosthetic hand fitted to Núadu which was then made 'better' by the mythical leech Míach.[205] In any case, the collation of MSE and GRM with the items in which Núadu Argatlám appears makes clear that both he and Núadu Déclám should be considered the same figure.

FIGURE 2.6 – NÚADU DÉCLÁM

MSE	GRM	GEC
	Míl	Míl Mórglonnach
Éber	Éber	Éber
Conmáel	Conmáel	Ross Anfhectnach
Eochaid Fáebor	Eochu Fáebar	——
Núadu Déclám	Núadu Déclám	Núadu Argatlám
Glas	Cú Oiss	Cú Oiss
——	Dáire Derg	Dáire
Ross	Ross Rígairlid	Ross
Rothechtaid	Án Rothectha	Án Rothectaid
Airer Ardda	Airer Arda	Airer Arda
Cas Clothach	Cass Clothach	Cass Clothach
Muimemón	Maine Máraicdech	

[204] Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*, Leabhar Mór na nGenealach*, 599.4, 6; 600.2, 609.3; 1305.1; 1306.2; 1314.1.

[205] Elizabeth Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, 32.

(b) Núadu (Find) Fáil

Núadu Fáil, or Núadu Find Fáil as he is sometimes named, appears in quite a number of items including the LL redaction of GEC, *Genelach Osrithe*, *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibneasta*, several of the early Leinster poems, etc. His father is variously given as either Ailchid (gen. Ailcheda) or Gíallchad (gen. Gíallchada). In the LL version of GEC, Núadu Find Fáil's place in the pedigree is identical with that of Núadu Argatlám in the Rawl. redaction save that Glas is his son and Cú Oiss his grandson.[206] In every other item in which he appears and in which his place within the scheme is made clear, though, he is placed within the Síl nÉremóin line of descent and made a forebear of Augaine Már.[207] This confusion regarding his placement in the scheme is very similar to that shown by his doublet, Núadu Argatlám, and the tradition that Augaine Már descended from Núadu can also be seen in *Comúamm na nGenelach*. That we should identify Núadu (Find) Fáil with Núadu Argatlám is further shown in *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibnesta* in which Núadu Find Fáil m. Gíallchada is said to have had "three excellent sons" (*trí meic airegda*): Cú Oiss, Áedán Glas, and Én Dub.[208]

II.B. *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibnesta*

A second remnant of a variant genealogical scheme was identified by John Kelleher in a juncture item entitled *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibnesta* (=MCC) in which one encounters three suggestively named sons of Éremón m. Míled: Muimne, Luigne, and Laigne.[209] Kelleher argued that Muimne and Laigne are clearly meant to be eponymous ancestors of the peoples of Munster and of Leinster; no doubt the names were devised through back-formation from the names of the historical provinces rather

[206] CGH, 363.

[207] CGH, 3, 6, 16, 129.

[208] CGH, 129.

[209] CGH, 129.

than preserving any sort of ancient ancestral tradition. Explaining Luigne presents more of a challenge. Kelleher suggested that "Luigne denotes the ancestral line of Dál Cuinn, referring either to their physical possession of Tara which lay in ancient Luigne, or perhaps to Lugna Fer Tri who may have been their chief god, a divinity appropriate to a people of three-fold division–Uí Néill, Connachta, and Airgíalla."[210]

Kelleher's conjecture regarding Laigne and Muimne appears self-evident, but his speculation regarding the importance of Luigne remains difficult to reconcile with other sources. The historical Luigne were reckoned to be a *fortúath* of Dál Cuinn, i.e. of Síl nÉbir extraction, in every source which I have encountered which details their origins. Their eponymous ancestor would therefore seem to have been a poor choice for an apical ancestor of Dál Cuinn, the dominant dynasties of roughly sixty percent of the island's land mass in the early historical period.[211] Even so, Kelleher's suggestion remains an attractive one if for no reason other than the fact that such an identification would represent the major 'spheres of influence' of the early historical period: the Laigin ruling Leinster, the Éoganachta ruling Munster, and Dál Cuinn maintaining hegemony over Connacht, most of Ulster, and Meath. Moreover, despite their status as *fortúatha*, the territories of the Luigne, both east and west, had strong associations with the origin legends of Dál Cuinn generally and the Uí Néill specifically. The territory of the western Luigne lay in co. Sligo, where their name was preserved in the Barony of Leyny.[212] O'Flaherty, in his *Ogygia*, asserts that the Luigne of Connacht resided in a

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[210] John Kelleher, "The Pre-Norman Genealogies," 146.

[211] *…it fortúatha Síl Chuind cach óen nach berar genelach co Cond eter nóebu ⁊ rígu amal atát Lugni ⁊ Delmna ⁊ Galenga ⁊ Cíanachta* (CGH, 358); *Clánna Ébeir hi Lleith Chuind .i. Gaelenga tair ⁊ tíar, Cíannachta tess ⁊ túaid, Luigne tair ⁊ tíar ⁊ na cethri Delbna…*(CGH, 246); et al.

[212] Whitley Stokes, *The Martyrology of Gormán*, Henry Bradshaw Society 9 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1895), 319; Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum locorum et tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae: an index, with identifications, to the Gaelic names of places and tribes* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, & Co., 1910), 507.

district called Corann,[213] the region in which Luigne (var. Lugna Fer Trí), apparently the eponymous ancestor of the Luigne, resides in *Geneamuin Chormaic* (=GC).[214] The eastern Luigne resided in co. Meath in the district of Kells, directly adjacent to Tara, the symbolic power center of the Uí Néill.[215] This evidence would seem to suggest the preservation of a vague, mythic memory of a close relationship between the Luigne and the Uí Néill during the ethnogenesis of the latter; conceivably the Luigne and Uí Néill were allies, or possibly 'cousins,' during this period.[216] In any case, Luigne's role as Cormac's fosterer in the Dál Cuinn origin legends *Geneamuin Chormaic* and *Scéla Éogain ⁊ Cormaic* (=SEC) makes clear that the Luigne were a people of some importance within the hegemonic federation of Dál Cuinn in the period in which these tales took shape.

Relationships between eponymous/apical ancestors in origin legends frequently attempt to explain contemporary political dynamics, and placing two such figures in the roles of fosterer and fosterling was a common method of doing so. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has endorsed such an interpretation, arguing that the placement of Luigne and Cormac into these roles in GC and SEC was "intended...as an 'explanation' of the relative status of the population groups in question."[217] That, as Professor Ó Cathasaigh points out, Luigne's role as fosterer is diminished in SEC, the later of the two tales, is telling. In SEC Cormac is fostered first by Luigne for a year, but is given into the care of a figure named Fíachnae Cassán. It seems likely that Fíachnae is a mistake for Fíachra Cassán, one of the

[213] Roderic O'Flaherty, *Ogygia: or a Chronological Account of Irish Events*, trans. Rev. James Hely (Dublin: W. M'Kenzie, 1793), 235–6. The name is preserved in the barony of Corran, co. Sligo.

[214] Vernam Hull (ed.), "Geneamuin Chormaic," in *Ériu* 16 (1956), 82.

[215] Mac Neill notes that the barony of Lune, also nearby, was named for the Lúaigne and not the Luigne *contra* Hogan and Stokes (Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population Groups," in *PRIAC* 29 (1911/1912) p. 73 n.2; Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, 507; Stokes, *The Martyrology of Gormán*, 319)

[216] Donnchadh Ó Corráin has previously reached the same conclusion, even going so far as to raise the possibility that Uí Néill originated among the eventually obscure peoples of northern Connacht such as the Luigne, Gailenga, and Corco'r Trí (Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Historical Need and Literary Narrative," 150–1).

[217] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin: DIAS, 1977), 57.

ancestral figures of the Airgíalla, vassals of the Uí Néill who wrested their territory in central and eastern Ulster from the native Ulaid. One is therefore able to witness the manner in which the narrative of Cormac's youth was reshaped to reflect changing political circumstances. By the eighth century, when the Luigne first appear in the annals, the Airgíalla were by far the most important vassals of the Uí Néill; and the decline of the status of the Luigne is apparent in the designation of their leader Dungalach m. Taichligh as *dux*, *tigerna*, or *toíseach* rather than as *rex* or *rí* as his father is.[218] A simple comparison of the relative amount of material which the corpus preserves relating to the Luigne and to the Airgíalla further underscores the degree to which the Luigne were relegated to a comparatively inconsequential role. Only two pedigrees of the Luigne are preserved in the corpus compared to the several folio pages dedicated entirely to the Airgíalla.[219] A further indication that the Airgíalla replaced the Luigne as the most important vassals of the Uí Néill is shown by how the Airgíalla are accounted part of Dál Cuinn and the nearest relatives of the Uí Néill after the Connachta.[220] Despite the seemingly precipitous decline of the Luigne's fortunes, indications of their earlier importance survive, as for instance in GC when Luigne Fer Trí grants land to Grec mac Arod, the eponymous ancestor of the Grecraige, suggesting that the Luigne were once sufficiently powerful to enfief other population groups.[221]

Whatever the reality of the early relationship between the two population groups might have been, the Luigne had clearly been subordinated to the Uí Néill at an early period. Indeed, if the three sons of Éremón in question ever did have an important role to play in the Milesian scheme, no trace has

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[218] AU 734, 771; AFM 728, 766.

[219] CGH 139–153.

[220] *Na hAirgíalla trá at é as nessom do Úib Néill aithliu Connacht* (CGH, 147).

[221] Vernam Hull, "Geneamuin Chormaic," 83.

survived. Even in the early Leinster poems, the Leinstermen do not descend from Laigne m. Éremóin. Assuming that Kelleher's intuition was correct, any previous role played by the trio within the scheme has been completely nullified in our sources, since even *Mínigud na Cróeb Coibneasta*, states that they had no issue,[222] and the burden of providing a link between Éremón and the peoples of Síl nÉremóin is assumed by their younger brother, Iarél Fáith, in every instance.[223] Still, their genealogical irrelevance notwithstanding, the following verse would seem to indicate that Muimne, Luigne, and Laigne were too well established in early iterations of Irish pseudo-history to excise from the tradition all together:

> *Trí bráithir roptar aidbli, Muimni, Lugni ocus Laigni rannsat hi trí hÉrind n-óig meicc Od<b>a ocus <Éremóin>*
>
> "Three brothers who were abundant/great (?), Muimni, Lugni, and Laigni, divided the whole of Ireland into three, the sons of Odba and Éremón."[224]

Large territorial divisions of the country sometimes acquired the names of their legendary rulers, virtually all of whom were also reckoned to be important ancestral figures. For example, the northern and southern halves of the country, are frequently referred to as Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga, respectively, due to the legendary division effected by Conn Cétchathach and Mug-Núadat. Similarly, the discursive corpus item concerning the sons of Ross Rúad[225] informs us that Cóiced Cairpri (Cairpre's Province/Fifth) was named after Ross' son Cairpre Nía Fer,[226] and many more

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[222]*Héremón trá cethri meic leis .i. Muimni ⁊ Luigni ⁊ Láigni ⁊ Iarél Fáith a sósar. At-berat araili sé meic aili oca .i. Aan, Edenn, Áine, Cathíar, Cacher, Cerna, ⁊ ní fárcgaib nech díb claind acht Iarél Fáith. Mac dó-side Ethrél m. Iaréoil* ("Éremón, then, had four sons, i.e. Muimni and Luigni and Láigni and Iarél Fáith, the youngest of them. Other say that [Éremón] had six other sons, i.e. Aan, Edenn, Áine, Cathíar, Cacher, Cerna; and not one of them left children save Iarél Fáith. [Iarél's] son is Ethrél son of Iarél"); CGH, 129.

[223] CGH, 6, 123, 129.

[224] CGH, 124.

[225] CGH, 22–3.

[226] CGH, 23. Since Cairpre ruled in Tara, one's first guess might be that Cóiced Cairpri should be equated with Mide, but in reality Cóiced Cairpri refers to the territory of the Laigin at a period in which Tara remained in their possession.

examples of the practice can be found in the *Onomasticon*.[227] Given all this, it is hardly inconceivable that there was once a pseudohistorical doctrine according to which Munster and Leinster were named after Muimne and Laigne and the inhabitants of those two provinces descended from them.

II.B.1. *Mínigud Senchais Ébir*

In addition to the three sons of Éremón, Muimne, Luigne, and Laigne, Kelleher also noted the mention of four sons of Éber who do not figure in the canonical form of the scheme.[228] In MSE they are listed: Ér, Orbba, Ferón, and Fergna.[229] Kelleher advanced the view that Ér was an early eponymous ancestor of the Érainn and that Orbba served the same function for the Orbraige; he was unable to identify any group for which Ferón or Fergna might have served as an eponymous ancestor.[230] As with his interpretation of the significance of Muimne, Luigne, and Laigne, Kelleher's explanation of the significance of Ér and Orbba is, *prima facie*, very persuasive; but, as with Luigne, the placement of these ancestral figures in such a prestige position of the Milesian scheme seems very strange considering the relative insignificance of both the Érainn and the Orbraige in the historical period, not to mention the lack of any evidence for groups for whom Ferón and Fergna could serve as plausible eponymous ancestors.

The Orbraige are quite obscure, but they were a tributary people of Munster who gave their name to the Barony of Orrery in the north of co. Cork.[231] At least one branch appears to have inhabited the

[227] For instance, Cóiced nAilella for Connacht, Cóiced nEchach Abratrúad mic Luchte for Desmond, etc. (Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, *s.v.* 'cóiced,' 279–80).

[228] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 146.

[229] CGH, 186.

[230] John Kelleher, "The pre-Norman Irish Genealogies," 146.

[231] Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, sv 'orbraige.'

area around Cashel, the seat of the Kings of Munster, a situation which parallels that of the eastern Luigne and their proximity to Tara.[232] Several contradictory origins are offered in the corpus. In the LL genealogies, they are mentioned as descendants of Éremón but without any elaboration of their line of descent.[233] In two other genealogical items they are said to be descended from either Fer Cíchech m. Fergusa Rossa[234] or Ethlenn m. Fergusa Rossa,[235] but neither Fergus Russ nor his two children are mentioned anywhere else in the corpus. It seems likely that Fergus Russ is a mistake for Fergus m. Rossa of the Ulster Cycle who himself is frequently reckoned as the ancestral figure to many the peoples belonging to Síl nÍr. In any case, they are reckoned among the *fortúatha Muman*.[236] The Orbraige also appear in a genealogy of the Cíarraige.[237] This genealogy is *extremely* out of accord with the rest of the corpus and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Like the Orbraige, the Érainn are consistently said to be descended from Éremón in the corpus[238] and are accounted among the *fortúatha Muman*,[239] but contradictory information regarding their origins and their relationship to other population groups is readily found. Most frequently, the corpus presents the Érainn as descendants of Óengus Turbech Temra, who serves as the common ancestor of the Ulaid and the Albanaig as well, and so they are reckoned part of Síl nÉremóin.[240]

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[232] Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, s.v. 'orbraige.'

[233] CGH, 358.

[234] CGH, 279.

[235] CGH, 320–1.

[236] CGH, 320–1.

[237] CGH, 287–8

[238] CGH, 17, 137, 358.

[239] CGH, 358.

[240] CGH, 137, 358, 376. One other item reckons them to be part of Síl nÉremóin but their line of descent from Éremón is not specified (CGH, 17).

They are therefore considered to have originated in the north of Ireland, and a section of MSE explains how their leaders seized the kingship of Munster and settled in western Munster following the slaying of the Síl nÉber king Dúach Dalta Dedaid by Fachtna Fathach of the Ulaid.[241] Their early conflicts with their Ulster cousins are also recounted in the section of the LL genealogies entitled *Genelach Érand* in which they are said to have triumphed over the Ulaid ten times and to have been defeated by them eight times.[242] There are, however, significant cracks in this standard explanation of the Érainn's genetic origins.

MSE contains a regnal list which names Dúach Dalta Dedaid as the last Síl nÉbir king who ruled Ireland before Mug-Núadat.[243] This regnal list immediately precedes a narrative passage which explains the northern origins of the Érainn and their relocation to Munster, before which – or possibly after, as the passage is somewhat unclear about the chronology – they gained ascendancy over Síl nÉbir. Following this is an anecdote about Dáre mac Dedaid, the king of the Érainn following the slaying of Dúach, and the birth of his grandson, Noíndiu Noíbrethach; but the passage primarily details successive kings of Munster. Embedded in this discursive passage is a digression on the inhabitants of western and southern Munster and their relationship with the Síl nÉbir kings of the province:

> *Dáre ⁊ Dergthene hi comflaith .i. Síl Lugdach ⁊ Síl nÉbir amal bíti do grés acht is úaisliu Síl nÉbir; nó is hé Dárfine ro báe i n-agid Deirgthene .i. Érnai ⁊ Dáirfhine do rád friu-side ó Dáre mac Dedaid a patre Con-ruí ⁊ ní Corco Laígde ut alii putant.*
>
> *Ar is ó hÉrnaib cech dara rí aness co Conaire mac Moga Láma ⁊ ó Dergthene in rí aile et at-berat na eolaig conid do clainn Dedaid do Mac-Con .i. Mac-Con m. Luigdech meic Dáre Sírchréchtaich.*

[241] CGH, 188.

[242] CGH, 377.

[243] CGH, 187–8.

> "Dáre and Dergthene in the co-rulership, .i. Síl Luigdech and Síl nÉbir as they always are, but Síl nÉbir is more noble; or it is Dárfhine who was before Deirgthene, .i. Érainn and Dáirfhine they are called from Dáre mac Dedaid, [i.e.] from the father of Cú Roí and not Corco Laígde as others think.
>
> For every other southern king is from the Érainn up to Conaire mac Moga-Láma; and the other king is descended from Dergthene; and the learned say that Mac-Con was of Clann Dedaid i.e. Mac-Con mac Luigdech meic Dáre Sírchréchtaich."[244]

In this passage we see confusion regarding the distinction between the Corco Loígde and the Érainn, and the solution is out of accord with the preceding material in MSE.

In summary, then, *Mínigud Senchais Ébir* may represent a conflation of two conflicting genealogical schemes. Although his role in any previous form of the scheme must remain highly conjectural, it appears that one scheme, probably the earlier of the two, made Ér m. Ébir the apical ancestor of the Érainn and placed the various population groups considered to be Érainn within Síl nÉbir. The second scheme assumes a fundamental genealogical distinction between Síl nÉbir and their vassal peoples who are all sorted into a single category, thus rendering the Érainn indistinguishable from their neighbors, the Corco Loígde, and assigns them to Síl Luigdech meic Ítha. Both of these schemes are, however, in conflict with the later consensus reflected in the corpus and other sources, namely that the Érainn were of Síl nÉremóin and had migrated into Munster and were thus considered one of the *fortúatha Muman*.

II.B.2. The Twelve Tribes of Ireland?

The Rawlinson redactions of MCC and MSE also hint at a pseudohistorical doctrine in which the Milesian invasion was led by twelve princes,[245] each the son of either Éber or Éremón. In MCC, we are told that "others say that [Éremón] had six sons, i.e. Aan, Edenn, Áine, Cathíar, Cacher, and

[244] CGH, 190.

[245] The Lec. version of MCC also contains this information.

Cerna;"[246] and MSE informs the reader that "others say that [Éber] had five [sic] other sons: Cauor, Cappa, Coronn, Ethor, Airb, and Airr."[247]

Not a single one of these twelve offspring appears in any other part of the corpus, but they are eventually rationalized as chieftains who accompanied Míl's sons on their expedition to Ireland.[248] Given the lack of additional context, it is difficult to know what to make of these names. I have found nothing which gives any clue to the significance of Éremón having two sons named Aan or Edenn. The name Áine, meanwhile, stands out as it is shared with Cnoc Áine, a *síd*-mound in Tipperary which was the territorial center of the Éoganachta Áine. In the Éoganachta origin legend *Cath Maige Mucrama*, however, the *síd* at Cnoc Áine is named for Áine, a princess of the *síd*, who was raped by the Éoganachta ancestor Ailill Aulom.[249] Since the Éoganachta were reckoned to be of Síl nÉbir, however, there would seem to have been no motivation for making Áine a son of Éremón. The name Cathíar is reminiscent of Cathaír Már, the common ancestor of most of the Leinster royal families; but, aside from the similarity in names, the lack of additional information precludes one from equating the two with any confidence. The name Caicher appears several other times in the corpus, though it is often confused with Caither, and none of the other personages named Caicher are said to be the son of Éremón.[250] In one pedigree common to LL, Lec., and BB, entitled "*Genelach Érand*," one does find the intriguing aside that Dún Cermna was built by Caicher.[251] In

[246] CGH, 129.

[247] CGH, 186.

[248] Flann Mainistrech, *Toísig longes dar ler*, ed. & tr. by R.A.S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, vol. 5, ITS 44 (Dublin, ITS: 1956), 104–111; Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, I.21–23.

[249] Máirín O Daly (ed. & tr.), "Cath Maige Mucrama," in *Cath Maige Mucrama* (Dublin: ITS, 1975), 39.

[250] CGH, 528.

[251] CGH, 376.

other corpus items, though, Dún Cermna is said to be named for Cermna Finn, one of the first kings of Ireland to come from the Ulaid and who was slain in Dún Cermna by Eochaid Fáeburglas, the son of Conmáel m. Ébir.[252] Still, the Lec. and BB redactions of the corpus mention a people called the "Érainn Dúin Cermna."[253] Overall, what little information survives links the name Caicher with Dún Cermna, and both are names associated with the Érainn. We can only guess why Caicher – if his Érainn associations are indeed real – was held to be a son of Éremón in MCC. Perhaps this reflected a doctrine in which the Érainn and the Ulaid were accounted among Síl nÉremóin but before Óengus Turbech Temra had been fabricated to serve as their common ancestor within Éremón's line of descent. The name Cerna is comparatively easy to explain as there is a *síd* and burial-mound in Brega by that name; context which would seem to validate to at least some small degree the inclusion of a personage named Cerna in the Síl nÉremóin genealogy.[254]

As for the six alternative sons of Éber (Cauor, Cappa, Coronn, Ethor, Airb, and Airr), I have no explanation for the names Cauor or Cappa, but I would suggest that Airb and Airr were intended as ancestral figures of the Orbraige and the Érainn respectively and so should be considered variant forms of Orbb and Ér. Coronn may have originally been invented to serve as the ancestral figure of the *Coraind/*Corrind, an archaic population group of the Boyne Valley mentioned in the YBL version of TBC.[255] Mac Neill believed that the *Coraind/*Corrind corresponded to Ptolemy's Coriondi,[256] but Pokorny rejected that interpretation on linguistic grounds.[257] Coronn may also be

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[252] CGH, 186, 269.

[253] CGH, 377, n. k–k.

[254] Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, s.v. 'cerne.'

[255] John Strachan and J.G. O'Keefe (eds.), *Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Yellow Book of Lecan* (Dublin: RIA, 1912), 100, 113.

[256] Eoin Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population Groups," 61. Ó Corráin affirms this view: "Prechristian and Early Christian Ireland," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. Roy Foster (Oxford: OUP, 1989), 4.

related to Corran, the barony in co. Sligo in which the Luigne and Gailenga resided, both generally held to be of Síl nÉber extraction. The name Ethor is probably related to the names Ethér and Ethrél. Ethér is given as a son, or perhaps grandson, of Éremón in *Núadu Necht, ní dámair anfhlaith*,[258] but in other items he is said to be the son of Airech Febrúad m. Míled, whose role in the scheme's early stages has been almost entirely erased and who will be considered in Ch. 4.[259] Ethrél is universally said to be the son of Iarél Fáith and thus is part of the Síl nÉremóin line of descent.[260] The problem is that both Ethér and Ethrél are easily confused with one another, as O'Brien himself indicates by cross-indexing the occurrence of Ethér in *Núadu Necht, ní dámair anfhlaith* with Ethrél, indicating that, at least in this case, he viewed them as doublets. It seems likely that their interchangeability in that early poem is due to the loose ends left by the gradual elaboration of the Milesian scheme. Whatever the role of Ethér/Ethrél in any earlier, unrecoverable version scheme, in the standard scheme he is only present as Ethrél m. Iaréoil in the Síl nÉremóin line of descent; Airech, his son Ethér, and their role in the scheme have been entirely obscured.

Ultimately, no solid conclusions can really be drawn from the names of these twelve figures, and one is left with far too little information to do more than note some broad possibilities. Even so, given the penchant of the pseudohistorians for using Biblical means of schematization, the fact that there are twelve of these princes may be significant. A single people divided into twelve kindreds founded and led by a set of brothers and cousins would parallel the twelve tribes of Israel, even though the relationships between the twelve Irish princes do not perfectly correspond to those between the

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[257] Julius Pokorny, "Spuren von Germanen im Alten Ireland vor der Wikingerzeit", in *ZCP* 11 (1917) 171–3

[258] CGH, 4.

[259] CGH, 282, n. l–l; 319, n. 5–5; 428.

[260] CGH, 4, 6, 17, 129, 186.

eponymous ancestors of the twelve tribes. It must be admitted that there is little evidence that such a pseudohistorical doctrine existed, but the extremely tenuous evidence just presented is bolstered by several references to "the twelve young lords who seized Ireland." To my knowledge these references are confined to the various redactions of a pedigree of the Cíarraige which is highly out of accord with the standard scheme. The pedigree is unusual for a number of reasons – not least of which is its contention that the Cíarraige, the Corco Ché, and the Fir Maige Féne descend from Airech Febrúad m. Míled – and appears to have been assembled no later than the 737 death of Flann Feorna, as the Rawlinson version of the pedigree terminates with him. In the Rawlinson and Lec. version, Míl Espáine is glossed as "one of the twelve young lords who seized Ireland."[261] In the LL version, the same gloss occurs, but it is applied to Airech instead of Míl.[262] I suspect that the doctrine concerning "the twelve young lords who seized Ireland" was part of a very early attempt to design a scheme to accommodate the important population groups of Ireland within a scheme of common descent which did not depend upon such pre-Christian supernatural figures as Núadu Argatlám. The ability to trace royal lineages back to ancestral figures created by the pseudohistorians must have been a radical step in the development of the Irish national origin legend generally and the Milesian scheme specifically.

[261] *is é side in dara ócthigern déc ro gab hÉrinn* (CGH, 288).

[262] CGH, 391.

III. The Invention of Síl nÉbir

If it was the case that Síl nÉbir was not a part of the scheme at the outset, then there must have been a reason for its invention. Deductively, one reaches the conclusion that the prime motivation for the creation of a new, distinct Milesian lineage was to enhance the prestige and claims of the Éoganachta, the preeminent group within that lineage. In the standard formulation of the scheme, all of Síl nÉbir descends from Conmáel m. Ébir m. Míled.[263] Within the corpus – and to my knowledge universally – the Éoganachta are presented as having been named for their legendary ancestor Éogan Már[264] – though in reality (Conall) Corc m. Luigthech is the common ancestor of the 'true' Éoganachta[265] – and their dynastic origin legends are well developed and amply attested.[266] Despite the order which their genealogies and origin legends attempt to impose, the confused morass of the corpus of Munster genealogies reveals that this apparent tidiness is a facade and that the Éoganachta may have sprung from the vassal peoples from whom they were so anxious to distinguish themselves genealogically.

III.A. The Éoganachta

While Éogan Már is presented as the eponymous ancestor of the Éoganachta in all our sources, the corpus records conflicting traditions regarding his parentage. Generally, as in the sagas, he is

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[263] CGH 186-187, 251, 270, 363.

[264] CGH, 195–197, 197–198, 199–202, 362.

[265] David Sproule, "The Origins of the Éoganachta," in *Ériu* 35 (1984), 32.

[266] Kuno Meyer (ed.), "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts,* vol. 3, ed. Osborn Bergin et al. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1910), 57–63; Vernam Hull (ed. &tr.), "The Exile of Conall Corc," in *PMLA* 56/4 (1941), 937–50; idem (tr.), "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," in *PMLA* 62/4 (1947), 887–909; Myles Dillon (ed. & tr.), "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," in *Ériu* 16 (1952), 61–73; Máirín O Daly (ed. & tr.), "Cath Maige Mucrama," "Scéla Eogain," "Scéla Moshauluim," "Cath Cinn Abrad," in *Cath Maige Mucrama* (Dublin: ITS, 1975); Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (ed. & tr.), "Scéla Éogain 7 Cormaic," in *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin: DIAS, 1977), 119–23.

reckoned the son of Ailill Aulomm,[267] but in two, admittedly late, items he is said to be the son of Dergthene and, thus, the father of Ailill Aulomm. The first instance occurs in a discursive item embedded in the Éoganacht and Dál Cais genealogies which is entitled *De Raind hÉrenn* ('Concerning the Division of Ireland'):

> *Diuissa est Hibernia insola in duas partes compares eter Conn Cétchathach et Éogan Már qui et Mug Nuadat m. Dergthene diximus*[268] *ó Áth Chliath anair siar iar n-Eiscir Riada dar certmedón h-Érenn co Fertais Medraige ri Áth cliath aniarthuaid ⁊ rl. Dá mac forfhácaib Éogan Már .i. Ailill Aulum ⁊ Lugaid Lága; is h-é rod-bí Artt mac Cuind.*[269]
>
> "Ireland is an island divided into two equal parts between Conn Cétchathach and Éogan Már, who we have said, is also Mug Núadat m. Dergthene, from Dublin westwards along the Eiscir Riada over the true middle of Ireland up to Fertais Medraige[270] [i.e.] to the northwest of Áth Clíath, etc. Éogan Már begot two sons, i.e. Ailill Aulum and Lugaid Lága; it is he who slew Art m. Cuinn."

De Raind hÉrenn is a collation of information regarding legendary territorial divisions, primarily in Munster, and the information contained therein is probably culled from sources and traditions of varying dates. It could not have taken its present form earlier than the late tenth or early eleventh century, however, as it contains an explanation of why the Dál Cais, the line of descent fabricated for Brian (Bórama) m. Cennétig, are entitled to rule Munster:

> *Ro rann trá Ailill Aulomm certleth hÉrenn eter Cormac Cass ⁊ Fíachu Mullethan mac Éogain ⁊ ro ráid Ailill Aulomm ná biad fer furáil di chlaind nechtar de sech araile co bráth ⁊ do-bretha a mallachtain for neoch nod-brisfed insin.*
>
> "Ailill Aulomm divided an exact half of Ireland between Cormac Cass and Fíachu Mullethan m. Éogain; and Ailill ordered that there be no importunate man among the descendants of either one of them above the other; and he pronounced his curses upon anyone who would violate that [command]."[271]

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[267] CGH, 192, 194, 198, 200, 251, 362.

[268] In Lec. and BB the pedigree is slightly different, but Éogan Már is still equated with Mug Núadat: ...*et Éogan Már qui et Mug Nuadat m. Moga-Néit meic Derg meic Derthenead dicitur .i....* (CGH, 206).

[269] CGH, 206.

[270] Maree peninsula in co. Galway (Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, s.v. 'Áth Cliath Medraige').

[271] CGH, 206.

The second instance of Eogan Mór's being assigned a father other than Ailill Aulomm occurs in the probably late eleventh-century or early twelfth-century *Item de Genelogiis Regum Muminensium* (=GRM).[272] The late date of these items need not concern us unduly; we have already seen how corpus items fabricated in the tenth and eleventh centuries may preserve traditions so at odds with the genealogical consensus of even the eighth-century that they must be of considerable antiquity. Indeed, GRM, as a pedigree composed for Muirchertach úa Briain, melds the standard Síl nÉbir line of descent with the variant discussed in Chapter 2 in which the Muimnig descend from a son of Núadu, in this case Cú Oiss: [*Ross*] *Rígairlid m. Dáire Deirg m. Con-oiss m. Núadat Décláim m. (m.) Echach Fáebair m. Conmaíl m. Ébir m. Míled.*[273]

We have already seen in *Genelach Éoganachta Caissil* that these two formulations of the pedigree were once considered irreconcilable.[274] The important point is that when Cú Oiss appears in the corpus, he is said to be the ancestor of the *Muimnig*, the general term for all the population groups residing in Munster, and *not* of the Éoganachta specifically. The fact that the Munstermen are treated as a singular group seems significant, especially since Dál/Síl Cuinn is clearly distinguished from the Laigin, the Ulaid, and the Dál nAraide in these items (and, indeed, universally within our sources). This likely reflects the fact that the genealogical scheme had its origins in the north of the country and that the early genealogists had neither the knowledge nor compelling interest to record the differences among the peoples of Munster. It might also mean, however, that the development of the genealogical scheme commenced in earnest after the rise of the Uí Néill and their Dál Cuinn

[272] CGH, 250. The pedigree gives his name as Éogan Toídlech, but the other instance of this name in the corpus (p. 190) makes it safe to assume that this is merely an additional alias for Éogan Már.

[273] CGH, 251.

[274] CGH, 199.

allies as the dominant power of the northern half of Ireland but before the dynasties of the Éoganachta had secured their position as the overlords of Munster.[275] If this is the case, then the genealogical scheme based upon common descent from Núadu *could* predate the middle of the seventh century.[276] Such a conclusion is bolstered by the fact that many aspects of the fully developed Milesian scheme are the product of the influence of Isidore's *Etymologiae*, a text which was probably transmitted to Ireland in the middle of the seventh century. Given the inestimable esteem in which Isidore's works were held by the Irish *literati*, it is unlikely that a scheme which takes no notice of Isidore's writings and which directly contravenes a scheme based upon them would be innovated at any date much later than their transmission to Ireland.

III.A.1. The Weakness of Éoganachta Claims

As noted, there is ample reason to believe that the the Éoganachta began propagating their promulgating propaganda sometime after the Uí Néill had already developed most of their own origin legends. A critical piece of the evidence for such a deduction is the comparative weakness of their claims to supremacy in Munster, particularly in material reliably datable to the late seventh and early eight centuries. There is, for instance, the following selection from MSE, already discussed in a

[275] As Sproule explains, it is quite clear that the Éoganachta developed their origin legends with the intent of mimicking and paralleling those of Dál Cuinn: "Though we see the Éoganachta growing in power in Munster in the historical period, they never dominated the south as the Uí Néill and Connachta dominated the north. Leth Cuind is not paralleled by Leth Éogain, and the Éoganachta never gave their name to the province, as the Ulaid, the Laigin and the Connachta did to theirs. It is clear that at the beginning of the historical period, if the Éoganachta existed (and we have no evidence for this such as we have for the other peoples just mentioned), they held no paramount position of power in the province of Munster" ("The Origins of the Éoganachta," 31); "The development of the elaborate parallelism between the mythologies of the north and south must have been a large project: it would have involved the rewriting of considerable portions of the political mythology of the country and cannot have occurred by accident but through the conscious decisions of rulers and the hard work of historians and genealogists. This can only have started when the Éoganachta were powerful enough to be taken into consideration by the Uí Néill and the Connachta. The name Éoganacht itself must have been adopted by a Munster sept or septs at a time when they had a good claim to domination of the province of Munster, and this, it seems, can have been at no very early date" (idem, 32).

[276] The earliest piece of Éoganacht produced propaganda appears to be the poem *Cú Cen Máthair, maith a chland*, an encomium for the Éoganacht king of that name whose death is recorded in the 665 entry of AFM (CGH, 199–202).

different context above, in which the ancestors of the Éoganachta are said to have alternated in the kingship:

> *Dáre 7 Dergthene hi comflaith .i. Síl Lugdach 7 Síl nÉbir amal bíti do grés acht is uaisliu Síl nÉbir; nó is hé Dárfine ro báe i n-agid Deirgthene .i. Érnai 7 Dáirfhine do rád friu-side ó Dáre mac Dedaid a patre Con-ruí 7 ní Corco Laígde ut alii putant.*
>
> *Ar is ó hÉrnaib cech dara rí aness co Conaire mac Moga Láma 7 ó Dergthene in rí aile et at-berat na eolaig conid do clainn Dedaid do Mac-Con .i. Mac-Con m. Luigdech meic Dáre Sírchréchtaich.*
>
> "Dáre and Dergthene in the co-rulership, i.e. Síl Luigdech and Síl nÉbir as they always are, but Síl nÉbir is the more noble; or it is Dárfhine who was before Deirgthene, i.e. Érainn and the latter are called Dáirfhine from Dáre mac Dedaid, [i.e.] from the father of Cú Roí and not Corco Laígde as others think.
>
> For every other southern king is from the Érainn up to Conaire mac Moga-Láma; and the other king is descended from Dergthene; and the learned say that Mac-Con was of Clann Dedaid i.e. Mac-Con mac Luigdech meic Dáre Sírchréchtaich."[277]

By comparison, Uí Néill propaganda is nearly unanimous in justifying their exclusive claims to the kingship of Tara since Niall Noígíallach – the three exceptions of Nath Í, Ailill Molt, and Brian Bórama notwithstanding – and that the king of Tara had been the high-king of Ireland since time immemorial. The Éoganachta *did* eventually begin to make similar claims about the paramount status of the king of Cashel and their exclusive right to it; but the foregoing demonstrates that, during the early development of their legendary ancestry and history, Éoganachta hegemony was still sufficiently recent that proposing a prehistoric and exclusive claim to the kingship of Munster was considered unsustainable.[278]

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[277] CGH, 190. This doctrine also appears in at least one saga: Máirín O Daily, "Scéla Moshauluim," in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74, 75.

[278] It should be noted that that when the Dál Cais were producing their own dynastic propaganda during the course of the eleventh century, they revived the myth of the alternation of the kingship, thus basing their contemporary ascendancy on an apparently archaic doctrine of the alternation of the kingship of Munster. That they felt no need to account for the Dáirine/Dáirfhine or other Érainn groups is probably a good indication of the still depressed fortunes of those peoples. In the power vacuum created by the crumbling of Éoganachta hegemony, not all of their former vassals fared equally well.

Another indication that the Éoganachta propagandists began their efforts in a historiographical environment already conditioned by Dál Cuinn/Uí Néill origin legends is the fact that most, perhaps all, stories concerning Ailill Aulomm, Éogan Már, or Fíachu Muillethan make at least some mention of Conn Cétchathach or Cormac mac Airt. Though it begins with a synopsis of the conception and birth of Fíachu Muillethan, the tale *Scéla Éogain ⁊ Cormaic* is almost exclusively concerned with Cormac mac Airt's conception, birth, and accession to the kingship of Tara. Likewise, although I have argued that the narrative core of *Cath Maige Mucrama* should be understood as providing a heroic biography for Lugaid mac Con,[279] the conception and birth of both Éogan and Cormac are also included; but it is Cormac and Art who are the real focus of those portions of the tale. At the final battle at Mag Mucrama, while everyone else is surrounded by demons, Art is attended by two angels "because of his being the rightful prince."[280] Moreover, Cormac figures prominently in the tale by gaining his birthright and deposing Mac Con, whereas Éogan and his son Fíachu do not have any significant role in the course of the tale. Following the account of his birth Fíachu is not mentioned again in the tale, and Éogan's only real action besides his antagonization of Mac Con lies in conceiving his (Éogan's) son. Ailill Aulomm is indeed central to the narrative of *Scéla Moshauluim*; but it is Mac Con who is the real protagonist; and the tale ends with his death, not with that of Ailill. Éogan Mór and Fíachu Muillethan are not even mentioned.[281]

[279] Matthew Holmberg, "A Sheep in Wolf-Son's Clothing? Lugaid Mac Con and Pseudo-Historical Etiology," in *PHCC* 31 (2011), 158–72.

[280] ...*fo bith a fhir fhlatha* (Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 54).

[281] Mug Núadat, however, does appear as Ailill's father, and we have seen that some redactions of the corpus treat Éogan Mór, Éogan Taídlech, and Mug Núadat as interchangeable.

III.A.2. Conall Corc

Other Éoganachta origin legends focus on Fíachu's descendant (Conall) Corc m. Luigdech. Information regarding his life is found primarily in three tales: "The Birth of Corc mac Luigdech,"[282] "The Finding of Cashel,"[283] and "The Exile of Conall Corc."[284] References to Corc are also present in *Cóir Anmann*,[285] *Lebor na Cert*,[286] and numerous other texts,[287] but to my knowledge they contain no information not available in the sagas named above. Each text that describes Corc's conception and birth gives his father as Lugaid m. Ailella, the king of Munster, and his mother as a female satirist from Britain. Corc is then fostered by a witch who is either named Láir Derg ('red mare') or Fedelm depending on the tale in question. A coven of fellow witches comes to visit, and Corc's foster-mother hides him beneath or inside a cauldron; since, as the third redaction of *Cóir Anmann* informs us, "they were witches who used to engage in witchcraft and injure little children."[288] Corc is sufficiently protected that he is not slain by the witches' ill intent but is instead burned by a dart of flame from the fire beneath the cauldron which strikes his ear. Most texts then explain that it was on account of his burned ear that Corc was known as 'Corc,' though Clodagh Downey has persuasively argued that this was not the original meaning of the name. She proposes that the verb *corcaid*, which the Irish *literati* interpreted as 'burns, reddens' and from which the adjective and

[282] Kuno Meyer, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts,* vol. 3, 57–63; Vernam Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 887–909.

[283] Myles Dillon, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 61–73.

[284] Vernam Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 937–50.

[285] Sharon Arbuthnot (ed. & tr.), *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names–Part 2*, ITS 60 (London: ITS, 2007), 16.

[286] Myles Dillon (ed. & tr.), *Lebor na Cert: The Book of Rights*, ITS 46 (Dublin: ITS, 1962), 4–5.

[287] For a full list, see: Vernam Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 937–8.

[288] Sharon Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann–Part 2*, 16–17, 92–93.

personal name *corc* are derived, probably had the original meaning of 'disfigures, blemishes.'[289] This account of Corc's conception and early life is also found in a passage from Lec. introduced as *Do geineamuim Chuirc meic Luigdech so*.[290] This passage of Lec. also includes an interesting anecdote about Corc which I have only found elsewhere in "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde."[291] In both sources we are informed that during his exile Corc ransomed three hostages from Níall (Noígíallach) m. Echach and that these were Graca, Dula, and Maine. Corc settled them in Munster, and they were the ancestors of the Grecraige, Corco Dula, and Mendraige respectively.

The motif by which Corc redeems hostages who then become his allies is also present in "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde." As a young man, Corc travels to Leinster to collect tribute owed to Crimthann m. Fidaig, the king of Munster and Corc's foster-father according to the tale. There he frees Gruibne, who returns to his home in Alba, and two other unnamed men, an action which ends up bringing Corc considerable wealth. Crimthann eventually becomes jealous of Corc and dispatches him to the king of Alba. Crimthann equips Corc with a shield inscribed in secret ogam with a message slandering Corc so that the king of Alba will slay him. Fortunately for Corc, he encounters Gruibne in Alba, and Gruibne repays Corc by altering the text on the shield so that it praises Corc instead. Corc thrives in Alba and eventually returns to Cashel on the same day that Crimthann dies, whereupon Corc is promptly made the king of Munster. The rest of this tale is a hodgepodge of information pertaining to the history and relative status of various Munster peoples and is not relevant to the present discussion.

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[289] Clodagh Downey, "Purple Reign: The Naming of Conall Corc," in *Approaches to Religion and Mythology in Celtic Studies*, eds. Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 28–54.

[290] Vernam Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 906–909.

[291] Vernam Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 895.

Besides the injury to his ear, exile, and redemption of hostages, Corc's biography is rounded out by his relocation of the kingship of Munster to Cashel. As told in "The Story of the Finding of Cashel" and "The Exile of Conall Corc," two swineherds, one serving the king of Éli and the other the king of Múscraige, 'discover' Cashel and gorge their pigs on the plentiful mast surrounding the site. Each, apparently independently, has a vision in which an angel blesses Corc and recites the names of the kings of Cashel. As might be expected, the list begins with Corc. Corc is informed of the vision by one of the swineherds and promptly buys Cashel from him, travels there, and claims the territory. After this point, the narrative becomes quite confused and essentially becomes a pastiche of various antedated prophecies concerning the kings of Munster, the arrival of Patrick, etc., and an explanation of the special status of several Munster *túatha* and families.

Corc's biography is intriguing for several reasons that may be relevant to the current inquiry. First, the injury to his ear parallels that of Ailill Aulomm, whose epithet is, supposedly, due to the fairy maiden Áine having bitten his ear off. It seems improbable that the presence of two important apical ancestors within the Éoganachta line of descent whose epithets were understood as being the result of aural injury is entirely coincidental. I would tentatively suggest that the commonality is due to a substrate of mythemes endemic to Munster which played an important part in the construction of the origin legends of the peoples of that province. An ancestral figure marked and named by disfigurement to his ear seems to be one of these mythemes.[292] Again, I stress that this is entirely conjectural, but there is a third example of this motif which we will encounter later in the chapter which I think lends further weight to such a suggestion.

[292] Disfigurement or other physical abnormality is common within the pattern of the international heroic biography – the hero is literally marked for greatness – but this aspect of the pattern seems to consistently manifest as an injury to the ears in Munster.

Second, Corc's redemption of hostages subverts the usual expectation that great kings subordinate other groups by extracting tribute and hostages from them. This is not to say that Corc takes no hostages; Corc's right to the kingship of Munster due to his taking the hostages of the province is made explicit in "The Finding of Cashel,"[293] "The Exile of Conall Corc,"[294] and "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde."[295] Even so, Corc's actions in Leinster, and their results, are remarkable. Rather than extracting the tribute claimed by Crimthann m. Fidaig, Corc instead frees several hostages and profits greatly by doing so. When one of the freed hostages is slain, Corc is compensated so much that he not only has the necessary tribute to give to Crimthann but enough to divvy up among the warriors of Ormond. Freeing Gruibne benefits Corc perhaps even more, since it is only Gruibne's intervention that saves Corc in Alba. Corc's emancipation of three of Níall's hostages similarly redounds to his benefit, as the three hostages are ancestral figures of three Munster population groups allied with, but nevertheless subordinate to, the Éoganachta. Corc's characterization is less warlord, hostage-taker, or even judge – typical archetypes for legendary Irish kings – than coalition builder and distributor of special benefits and boons to his allies. Reciprocal obligations and gifts between king/lord and client were integral aspects of the ideology of kingship in medieval Ireland, but this aspect of proper rulership seems far more inflected in Munster than in the rest of the country. Besides the emphasis on Corc's beneficence towards his vassals and potential allies, there is the early quasi-legal tract *Frithfholaid Rig Caisil fri Túatha Muman* ('The Counter-Obligations of the King of Cashel to the Peoples of Munster')[296] and the much later *Lebor na Cert*,[297] which also details

[293] Vernam Hull, "The Story of the Finding of Cashel," 71.

[294] Vernam Hull, "The Exile of Conall Corc," 945.

[295] Vernam Hull, "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," 897.

[296] J.G. O'Keeffe (ed.), "Dál Caladbuig and reciprocal services between the kings of Cashel and various Munster states," in *Irish Texts–Fasciulus I*, ed. J. Fraser, P. Grosjean, and J.G. O'Keeffe (London, 1931), 19–21.

the tribute and countergifts due both to and from the King of Cashel. The earlier of the two seems to reflect the state of affairs in Munster during the early hegemony of the Éoganachta and the latter that which was current following the rise of the Dál Cais in the early eleventh century. This chronological gap is highly significant, as it indicates that this aspect of the kingship of Cashel persisted throughout the upheaval of three or more intervening centuries. This is to say that, despite the rapid and militaristic rise of the Dál Cais under Brian Bórama, the primacy of obligation and counter-obligation between the king of Cashel and his subjects persisted and appears to have been an implicitly accepted aspect of that provincial kingship. Generosity and mutual support are emphasized in wisdom literature and legal tracts associated with Leinster and Leth Cuinn, but I know of no texts specifically pertaining to the kings of Tara, Allen, Ailech, or Crúachu which resemble the two Munster texts mentioned.

Third, there is the relocation of the seat of the king of Munster to Cashel. As a symbolic emblem of Munster royalty, Cashel is certainly anomalous in that it is 'found' rather than represented as a natural part of the landscape, as Allen is, or a royal center built by a mythical and/or ancestral figure, as Tara and Emain Macha are. The notion that Cashel, a tall geological formation located in a plain, was unknown before the two pigherds came upon it is farcical, and this peculiar aspect of the site's alleged prehistory is accented still further by the non-native origin of the name. A *caisel* is a stone rampart or wall, a fairly common sight in Ireland, but the term is not native in origin unlike similar words denoting a protected settlement or fortification such as *ráth* or *dún*. Instead, *caisel* is a borrowing from Latin *castellum*. The degree to which Corc's fortunes, as well of those of his descendants, is intertwined with divine providence are striking when compared to tales having to do with the Dál Cuinn ancestral figures. This contrast is even more striking when considering the

[297] Myles Dillon (ed. and tr.), *Lebor na Cert: The Book of Rights*, ITS 46 (Dublin: ITS, 1962).

pagan associations of Tara and Crúachu, the seats of the kings of the Uí Néill and Connacht respectively. Cashel quite literally has no history before its divine revelation; it has no non-Christian associations. Further, legends concerning Conn, Cormac, and Níall Noígíallach are replete with non-Christian motifs of Irish kingship, i.e. the ale of sovereignty, confirmation by Otherworld personages, copulation with sovereignty figures, overseas raiding, winning magical items through forays into the Otherworld, etc. Alba is frequently presented as an Otherworld locale in Irish sagas, but this doesn't appear to be the case in the Corc story cycle. The kings of Alba mentioned in these tales appear in the regnal lists of Gaelic Scotland so that the Alba of Corc's exile is contextualized in the world of human politics and society. This is not so say that the motifs which predominate in the Dál Cuinn historical legends are absent in those from Munster. Rather than appear in stories about Corc, however, they appear in those concerning his ancestor, Ailill Aulomm.

III.A.3. Ailill Aulomm, Moshauluim, and M'aulum

Important and telling inconsistencies in the Éoganachta genealogies/origin-myths are to be found in the sources regarding Ailill Aulomm/Ólomm/Moshauluim. Within the corpus, we have already encountered Ailill as the king-judge whose *imprimatur* was used by eleventh-century Dál Cais propagandists to burnish the authority of their patrons to rule as kings of Munster. In doing so, they were almost certainly drawing upon a long-standing tradition which viewed Ailill as a legendary king famous for his legal pronouncements, a role he assumes in the group of texts, discussed above, which detail the genetic origins of the Éoganachta and Dál Cuinn.[298] As a genealogical linchpin, Ailill serves as the father to Éogan Már, eponymous ancestor of all the Éoganachta, Cían,

[298] In these tales, however, the validity and impartiality of Ailill's judgment is highly questionable, and he is generally portrayed in an unsympathetic light.

eponymous ancestor of the Cíannachta (and occasionally the Luigne and Gailenga[299]), and Cormac Cass, the eponymous ancestor of the Dál Cais who was transparently invented in the late tenth or early eleventh century. His genealogical primacy as the progenitor of the free-peoples of Munster (*sáerchlanna Muman*) is reflected in a pair of corpus items which assert that any group which does not (or cannot) trace their ancestry to Ailill is to be accounted among the *fortúatha Muman*.[300] In another context, however, such an ancestry could be a liability instead of a boon. For instance, the Luigne, Gailenga, and Cíannachta all claimed (or more probably were assigned) an ancestry from Tadg m. Céin m. Ailella Auluimm;[301] but resided in Leth Cuinn; and were, therefore, restricted to the status of *fortúatha*. Still, for those population groups residing in Munster the benefits of claiming Ailill as an ancestor is strongly demonstrated by a pedigree entitled *De Genealogia Cerddraige Tulchi Gossa*.[302] This pedigree invents Tigernach m. Ailella[303] as an ancestor of the Cerdraige, a very minor Munster group about whom almost nothing is known.

This general tidiness, however, only holds true for those items dealing with Ailill Aulomm/Ólomm. When corpus items dealing with (Ailill) Moshauluim are consulted, the picture becomes far more confused. The name Moshauluim is most closely associated (and occurs most frequently) in *Scéla Moshauluim ⁊ Mac Coin ⁊ Luigdech*.[304] O Daly, the tale's editor and translator, held that the language of

[299] CGH, 168, 169–70, 193, 246–7.

[300] CGH, 137, 358.

[301] CGH, 98, 168–9, 193, 246.

[302] CGH, 219.

[303] This personage is found elsewhere only in the Lec. recension of an obviously late addition to the item entitled *Incipit de Genelogia Síl Ébir* (CGH, 193).

[304] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74–87.

the tale is largely ninth-century,[305] but that it contained certain archaic features which might indicate that the tale had its origins in the eighth century.[306] Of particular importance are the archaic forms of personal and place names contained in the text, e.g. Luigith (§2), Míleth (§3), gs. Dego (§3), ds. Mume (§6). Moreover, of the four related sagas O Daly edits and translates in the volume, she considered *Scéla Moshauluim* the earliest. The legal anecdote included in the tale concerning the means by which the right of an illegitimate child to his father's patrimony is established[307] calls to mind other early pseudohistorical anecdotes containing 'leading cases' which Irish legalists could cite and may be another indication of the antiquity of the tale's nucleus.[308]

The tale is one of the few which displays a Munster bias. Dáre Doimthech, one of the ancestral figures of the Corco Loígde, is said to rule "the land of the island of Éber" (*ba rí for mbruig Inse Ébir*);[309] the ruler of Munster is also said to rule over Leinster;[310] and the compact that the descendants of Aulumm and the descendants of Lugaid should alternate in the kingship and judgeship of Munster is described.[311] The designation of Ireland as 'the land of the island of Éber' is highly unusual, as Éremón is considered the foremost of Míl's sons in every source – with one very

[305] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 18.

[306] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 19–22.

[307] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 76, 77.

[308] D.A. Binchy (ed. &tr.), "The Saga of Fergus mac Léti," in *Ériu* 16 (1952), 33–48; Thomas Charles-Edwards and Fergus Kelly (ed. & tr.), *Bechbretha: an Old Irish Law-Tract on Bee-keeping* (DIAS: Dublin, 1983), 69–70; Johann Corthals, "Affiliation of Children: Immathchor nAilella 7 Airt," in *Peritia* 9 (1995), 92–124. See also: Fanqzhe Qiu, "Narratives in early Irish law: a typological study," in *Medieval Irish law: text and context*, ed. Anders Ahlqvist and Pamela O'Neill (Sydney: Celtic Studies Foundation, 2013), 111–41.

[309] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 76, 77.

[310] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74, 75.

[311] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 74, 75.

notable exception.[312] That Dáre Doimthech is listed as a king of Tara is another indication of the tale's archaic origins, as he is otherwise absent from any extant regnal lists, unless we take the Dáre Drechlethan of the late seventh-/early eighth-century *Baile Chuind Chétchathaig* to be the same personage as Dáre Doimthech.[313] That Mac Con, Dáre's grandson in this text, is not portrayed in an unflattering light is also unusual. Overall, then, the tale may reflect the interests and claims of the Corco Loígde in the eighth and ninth centuries. Examined in this way, two very telling pieces of information emerge. The first is that Ailill Auluim was also known as Moshauluim – the text freely uses either epithet to refer to the same person. The second is buried in a long pedigree which finishes the third paragraph of the text: *Dáre Domthech...m. Sithbailc m. Fir Úaillne m. Daigmanrach m. Dego Dergthine...* As noted above, *Dego* is an archaic form, but the far more extraordinary detail is that Daig Dergthine, who is otherwise reckoned to be of Síl nÉbir and an ancestor of Ailill Aulomm and the Éoganachta, has been included in a Corco Loígde pedigree![314] Little of this pedigree accords with the standard scheme. The pedigree does have the Corco Loígde descend from Lugaid m. Ítha, but Íth is presented as a grandson of Míl. Even stranger is the presence of Éremón who appears as a descendant of Lugaid m. Ítha and ancestor of Dáre Domthech. Frustratingly, the tale does not flesh out Moshauluim's ancestry in detail, but he is called a 'son of Mug Núadat,'[315] who is himself a son or grandson of (Daig) Dergthene in the genealogies.[316] With the additional testimony of the

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[312] …*ob hoc genelogia Scotigene gentis litteris Ébir secondo gentis hÉrimóin tercio gentis hÍr quarto gentis Lugdhach meic Ítha*…(CGH, 192 +BB).

[313] Edel Bhreathnach and Kevin Murray (ed. & tr.), "*Baile Chuinn Chétchathaig*: an edition," in *The Kingship and Landscape of* Tara (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003), 73–94. In *Baile Chuind,* Dáire is king between Fiachra (Sraiptine) and Muiredach Tírech. His position is assumed by Colla Uais in most later regnal lists.

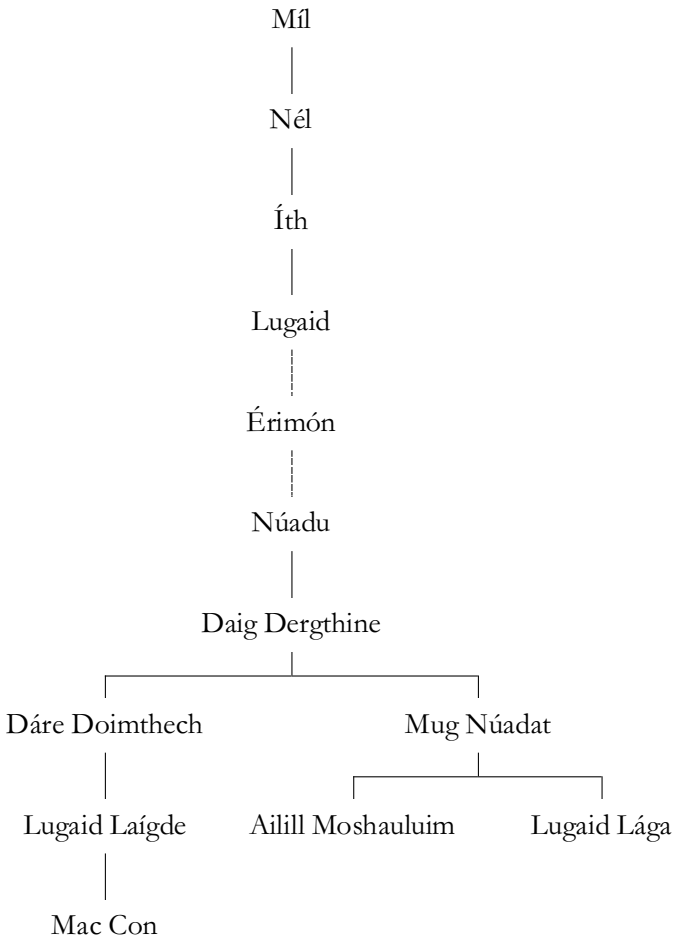
[314] CGH 190, 198, 200, 250, 362.

[315] Máirín O Daly, 74, 75.

[316] CGH, 198, 200, 206, 250, 362.

corpus, the genealogical information contained in *Scéla Moshauluim* can be reconstructed into the following tree:

FIGURE 3.1 – AILILL MOSHAULUIM'S PEDIGREE



The inherent weakness in reconstructing the tree above, namely combining data from *Scéla Moshauluim* and the genealogical corpus, two very different sources, in order to connect Moshauluim to the pedigree provided in the tale, can be remedied by further consultation of the corpus. The name Moshauluim shows a high degree of variation in the corpus and appears in four redactions of a pedigree of the Cíarraige as Mas[h]auluim, Saulum, M'aulom, and M'Ólum.[317] Three of the four redactions of this pedigree terminate with one of two brothers: Mathgamain m. Meic-Bethad or

[317] CGH 254, 287–8, 391, 427.

Mac-Raith m. Meic-Bethad.[318] Mac-Bethad m. Conchobuir died in 1086 according to the *Annals of Ulster*, so these three redactions of the pedigree were probably composed no earlier than 1100. The remaining redaction of this Cíarraige pedigree appears to be significantly older as it ends with Flann Féorna, the lord of Corcomroe whose death is recorded in the 737 entry of AU.[319] Given that Flann was lord of not only Cíarraige Lúachra, his native district, but also Corcomroe, it seems that the power and influence of the Cíarraige Lúachra was waxing under his direction and that the Cíarraige may have found themselves in a correspondingly strong position when pushing genealogical claims at this time.

Complicating matters still further though, this pedigree does not assign the Cíarraige a place within Síl nÉbir, as one might expect. Rather, all four redactions of this pedigree have the Cíarraige descend from Fergus m. Róig or Rudraige, Fergus's putative grandfather. This section of the pedigree – from Flann Féorna or Mac-Bethad's sons to Fergus m. Róig – is, orthographic variations notwithstanding, identical in all four redactions of the pedigree. Three of the redactions then continue the pedigree back further, linking Fergus, Rudraige, and their supposed descendants into the Milesian scheme by having them descend from Érech Febria, a son of Míl who has no descendants in the canonical scheme. The LL scribe, however, shows a degree of uncertainty regarding the descent of the Cíarraige from Érech, since he includes a variation in which Fergus m. Róig descends from Lugaid m. Ítha instead.[320]

[318] CGH, 254, 391, 427.

[319] CGH, 287.

[320] CGH, 428.

This Cíarraige pedigree appears, then, to have had its origins in the first half of the eighth century and demonstrates that the scheme was still far from solid at that time. This is hardly surprising; we have already seen confusion over high level apical ancestors in the probably contemporaneous *Genelach Éoganachta Caissil*. Taken altogether, the evidence seems to show that the Éoganachta still had not managed to fully separate themselves genealogically from their less powerful neighbors during this period. If it was the case that Ailill Aulomm was originally an ancestral figure of more than just the *sáerchlanna Muman* and some of the *fortúatha Leithe Cuinn*, then his conventional role in the scheme must have been designed by pseudohistorians friendly to the Éoganachta. I would suggest that the Éoganachta propagandists took a preexisting Munster ancestral figure, (Ailill) Moshaulomm, and from him created two separate figures, Ailill Aulomm and M'aulom. The first of these was then cast as the common ancestor of the Éoganachta and their allies, and the latter was cast as an ancestor of the Cíarraige. If this is indeed the case, then the Éoganachta, or at least some branches, may have originated among the Érainn in southwest Munster. The primary goal of the Éoganachta propagandists, therefore, would have been to ensure clear genealogical separation between their patrons and the Cíarraige, Corco Loígde, and any other group reckoned to be of the Érainn. The evidence from *Scéla Moshauluim* seems to indicate this had not quite been accomplished by the early eighth century, and perhaps not even until the turn of the ninth.

III.A.4. Corbb Aulomm m. Fergusa

Further evidence for the interpretation provided above can be gleaned from a number of references to an obscure population group, the Corco Auluimm,[321] and their apical ancestor, Corbb Aulomm.

[321] CGH, 279, 311, 321; Laud Gen., 334–5. The ethnonym shows a high degree of variation. Dál nÁuluim (CGH, 279), Dál nUlaim (Lec., 116 Ra 36), Dál nDuluim (Uí Maine, 66 a 1), and even Dál nUladh (H.3.7, 869) are all attested.

The corpus informs us that Corbb Aulomm and Condrí were twins,[322] that they were sons of Fergus m. Róig, and that Condrí was born with Aulomm's ear in his mouth after he had bit it off in the womb.[323] Here, again, we find a Munster ancestral figure whose ear has been deformed in some way. In this case, the mytheme has manifested in a manner which bears closer resemblance to the disfigurement of Ailill Aulomm's than that of Conall Corc's, since the mutilations of both Ailill Aulomm and Corbb Aulomm are associated with sexual reproduction.

As for the Corco Auluimm themselves, they appear to have had no historical significance aside from having produced Saints Erc Sláine and Brénainn Birra.[324] Donnchadh Ó Corráin has identified Cíarraige Lúachra as their homeland, on the southern slope of Slieve Mish and the nearby lowlands of Maine specifically.[325] On this basis, as well as their connections to the Uí Angáin[326] and the Uí Fherba[327] – local septs of the Cíarraige Lúachra – Ó Corráin suggests either that the Corco Auluimm survived "as subject communities in the lands of Uí Angáin or that lineages of Uí Angáin had expropriated them and retained their name."[328] Ó Corráin does not entertain the possibility of any connection between Corbb Auluimm and Ailill Aulomm. I would, indeed, be very skeptical of any

[322] As with the group to which he supposedly gave his name, his name varies somewhat. Corbb Auluimm (CGH, 320) and Corb Aulomm (CGH, 321) are used interchangeably, and is name is reduced simply to Aulomm in one instance (CGH, 279).

[323] *Do óen-breith roducait Aulomm ⁊ Condrí dá m. Fergusa ⁊ is amlaid rucad Condrí ⁊ cluas Auluim inna béolu iarna tescad de* (CGH, 279).

[324] CGH, 279.

[325] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Onomata," in *Ériu* 30 (1979), 176–8.

[326] Lec. 119 Vc 16 = BB 158 a 36.

[327] Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 171, §5.

[328] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Onomata," 177.

connection between the two figures myself were it not for the doctrine, barely preserved, that Corbb Auluimm was the ancestor of the free-peoples of Munster:

> *An céd-bhliadhain do righe Cairpre Cinn Cait, iar marbhadh na saorchlann dó cenmotha uathadh térna as an orcoin in ro h-ortadh na h-uaisle las na h-aitheachthuathoibh. At iad na trí saoir at-rullatur uatha an ionbhaidh sin: Feradhach Fionn Fechtnach, o t-tád Síol c-Cuinn Cédcathaigh, Tiobraide Tireach, o t-tád Dál n-Araidhe, ⁊ Corb Olum, o t-tád rioghraidh Eoghanachta h-i Mumhain. Agus cidh iad-sidhe bá h-i m-bronnaibh a maithreach luidhsiot tairis. Baine inghen righ Alban ba mathair d'Fearadhach Fionn Fechtnach, Cruife inghen rígh Bretan mathair Cuirb Oluim, ⁊ Aine inghen rígh Saxan máthair Tiobraide Tírigh.*[329]
>
> "The first year of the reign of Cairbre Cinncait, after he had killed the nobility, except a few who escaped from the massacre in which the nobles were murdered by the Aitheach Túatha. These are the three nobles who escaped from them at that time: Fearadhach Finnfeachtnach, from whom are *sprung* all race of Conn of the Hundred Battles; Tibraide Tíreach, from whom are the Dal Araidhe; and Corb Olum, from whom are the kings of the Éoghanachts, in Munster. And as to these, it was in their mothers' wombs they escaped. Baine, daughter of the king of Alba, was the mother of Fearadhach Finnfeachtnach; Cruife, daughter of the king of Britain, was the mother of Corb Olum; and Aine, daughter of the king of Saxony, was the mother of Tibraide Tireach."[330]

A virtually identical passage appears in the third recension of *Lebor Gabála Érenn*:

> *Elim mac Conrach do gabáil rígi nÉrenn i flaith Adrianuis, ré fichi bliadan íar marbad Fhiachach Findolaich ⁊ sáerclanna Érend uime, i Maig Bolg, co nach térno uada dona sáerclandaib acht trí mná cona toirrchesaib na mbroind, .i. Eithni ingen ríg Alban, ben ríg Érenn máthair Thuathail Techtmair; ⁊ Gruibni ingen Gairtniath, ríg Breatan, bean ríg Muman, máthair Cuirp Uloim, ótáit sáerclanna Muman ; ⁊ Aine ingen ríg Sacsan, ben ríg Ulad, mathair Thibraidi Thírich, ótáit sáerclanna Dál nAraidi…*[331]
>
> "Elim s. Conrai took the kingship 61 Ireland, in the reign of Hadrianus, for a space of twenty years after the slaying of Fiachu Finnoilehes, and the Freemen of Ireland along with him, upon Mag Bolg : so that of the Freemen none escaped, save three women with their pregnancies in their wombs, namely Eithne daughter of the king of Alba, wife of the king of Ireland, mother of Tuathal Techtmar; and Gruibne daughter of Cartnia, king of the Britons, wife of the king of Mumu, mother of Corb Aulom, from whom are the freemen of Mumu; and Aine daughter of the king of the

[329] AFM 10.1

[330] John O'Donovan (ed. & tr.), *Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, vol. I (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis, 1848), 95.

[331] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 306.

Saxons, wife of the king of Ulaid, mother of Tibraide Tirech, from whom are the Freemen of Dal Araide..."[332]

The poem which follows this passage recapitulates the essential points, naming Túathal Techtmar, Corbb Auluimm, and Tibraide Tírech as the ancestors of the free peoples of Ireland, until the final two quatrains:

Conn, Éogan, Araidi án,	"Conn, Éogan, noble Araide,
it é cinead na trí mál;	These are the kindred of the three lords;
Araide i nEmain cen oil,	Araide in Emain without reproach,
Cond Cétchathach i Temair,	Conn the Hundred-fighter in Temair,
Éogan i Caisil na ríg,	Éogan in Cashel of the kings,
is and tarustair a síl;	It is there that their descendants are established;
conid friu-sin, sund is tall,	So that to them, here and yonder,
samles in saí cach sáerchland.[333]	The sages compare every family."[334]

The import of the poem – namely that the nobility of the Gaels descend from three survivors of the revolt of the vassal-tribes – remains unchanged in these final two quatrains. The original trio of ancestral figures, Túathal Techtmar, Tibraide Tírech, and Corbb Auluimm, has been replaced by a more conventional set, but the change is largely meaningless in the first two cases. Conn is a direct lineal descendant of Túathal, and (Fíachu) Araide is a direct lineal descendant of Tibraide Tírech. The change from treating Corbb Auluimm as the ancestor of the Munstermen to Éogan (Mór) as ancestor of the Éoganachta seems to reflect a general trend in the development of the Munster genealogies. In the earliest stage, as we have seen in the discussion of the roles of Núadu and Muimne m. Éremóin in the genealogies, it appears that the various population groups of Munster were assumed to have a common ancestry distinct from that of the other provinces. In the later stage, a new doctrine was created in which the Éoganachta and those they begrudgingly accepted as

[332] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 307.

[333] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 482, 484.

[334] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 483, 485.

collaterals comprised a distinct genealogical unit within Munster and, moreover, were the only non-alien population groups within Munster. The poem seems to have had its origins in this earlier stage and then was updated at a later date when the Éoganachta had begun to codify and disseminate genealogical and historical doctrines favorable to their own interests. The three-fold division of the *sáerchlanna Érenn* calls to mind the opening of the c. 700 tale "The Saga of Fergus mac Léti,"[335] and the doctrine that the *sáerchlanna Muman* descend from Corbb Auluimm may well date to that period.

In sum, the evidence cited in this section indicates that in the early development of the scheme a legendary figure known for his mutilated ear served as the common ancestor of the various free-peoples of Munster and was named Aulomm or some variation thereof. That the Éoganachta included this figure into their pedigrees is an indication both that the tradition regarding this ancestral figure was too strong for them to ignore while fashioning their origin-legends and also that some or all of the Éoganachta originated among the Cíarraige of Munster generally, and perhaps specifically among the Corco Auluimm, in the late prehistoric or early historical period. Such an interpretation would fit with widely observable patterns by which ascendant population groups obscured their plebeian origins.

III.B. What does *Muimnig* mean in our sources?

One problem in interpreting the foregoing evidence is determining what precisely is meant by the term *Muimnig*. It is clearly the nominative plural form of the adjective *Muimnech* ('of Munster') used substantively, hence 'Munstermen.' But who are these Munstermen? Does this refer to all the inhabitants of Munster regardless of legendary ancestry, or to all the peoples of Munster belonging

[335] *Batar trí primcinéla in hÉre: Féni ⁊ Ultaig ⁊ Gáilni .i. Laigin* ("There were three chief-races in Ireland: the Féni, the Ulstermen, and the Gáilni, .i. the Leinstermen"; D.A.Binchy, "The Saga of Fergus mac Léti," 37).

to Síl nÉbir, or to the Éoganachta alone? In other words: does it carry geographical significance or genealogical significance?

Within the genealogical corpus, the term 'Muimnig' appears in three of the four items involving Núadu Argatlám discussed above and once in a discursive passage about the Loíchsi. In *Genelach Osrithe*[336] and in *Comúammann na nGenelach*,[337] Muimnig is used side by side with the rarely encountered [*clann Augaine*[338]], and can be inferred to have genealogical import in that context. Similarly, in the Airgíalla genealogies[339] the Muimnig are distinguished from the Laigin, the Ulaid, the Dál Riata, and Síl Cuinn. Laigin or Ulaid might hypothetically denote all the peoples living in Leinster and Ulster respectively although this is clearly not the case with the Laigin who are universally interpreted genetically as the descendants of Lóegaire Lorc. Síl Cuinn, on the other hand, definitely refers only to those peoples descending from Conn Cétchathach, i.e. the Uí Néill, the Airgíalla, and the Connachta. On this basis it would seem it is safe to consider the Muimnig of the genealogies to be a group defined by common ancestry.

The remaining example of the use of Muimnig and its forms in the corpus occurs in a discursive passage concerning the Loíchsi, in which we are told that the Loíchsi descend from Lugaid Loígsech Cennmár m. Chonaill Chernaig and that they were granted their territory and their freedom from taxation in exchange for driving the Munstermen out of Leinster. In this passage, one finds that the

[336] CGH, 15–7.

[337] CGH, 137.

[338] See II.A.c.

[339] CGH, 153.

terms *Muimnig* and *Fir Muman* ('Men of Munster') are used interchangeably.[340] As has been noted by Ruairí Ó hUiginn,[341] the use of the construction '*Fir* [PLACENAME]' predominates in earlier sources – for those population groups which used such a construction to form their ethnonym, that is – but was eventually displaced by a construction employing an adjectival suffix, i.e. '[PLACENAME] + *-ach*.'[342] This shift, which Ó hUiginn notes is observable for the Munstermen in the shift from *Fir Muman* to *Muimnig*, seems to have become permanent sometime around the end of the twelfth century.[343] Nevertheless, *Muimnig* and its grammatical forms are attested in AU entries from the eighth to tenth centuries,[344] whereas *Fir Muman* is not attested earlier than 854. In any event, the presence of both formulations side by side within the Loíchsi genealogies lends support to the position that they should be viewed as semantically identical within the corpus.

Expanding the inquiry to see how the similarly ambiguous *Leth Cuinn* is employed throughout the corpus sheds some light on matters. Literally meaning 'Conn's half,' Leth Cuinn would seem to have a strictly geographical sense. Throughout the corpus, though, one continually encounters it being used in a genealogical sense signifying Síl/Dál Cuinn. This is the case in *Genelach Osrithe* in which it is said of Augaine Már that "here the Laigin and Leth Cuinn meet,"[345] and of Éremón that "here Leth Cuinn meets, i.e. the four kindreds of Tara, and the three Connachts, and the Airgíalla,

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340 *....i. Fir Muman dia ngabáil...ro buí Laignib ó Muimnechaib...dia cuirtis na Muimnechu de...Is iarum immus-fópratar Muimnecho....in cétchath do feraib Muman...Slechta iarum in Mumnich co Corthíne...* (CGH, 94–5)

341 Ruairí Ó hUiginn, "Éireannaigh, Fir Éireann, Gaeil agus Gaill," in *Aon don Éigse: Essays Marking Osborn Bergin's Centenary Lecture on Bardic Poetry (1912)*, ed. by Caoimhín Breatnach and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail (Dublin: DIAS, 2015), 17–49.

342 GOI, §347, 349.

343 In AU the last use of *Fir Muman* occurs in the entry 1188.6. Thereafter, *Muimnig* and its grammatical forms are used exclusively.

344 AU 732.12, 775.5, 837.8, 940.1.

345 CGH, 16.

and the Laigin, and the Osraige, and the Déssi, and the Érainn from whom are Clanna Dedaid."[346] The same genetic sense is also explicit in a synopsis of *Orguin Denna Rig*,[347] in *Comúammann na nGenelach*,[348] in the Airgíalla genealogies,[349] in a pedigree of Clann Cholmáin Móir,[350] and in a pedigree of the Múscraige Mittine.[351] The fact that Leth Cuinn, when it is used in a genealogical sense, does not refer to every population group residing in the northern half of Ireland argues against interpreting Muimnig as referring to all the inhabitants of Munster within the corpus.

In the absence of any definitive internal evidence which would explain what precisely these ambiguously genealogical/geographical terms – *Muimnig*, *Fir Muman*, *Leth Cuinn*, etc. – mean, the best interpretation has probably been indicated already by Donnchadh Ó Corráin who, writing about the politics and royal propaganda of the ninth to twelfth centuries, argues that the phrase *fir hÉrenn* should be understood to mean "the followers of the greatest kings and of the lesser kings and nobles under their sway."[352] Viewed in this way, the terms *Fir Muman/Muimnig* and *Leth/Dál/Síl Cuinn* most likely mean the provincial overlord of Munster and the Uí Néill respectively, along with all of the lesser kings whom they have enfiefed. Under this interpretation the Muimnig mentioned

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[346] *i sunn condrecat Leth Cuind .i. cethri fini Temra ⁊ téora Connachta ⁊ Airgialla ⁊ Lagin ⁊ Osraige ⁊ na Déssi ⁊ Érnae dia mbaí Clanna Dedad* (CGH, 17). This usage is, admittedly, unusual since it treats Leth Cuinn, i.e. Síl/Dál Cuinn, as interchangeable with Síl nÉremóin. Even so, the term is clearly meant genealogically here and, so, may be used as evidence for the issue at hand.

[347] CGH, 18.

[348] CGH, 137.

[349] CGH, 152.

[350] CGH, 159.

[351] CGH, 372.

[352] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Nationality and Kingship in Pre-Norman Ireland," in *Historical Studies XI: Nationality and the pursuit of national independence, papers read before the Conference held at Trinity College, Dublin, 26–31 May 1975*, ed. T. W. Moody (Belfast: Appletree Press 1978), 8. Ó hUiginn also follows this interpretation.

in the corpus were probably understood to mean the Éoganachta and their favored allies, e.g. the Uí Fhidgeinte, Uí Líatháin , Múscraige Tíre, and the Déisi Muman, from about the end of the eighth century onwards. But traditions regarding the ascendancy of other Munster peoples before the rise of the Éoganachta are well attested. Story cycles concerning Conaire Már[353] and (Lugaid) Mac Con,[354] two hero-kings of the Érainn who ruled in Tara, are extant and hint at a power hierarchy in Munster radically different from that which succeeded it. Indeed, according to the internal chronology of the later pseudohistorical material, Mac Con was the last king of Tara not descended from Conn Cétchathach or Ailill Aulomm, and his presence in regnal lists which attempt to minimize any non-Uí Néill or non-Éoganachta kings suggests that the ascendancy of the Érainn, and specifically the Corco Loígde who claimed to descend from Mac Con, did not end in prehistorical times. Such a supposition finds further support in the entry for the year 583 in the Fragmentary Annals which records the death of Feradach Finn m. Dúach who is named one of seven kings from the Corco Loígde who was also a king of Osraige;[355] this supposed heptad has, unfortunately, not survived in any source.

So, armed with this information, what does *Muimnig* mean in our sources? I believe that within the early genealogical material, Muimnig simply meant the king of Munster and his supporters within the province. The lack of specificity inherent in the term – unlike Dál/Leth Cuinn, Muimnig does not

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[353] Whitley Stokes (ed.), "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel," in *Revue Celtique* 22 (1901), 9–16, 165–212, 282–329, 390–437; Lucius Gwynn (ed.), "De Maccaib Conaire," in *Érius 6* (1912), 144–53; idem (ed.), "*De Shíl Chonairi Móir*," in *Ériu* 6 (1912), 144–53; Eleanor Knott (ed.), *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (DIAS: Dublin, 1936); Vernam Hull (ed.), "Togail Bruidne Da Derga: The Cín Dromma Snechta Recension," in *ZCP* 24 (1954), 131–2. *De Shíl Chonairi Móir* also names Gnáthal, a descendant of Conaire from the Múscraige, as a king of Tara (140).

[354] Mairín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama* (Dublin: ITS, 1975); Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin: DIAS, 1977). I have argued elsewhere that a heroic biography can be reconstructed for Mac Con and that the unfavorable treatment he receives in our sources is due to their Éoganachta and Uí Néill biases ("A Sheep in Wolf-Son's Clothing? Lugaid Mac Con and Pseudo-Historical Etiology," in *PHCC* 31 (2011), 158–72.)

[355] *Marbhadh Fearadhaigh Fimi mc. Duach, rí Osairghe...uair do Chorca Laoighdhe d'Fearadac mc. Duach, uair seacht rígh do gabhsad Osairghe do Corco Laoighdhe, 7 seacht rígh do Osairghe ro ghaph righe Chorca Laoighdh* (FA 4).

refer to any supposed common ancestor – may well have been intentional and may betray the unsettled state of Munster affairs during the course of the seventh and early eighth centuries. Moreover, although far more research is required before a reasonable degree of certainty can be established, I have come to suspect that the refinement of the Munster genealogical material to support the claims of the Éoganachta may have only begun in earnest in the reign of Cathal m. Fhinguine (†742) with the compilation of the Saltair Chaissil.[356] The reason, therefore, for the high level of internal contradiction for which the Munster genealogical material is known is that the Éoganachta propagandists were not firmly in control of the development of Munster genealogical doctrines until some time after their northern counterparts had accomplished the same. Even as older genealogical theories, which did not reflect the new reality of Éoganachta supremacy, were preempted, bits and pieces of them survived.

III.C. Repeated segmentation of the Éoganachta pedigrees

That the 'true Éoganachta,' to borrow David Sproule's term,[357] have Conall Corc as their common ancestor rather than their eponym, Éogan Már, is surely significant, as is the fact that the corpus treats descent from Ailill Aulomm rather than from Éogan as a necessary condition to be reckoned among the *sáerchlanna Muman*.[358] Undoubtedly these two bits of data lend further support to the notion that Munster politics were particularly chaotic in the early stages of the genealogical scheme's development. The portion of the Síl nÉbir line of descent which begins with Ailill Aulomm and

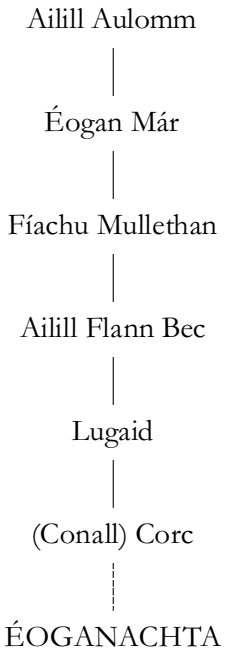
[356] For the Psalter, see: Pádraig Ó Riain, "The Psalter of Cashel: A Provisional List of Contents," in *Éigse* 23 (1989), 107–30; Bart Jaski, "The Genealogical Section of the Psalter of Cashel," in *Peritia* 17/18 (2003/4), 295–337.

[357] These are the Éoganacht Chaisil, the Éoganacht Glendamnach, and the Éoganacht Airthir Clíach (David Sproule, "Origins of the Éoganachta," 32).

[358] CGH, 137, 358.

terminates with Conall Corc is replete with ancestral figures. The specific line of descent to which Conall Corc, and hence the Éoganachta, attaches does not vary:[359]

FIGURE 3.2 – CONALL CORC'S LINE OF DESCENT

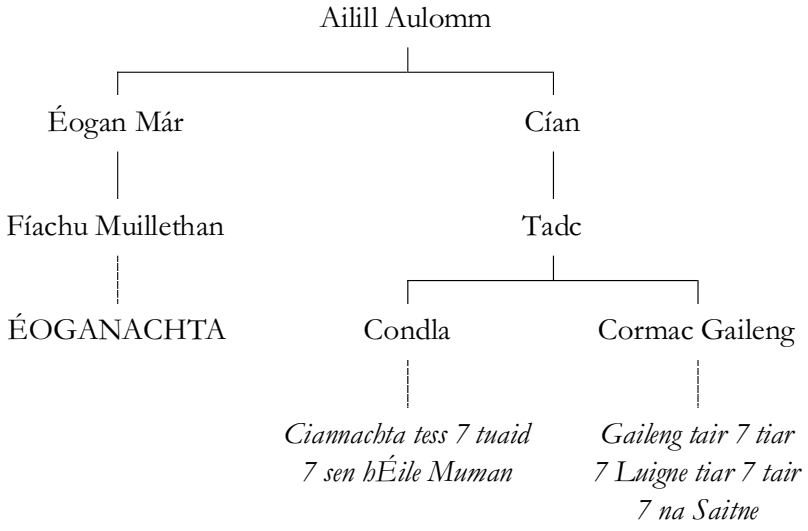


But a number of the true Éoganachta's subordinates and rivals also traced their ancestry to Ailill Aulomm, Ailill Flann Bec, or Lugaid. In the eleventh century the Dál Cais invented Cormac Cass, a new son of Ailill from whom they could claim descent, but several other groups attempted this even earlier by attaching themselves to Cían,[360] another of Ailill's supposed sons.

[359] A possible exception, however, is the presence or absence of Ailill Flann Már in the pedigree. The essential issue is that there was confusion about whether Ailill Flann Már and Ailill Flann Bec were brothers or whether the latter was the son of the former. The discursive section which introduces the Éoganachta material in the Rawlinson and BB redactions is internally inconsistent on this point (CGH, 195), although the redactor attempts to resolve the issue by assuring the reader that Ailill Flann Már did not have children (*sed tamen Ailill Flann Már unquam non habuit prolem*). The conflicting characterization of Ailill Flann Már can also be seen by comparing the Rawlinson, BB, and Lec., version of a pedigree of the Uí Líatháin (CGH, 224–5) with the LL version (CGH, 224).

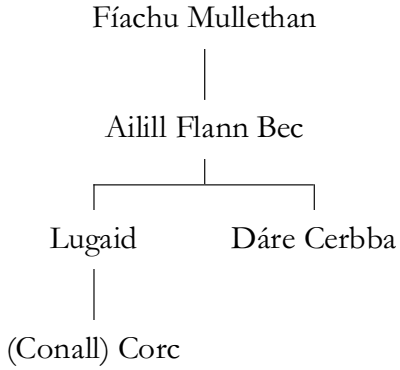
[360] CGH, 246.

FIGURE 3.3 – AILILL AND THE CÍANNACHTA AND THE GAILENGA



Ailill Flann Bec, meanwhile, is said to have had either two sons, Lugaid and Dáre Cerbba,[361] or four: Lugaid, Dáre Cerbba, Fidach and Muinchaín.[362]

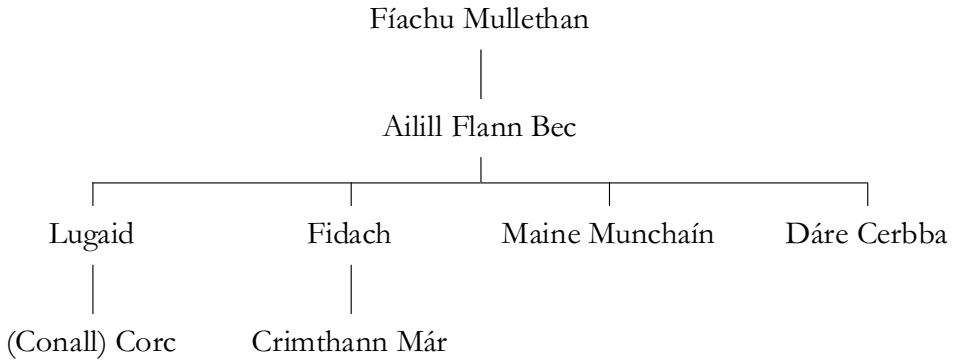
FIGURE 3.4 – SONS OF AILILL FLANN BEC (1)



[361] CGH, 195.

[362] CGH, 205.

FIGURE 3.5 – SONS OF AILILL FLANN BEC (2)



Lugaid m. Ailella's brothers are, predictably, apical ancestors themselves. Reconstruction of the relationships described on p. 195 of CGH yields the following:

FIGURE 3.6 – SONS OF DÁRE CERBBA

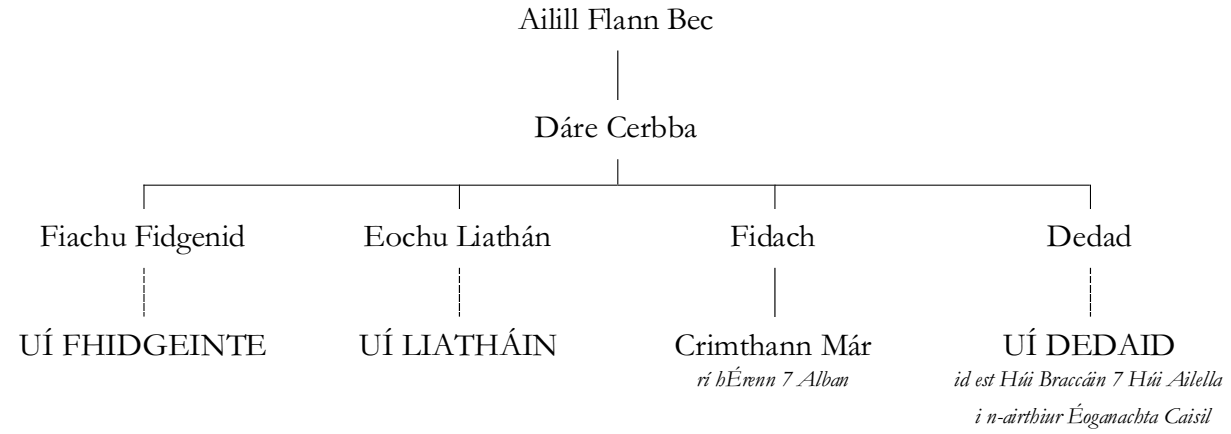
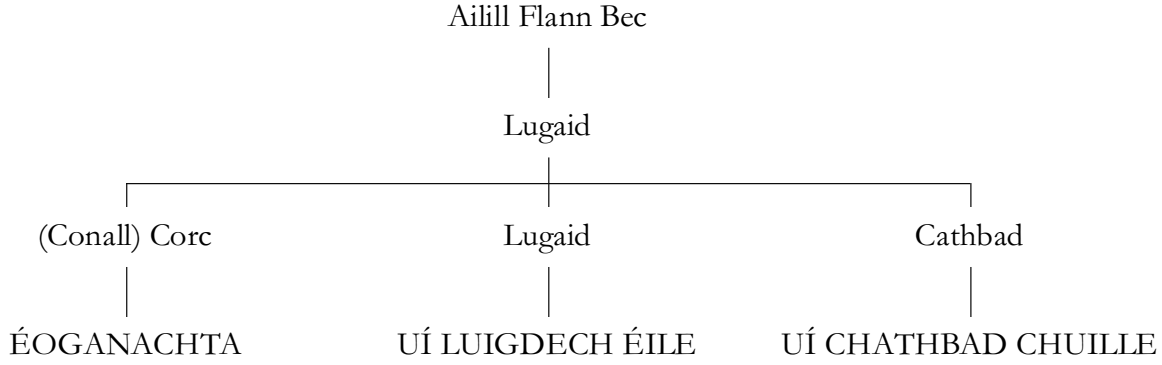


FIGURE 3.7 – CONALL CORC'S BROTHERS



As one can see, Ailill Aulomm, Ailill Flann Bec, and the latter's son provided the opportunity for non-Éoganachta population groups to lay claim to the status of *sáerchlann Muman* by plugging into the pedigree of Síl nÉbir at or below Ailill Aulomm.

What's most intriguing about these sections of the corpus detailing the Éoganachta's distant relatives, is the obscurity of some of the groups named. The Uí Chathbad Chuille and the Uí Dedaid are extremely obscure, but pedigrees of each group are recorded in the corpus.[363] The corpus contains two pedigrees detailing Cathbad's descendants. The title of the first is *De genelogia Éoganacht hÚa Cathbath*,[364] and its resemblance to the presumptuous dynastic titles claimed by the Uí Fhidgeinte and Uí Líatháin (see below) is suggestive, especially considering that the dynasty was very early displaced by the Éoganacht Airthir Chlíach, the last of the seven 'canonical' Éoganacht dynasties to emerge.[365] The pedigree is short, terminating a mere eight generations after Cathbad with Conaing m. Lárchada; and I am unable to find any source which might give a clue as to the period in which he, or any other member of the pedigree, lived. The other pedigree, this one entitled *De Genelogia hÚa Cathbath*, terminates with Gainemach m. Brócáin. I cannot definitively locate either the son or the father in the annals, but I have found a death notice for an unnamed son of a certain Brócán (*filiusque Broccáin ó Thaigh Theille*) in the AT and AU entries for the year 725.[366] Assuming that the pedigree of the Uí Chathbad Chuille was compiled c. 740 for the Psalter of

[363] CGH 210, 222–3.

[364] CGH, 210.

[365] F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 178.

[366] AU 725.4, AT 725.4. He also appears in AFM 720.11.

Cashel, it would be quite possible that the Brócán of the annals is the same as that found in the pedigree, though this must remain pure conjecture.[367]

The Uí Dedaid pedigree varies greatly depending on the manuscript witness – in the Lec. version they have even been made ancestor of Corc m. Luigdech(!); but it is difficult to ignore the similarity of names between this sept and the Érainn population group known as Clanna Dedaid. Examining the corpus items which mention the Uí Breccáin/Uí Braccáin, with whom the Uí Dedaid were associated,[368] appears to yield evidence in support of treating the Uí Dedaid and Clann Dedaid as identical. There are a handful of families with the name Uí Breccáin/Uí Braccáin in the corpus, and with the exception of an offshoot of the Uí Bairrchi of Leinster,[369] they are all located in Kerry. Within the Cíarraige genealogies found in Rawl., BB, and Lec. they are listed as one of the seven families (*secht n-aiccme*) of the Úa Uaire/Clann Uaire.[370] This is at odds with their presentation in the LL, BB, and Lec. versions of the genealogies of the Corco Duibne.[371] There they are clearly listed as members of the Corco Duibne, and the same passage asserts that the Corco Duibne are to be included among Clanna Dedaid.[372] This might be another bit of evidence in support of the hypothesis that the Éoganachta originated among the Érainn of Kerry, but, frankly, such an interpretation involves an uncomfortable amount of question-begging.

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[367] It may also be that Dícolla mac Colmáin, the bishop of Clonenagh (†672 AI), is the same as the Dícolla m. Crunnmáel m. Colmáin of the pedigree. Although counting generations and assuming an average of 33 years per generation (per Ó Murchadha) is an imprecise method of dating, applying that methodology in this instance provides supports for identifying the Dícolla of the pedigree as the bishop of Clonenagh.

[368] CGH, 195. In Rawlinson they are treated as equivalent (*Dedaid id est Uí Braccáin*), but the Lec. and BB versions of the passage distinguish between them (*Uí Dedaid ⁊ Uí Braccáin*).

[369] CGH, 46–7.

[370] CGH, 312.

[371] CGH, 378

[372] CGH, 378.

As opposed to the Uí Chathbad Chuille and Uí Dedaid, the Uí Líatháin and the Uí Fhidgeinte were important Munster dynasties whose members attempted to be reckoned among the Éoganachta by styling themselves as the Éoganacht Uí Fhidgeinte and Éoganacht Uí Líatháin, but "these formulations, dubious in their awkwardness ('the descendants of Éogan of the descendants of Fidgennid'!), contrast with the names of the descendants of Corc: Éoganacht Chaisil, Éoganacht Locha Léin, Éoganacht Áine etc., all deriving the second half of their sept-names from geographical locations."[373] The paucity of information contained in the annals regarding Munster's internal affairs in the early historical period means that it is difficult to easily suggest a period at which the fortunes of these dynasties were at their zenith, and the dynasties correspondingly found themselves in a position to push their genealogical claims. To my knowledge Ólchobur m. Flainn (†796/7) was the only Uí Fhidgeinte king to be referred to as king of Munster,[374] so any investigation of the Uí Fhidgeinte and their genealogical pretensions might do well to begin with his career.

The Uí Luigdech Éile were clearly a dynasty of the north Munster marches, but their genealogical affiliations are hopelessly contradictory. We have seen how they were fashioned with a line of descent beginning with Lugaid m. Luigdech m. Ailella Flainn Bice, but elsewhere they are said to descend from Lugaid Cíchech,[375] son of Eochu m. Cais m. Cuirc, hence they should be identified with the Úí Echach Muman[376] but distinct from the Éoganacht Raithlind, who descend from Lugaid's brother, Crimthann m. Echach:

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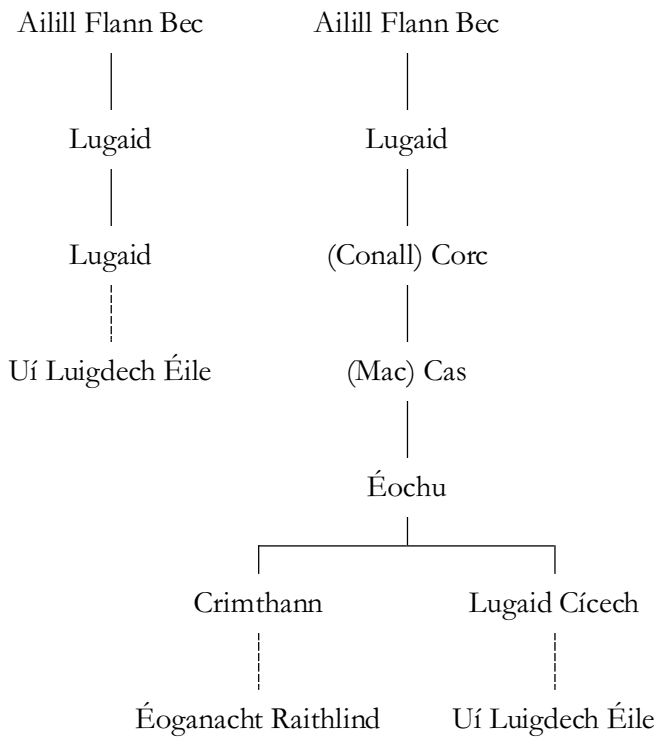
[373] David Sproule, "The Origins of the Éoganachta," 32–3.

[374] AU 796.

[375] CGH, 384.

[376] F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 291, 294.

FIGURE 3.8 – THE UÍ LUIGDECH ÉILE



This item claims that Lugaid nursed Crimthann's two sons from his own breasts, hence his epithet, and this indicates that the Uí Luigdech Éile were likely grafted onto the Éoganacht Raithlind line of descent during a period in which the former were favored subjects of the latter. In a genealogy of the Corco Óchae, however, it is noted that 'some say' (*dicunt quidam*) that the Uí Luigdech Éile join to the Corco Óchae, another obscure population group at Meic-Erce m. Imchada.[377] It seems then that the Uí Luigdech Éile were perpetually one of the vassal-peoples (*aithechthúatha*) of Munster whose genealogical status was easily reformulated to reflect their relationship with whichever group under whose sway they had fallen.

[377] CGH, 393.

Given that the genealogical scheme does not represent actual genetic relationships, we should interpret the status of the non-Éoganachta groups described above as descendants of Ailill Aulomm, Ailill Flann Bec, and Lugaid m. Ailella to represent their relationships with the Éoganachta. This is certainly the case with the Uí Líatháin and the Uí Fhidgeinte whose attempts to be numbered among the Éoganachta dynasties have been touched upon above. Any reason for the inclusion of the more obscure groups, the Uí Chathbad Chuille, Uí Dedaid, etc., is far murkier. That they are presented as descendants of Ailill Aulomm means that they are to be accorded the status of *sáerchlanna Muman*. I have tentatively dated the pedigrees of these groups to the first half of the eighth century which, according to Jaski, would mean that their presence in the corpus is probably due to their having originally been included in the genealogical section of the Psalter of Cashel. In conjunction with their disappearance from later records, their presence in these early pedigrees indicates that they were key players within Munster's political hierarchy as late as the mid-eighth century but had become irrelevant by the time of the next updates to the Munster genealogical records.

What I think the foregoing section demonstrates is a process usefully termed '(re)segmentation' by Donnchadh Ó Corráin:

> "As a result…of an inclusive law of legitimacy, the royal dynasty increased rapidly in numbers of a few generations; and, for political and other purposes, it resolved itself into a number of royal factions or segments…Kingship was a valuable prize in that it ensured the status, power and expansion of the segment which obtained it. In consequence, each segment contended for the kingship to the best of its ability and, when it obtained the kingship, it made every effort to retain it within itself and to exclude all other segments. However, even if a given segment of a royal dynasty succeeded in monopolising the kingship, the polygamic rule of marriage ensured that within a few generations this very segment produced a whole new set of segments, each contending for the kingship and each diametrically opposed in its interests to the others."[378]

[378] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin, 1972), 38–9.

'(Re)segmentation' is the process by which earlier political relations and the allegorical genealogical relationships which code these relations are reformulated to better meet contemporary circumstances by picking a more recent apical ancestor and, often but not always, forming a new ethnonym from this ancestor's name. For example, in order to forestall the claims of the Connachta and the Airgíalla, the Uí Néill held up Níall Noígíallach as their common ancestor rather than Conn Cétchathach. In other words, although the term Dál/Síl Cuinn occurs frequently in the corpus, Uí Néill propaganda held that descent from Níall, not Conn, was the prerequisite to claim the right to be king of Tara. This process went even further. As various branches of the Uí Néill lost influence, another term was invented to signify the Uí Néill dynasties which had the right to claim the kingship of Tara. The identity of the *cethri fini Temra* referenced in *Genelach Osrithe*[379] is not made explicit in the corpus, but in *Gabhála Érenn* one finds that "the four families of Temair [descend from] Colmán, Áed Sláine, Conall, and Éogan."[380] And indeed the kingship of Tara was dominated by Clann Cholmáin Móir, Síl nÁedo Sláine, Cenél Conaill, and Cenél nÉogain from the sixth to eleventh centuries.

In the case of the Éoganachta, this process has been highly compressed so that the Éoganachta pedigree appears to resegment several times within a span of only five generations. Despite their taking their ethnonym from Éogan, it is his father, Ailill Aulomm, who is far more fully represented in the Éoganachta origin legends. As discussed above, Éogan's role in each of these tales comes down to having been born. From whatever circumstances the Éoganachta originated, their first step seems to have been to differentiate themselves from the Éile, Cíannachta, Gailenga, and Luigne by assigning Éogan's nephew, Tadc, as the common ancestor of the latter. I am unaware of any source

[379] CGH, 17.

[380] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 269.

which attempts to present Tadc and the peoples said to descend from him as descendants of Éogan rather than Ailill, so this segmentation appears to have been entirely successful.[381] The next stage of segmentation occurs at Ailill Flann Bec. As we have seen, there are at least two doctrines concerning Ailill: one stating that Ailill had two sons, and the other that he had four. The difference almost certainly stems from changing dynamics in Munster's political hierarchy. If possible, it would be worthwhile to determine what political exigencies spurred this revision and in which direction it went, but such an investigation falls outside the scope of this investigation.

Conall Corc represents still another stage of segmentation, and this one is perhaps the most crucial. We have seen that the Uí Fidgeinte and the Uí Líatháin attempted to present themselves as members of the Éoganachta. Genealogically, there is nothing that would preclude them from doing so as they are universally reckoned to descend from Éogan Már. I believe that the Éoganachta found it necessary to resegment at Conall Corc in order to stifle such aspirations from their more powerful allies in the province. Several more segmentations occur at Corc's son and grandson, Nad Froích and Óengus, but these have to do with internal dynamics among the Éoganachta and need not be detailed here.

III.D. Summary

The foregoing has been an attempt to demonstrate the comparative fragility of Éoganachta hegemony at least as late as the early eighth century. This is shown by: (1) the high number of free peoples who were able to attach themselves to their lineage and claim status as *sáerchlanna* and (2)

[381] Only the Éile would have posed any possible challenge to the Éoganachta, since the Gailenga, Luigne, and Cíannachta were all *fortúatha Leithe Chuinn*. From an Éoganachta perspective the Éile may have been the only target of this segmentation; whereas, from an Uí Néill perpective, Tadc m. Céin may have provided a convenient ancestral figure for some of their own rent-paying vassals.

their need for two series of origin legends, one centered upon Ailill Aulomm and Éogan and the other upon Corc. That the latter story cycle was produced after the former is almost certainly indicated by the overtly Christianized means by which Corc, and therefore the Éoganachta, become the kings of Cashel. The overall impression given is of a group of allied and/or related dynasties still very much in the process of asserting their absolute right to the kingship of Munster during the course of the seventh and eighth centuries. As political relationships coded into earlier genealogical material became obsolete, it became necessary to devise new genealogical schemes to account for contemporary relationships.

IV. Síl nÍr and Síl Luigdech meic Ítha

IV.A. The Organization of Síl nÍr

The population groups which are given a descent from Ír m. Míled in the genealogical corpus are frequently obscure and in some cases are unknown outside of the genealogical collections. Notable exceptions, however, do occur. The Cíarraige of Munster, for instance, are a very well-known population group. Although the Cíarraige were seemingly minor players in the province's internal politics during the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, the abundance of material concerning the Cíarraige which comes from the eighth-century stratum of the genealogical corpus suggests that they were far more politically important in the preceding centuries. Likewise, despite being subsumed into Síl nÍr, Dál nAraide was an important population group which had standing to claim the kingship of the Ulaid. As a general principle it seems that population groups provided with either a Síl nÍr or a Síl Luigdech pedigree were either insignificant, peripheral to the dominant political hierarchies of the Uí Néill and the Éoganachta, or operated (semi-)independently from those hierarchies.

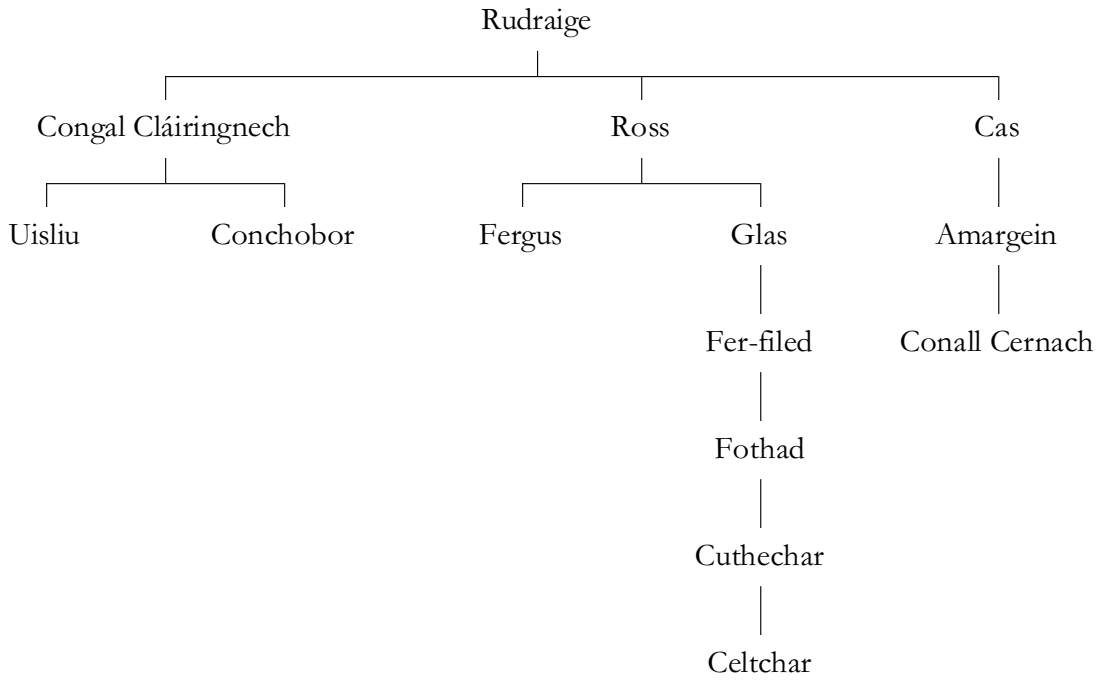
Within the canonical scheme, the true apical ancestor of Sil nÍr is not Ír m. Míled but, rather, Rudraige m. Sittrice who descends fourteen generations from Ír. That his name ends with the suffix *-raige*, a collective suffix frequently found in the names of archaic population groups,[382] shows that Rudraige's name is unlikely to have originally been a personal appellation. The interpretation of the name as a personal one is probably the result of an attempt to harmonize earlier beliefs about Ultonian ancestry – it seems likely that the Ulaid were once known as the Rudraige – with the need to have the Ulaid descend from a single ancestor who could be fitted into the Milesian scheme.

[382] Eoin Mac Neill, "Early Irish Population-Groups," 67–9.

Rudraige serves as the common ancestor of most of the prominent figures of the Ulster Cycle, and Clann Rudraige is sometimes used as a byname for the Ulstermen.[383]

The genealogists found four of Rudraige's near descendants particularly useful as linchpins around which Síl nÍr could be organized: Fergus m. Róig (or, frequently, m. Rossa in the genealogies), Celtchair m. Cuithechair, Conchobor m. Nessa, and Conall Cernach. A section of the genealogical tract *Senchas Síl nÍr* (SSI)[384] sets out a version of the organization of Síl nÍr predicated upon these four descendants of Rudraige:

FIGURE 4.1 – SONS OF RUDGRAIGE



[383] R.I. Best and Osborn Bergin (eds.), *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin: RIA, 1929), p. 57, ll.1621–2; Myles Dillon, *Lebor na Cert*, 124–5; E. Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas,* vol. 4, 68–69; Standish Hayes O'Grady (ed. & tr.), "Aided Fergus meic Léide," in *Silva Gaedelica*, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1892), I 238–52, II 269–85; Cecile O'Rahilly (ed. & tr.), *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin: DIAS, 1967), 70, 210; etc.

[384] CGH, 271 (+Lec., BB).

IV.A.1. Fergus mac Rossa

Numerous peoples, mostly minor and tributary ones, are said to descend from Fergus. In a discursive passage entitled *De Forslointib Ulad Íar Coitchiund in so* (DFU), eight such population groups are listed: (1) Dál Connaid, (2) Dál Cethirn, (3) Dál nÁuluimm, (4) Corcco Dálann, (5) Dál Condrach, (6) Dál mBuinne, (7) Mendraige, (8) and, via his son Fer Cícech, Orbraige na hAille and Orbraige Irruis.[385] None of these groups is well known. The next section then enumerates the peoples who descend from Cíar, Corc, and Conmac, the three sons whom Medb bore to Fergus during his exile.[386]

FIGURE 4.2 – THE BRANCHES OF THE CÍARRAIGE

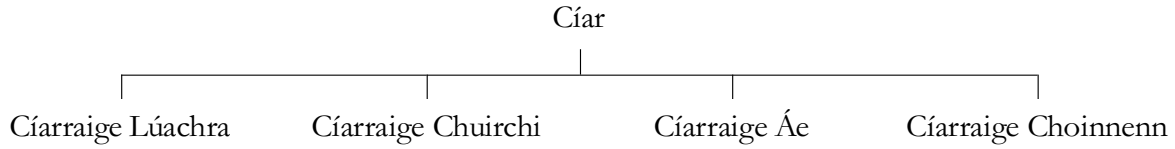
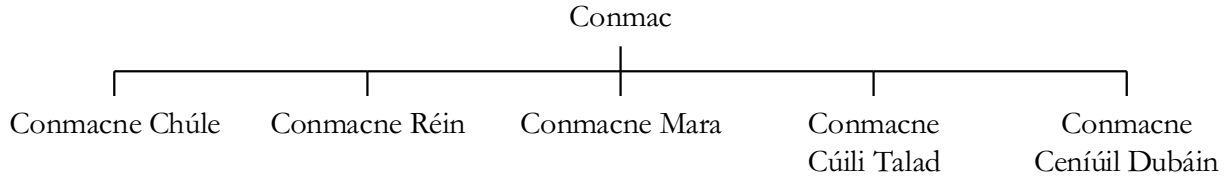


FIGURE 4.3 – THE BRANCHES OF THE CONMAICNE



Only the Corco M'drúad descend from Corc mac Fergusa. The section then continues, explaining that Mug Roith, the ancestor of the Fir Maige Féine, was the result of a union between Fergus and Cacht, the daughter of Cathmind, the king of the Britons.[387]

[385] CGH, 279.

[386] CGH, 279.

[387] CGH, 279.

This is but one account of the peoples descending from Fergus. Another version is found sandwiched between the pedigrees of the Conmaicne and of the Dál nAraide.[388] Here, Fergus is said to have six sons, only one of whom (Corbb Auluim) is also listed as a son of Fergus in the other passage discussed above:

FIGURE 4.4 – SONS OF FERGUS

Fer Tlachtga	Tácraige Artraige Descert Clíach (+LL, La.) Uí Ibdana
Fer Dea	Corco M'drúad
Mug Tóeth	Cíarraige Conmaicne Bibraige
Úato	The nine sons of Macnia
Ethlenn	Orbraige Bentraige
Corbb Aulomm	Corco Auluimm

Many of the population groups mentioned in DFU are present, but the manner in which they are said to relate to one another is quite different.

IV.A.2. Celtchair m. Cuithechair

According to DFU, Celtchair m. Cuithechair's putative descendants come from his seven sons: Éogan, Ailill, Sem, Fer-Tlachtga, Úathnía, Cathnía, and Drúithnía.[389] The peoples descended from these brothers are:

[388] CGH, 320–1.

[389] CGH, 280–1. But the LL and BB redaction names Conall Cernach as the father of these seven (CGH 266; LL 325d56–8). I am personally unaware of any distinction in regards to rights or prerogatives which attaches to a claimed descent from either Conall Cernach or Celtchair and so am unable to explain what significance there is in assigning the parentage of these seven brothers to either one. If this difference ever was significant, it is unlikely to be of great importance or even recoverable due to the extreme obscurity of the peoples said to descend from them.

FIGURE 4.5 – SONS OF CELTCHAIR

Éogan	Corcco Soilgind Crúaich C.S. des Fiud C.S. Droget C.S. Maige Locha C.S. Tethba
Ailill	Cenna Uí Fhorchellaich ind Fhochlae
Sem	Semne na nDéisse
Fer Tlachtga	Dál nUmain The two *fortúatha* of the Araid
Úathnía	Úathnía Tíre Úathnía Clíach
Cathnía	Cóenraige
Drúithnía	Muindruine

The unimportance of these groups is evident not only in their unfamiliarity but also in the qualifiers describing some of them. The Muindruine reside *la Connachto* ('among the Connachta'), and the Cenna live *la Luigne Connachta* ('among the Luigne of Connacht'), clearly indicating their subordinate and 'alien' status in those territories.

IV.A.3. Conchobor

Surprisingly few peoples are said to descend from Conchobor. DFU lists ten of his sons, although there is only mention of only a single population group, Cenél nGlaisne, which descends from one of these ten. The passage goes on to mention that 'others say' that he had two other sons, Benna, from whom the Bennraige descend,[390] and Lama, from whom the Lamraige descend.[391]

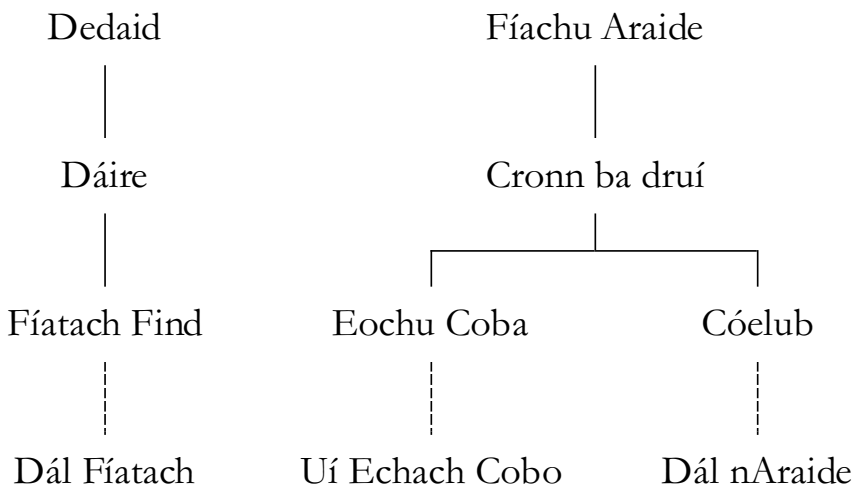
[390] The Bennraige and the Bentraige are clearly the same population group.

[391] CGH, 281.

IV.A.4. Conall Cernach

It is from Conall Cernach that many of the significant peoples of Ulster descend. From him are: (1) Dál nAraide, (2) Uí Echach Ulad/Coba, (3) Conaille Muirthemne, (4) Laígsi Lagen, and (5) the seven Sogain. The territory of Dál nAraide was roughly coterminous with modern co. Antrim, and the dynasty claimed to take their name from Conall's descendant Fíachu Araide. The Uí Echach Coba claimed to descend from Echu Coba, a son of Cronn ba druí. As Cronn ba druí descends from Fíachu Araide, the Uí Echach Coba claims cast them as a subset of the Dál nAraide. Kings of independent Ulster were drawn from the Dál nAraide and, less frequently, the Uí Echach Coba, but a third dynasty, the Dál Fíatach, who were said to come from Munster and resided in the eastern portion of independent Ulster (roughly eastern co. Down), predominated.

FIGURE 4.6 – DEDAID AND FÍACHU ARAIDE



The Conaille Muirthemne occupied a kingdom bordering the territories of the Southern Uí Néill, the Airgíalla, Dál Fíatach, and Uí Echach Coba and are included in a list of the *forslointe Úa nEchach*.[392]

[392] CGH, 278.

Byrne notes that their kingdom appears to have emerged in the late seventh century[393] – the earliest mention of them in the annals is in a poem found in AU 688.4 – and that "the genealogists could not agree on their ethnic origins."[394] The confusion regarding their origins revolves around conflicting statements about whether their eponymous ancestor was Conall Anglonnach or Conall Cernach. Conall Anglonnach is given as the son of Eochaid mac Cruind ba druí.[395] Confusion is introduced, however, by a pedigree of the Conaille Muirthemne, the Lec. and BB copies of which gloss Conall m. Echach with the statement that "from [him] the Conaille Muirthemne descend, as it is found in the Psalter of Cashel,"[396] and extends the pedigree – [...Cronn] ba druí m. Dedad m. Sin m. Roisin – so that the Conaille Muirthemne are actually placed within Síl nÉremóin rather than Síl nÍr.[397] The aside in Lec. and BB that the Psalter of Cashel named Conall Anglonnach rather than Conall Cernach as the eponymous ancestor of the Conaille Muirthemne is certainly interesting, and the issue has been discussed at length by David Thornton who has argued that the "genealogical schizophrenia" of the Conaille Muirthemne is "symptomatic of an underlying political insecurity resulting from the position of the Conaille as a buffer-kingdom."[398] More interesting for present purposes, though, is the gloss which presents Cronn ba druí as a son of Dedad, an ancestral figures of both the Érainn of Munster and of Dál Fíatach. This would qualify as a major reappraisal of their origins, not only grafting the Uí Echach Coba, and the Dál nAraide likewise, onto the lineage of the

393 F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 90.

394 F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 118.

395 CGH 326–7.

396 [...*Conall Anglondach*] *ó táit* [sic] *Conailli Murthemne* (CGH, 327).

397 CGH, 327.

398 David Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies: studies in the political history of early medieval Ireland and Wales*, Prosopographica et Genealogica 10 (Oxford: Linacre College; Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2003), 196. Thornton's full treatment of the Conaille Muirthemne's origins and genealogical pretensions occupy pages 195–208. This is a phenomenon also apparent in the genealogies of the Osraige, Laígse, and other buffer states along the Leinster-Munster border.

Dál Fíatach but also, secondarily, placing them within Síl nÉremóin. This secondary effect, however, is likely incidental; the desire of the Conaille Muirthemne to lay claim to kinship with their more powerful neighbors in Ulster, specifically the Dál Fíatach, is clearly the primary concern. As Thornton points out, the Conaille Muirthemne are only included among the descendants of Cronn ba druí in their own genealogies.[399] Thornton further argues that the switch from the Conaille's claims of close relation to the Dál nAraide and Uí Echach Coba to their claim of a connection with the Dál Fíatach probably occurred in the early eleventh century when the extant Conaille pedigrees were written, since Dál Fíatach exclusively held the kingship of Ulster following the death of the last Dál nAraide king of Ulster, Áed mac Loingsig, in 972.[400]

The Laigsí Laigen were a *fortúath* of Leinster and occupied a territory roughly along the border between the territory of the northern Lagin and the Osraige and "as the prime defenders of the province against attacks from Munster the Loígis enjoyed that status of most favoured vassal which the Uí Néill accorded to the Gailenga and Ciannacha."[401]

From Conall Cernach, then, come a number of subordinate population groups scattered throughout Ireland, but also two of the three royal dynasties of independent Ulster. The third dynasty, the Dál Fíatach, are held to descend from Fíatach Find who is reckoned a king of Ireland in the long, but acephalous, regnal list incorporated into the Rawlinson redaction of the corpus.[402] In a probably late eleventh-century pedigree entitled *Geneloige Rí nUlad* we find that he descends from Eochu m. Sin m.

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[399] David Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Genealogies*, 200.

[400] Ibid.

[401] F.J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 131–2.

[402] CGH, 121.

Rosin,[403] thus making the Dál Fíatach cousins of Clann Dedaid, the Érainn of Munster who were named from their supposed descent from Dedad mac Sin.

IV.B. Érech Febria m. Míled

That Síl nÍr was invented after the broad contours of Síl nÉremóin and Síl nÉbir had solidified is evident from the existence of another son of Míl to whom many of the peoples subsumed into Síl nÍr are connected. This "other Ír" is named Érech Febr(i)a[404] and appears seven times in CGH, though only twice in the Rawl. redaction. One of these two appearances in Rawlinson perfectly summarizes his role within the genealogical scheme:

> *Do shíl trá Fergusa do Chiarraigib ut prescripsimus ⁊ atát dá genelach la Fergus .i. genelach cu h-Érech Febra m. Míled ⁊ ab hÉrech usque Ádam nó a Rudraige usque hÍr ⁊ ab hÍr usque Ádam.*[405]
>
> "Now, the Cíarraige are among the descendants of Fergus, as we have previously written; and Fergus has two genealogies, i.e. a genealogy up to Érech Febra m. Míled and from Érech to Adam, or from Rudraige to Ír and from Ír to Adam."

Most mentions of Érech survive in material pertaining to the Cíarraige,[406] but he also appears in pedigrees of the Conmaicne and Corco Óche.[407] The anomalous nature of this lineage from Fergus back to Érech is further heightened by the presence of several members of the Túatha Dé Danann within it as well as the treatment of female personages as male. Side-by-side analysis reveals three versions of Fergus's pedigree:

> 1. One takes his pedigree back to Rudraige as expected, but does not provide Rudraige's pedigree. Rudraige'ss standard line of descent from Ír is likely implicit in this version of Fergus's ancestry.

[403] CGH, 322.

[404] Both elements of his name have variants, namely Airech and Febrúad.

[405] CGH, 288.

[406] CGH, 282, 288, 391, 428.

[407] CGH, 319, 392.

2. Another version associates Fergus with Síl Luigdech m. Ítha via his mother.

3. And still another version has Fergus descend from Érech m. Míled. In two cases, all three of these possible pedigrees are presented:

FIGURE 4.7 – FERGUS'S LINEAGE

Fergus' Genealogy[408]			***Genelach Cíarraige Lúachra***[409]		
LL, La.	**Rawl., LL, La.**	**LL, La.**	**LL**		
Fergus	Fergus	Fergus	Fergus	Fergus	Fergus
Róech	Róech (f.)	Róech	Róech	Róech	Róech (f.)
Ross	Éochu	Éochu	Rudraige	Éochaid	Éochu
Rudraige	Cairpre	Cairpre	*vel ita:*	Cairpre	Cairpre
nó	Lugaid	Lugaid		Lugaid	Lugaid
	—	Lugair		Lugair	—
	Lug Lúath	Lug		Lug	Lug Lúath
	Eithniu Cass	Ethniu		Ethniu	Ethniu Cass
	Danu Derg	Donu		Donu	Donu Derg
	Ethéor	~7~		~7~	Ethéor
	~7~	Éber Brecc		Éber	~7~
	Dáire Doimthech	Ethéor		—	Dáire Doimthech
	Ross Rigoll	Érech		Érech	Ross Rigoll
	Lugaid Loígde	Míl Espáin		Míl Espáne	Lugaid Loígde
	Bréogann			*nó*	Bregann
	Lugaid				Lugaid
	Íth				Íth
	Breógann				Bregann
	nó				

The line of descent linking Fergus to Érech m. Míled shows no essential difference between these two items. The inclusion within this line of descent of Lug, his mother, and his maternal great-grandmother, all members of the Túatha Dé Danann according to the standard Milesian scheme, is odd but reminiscent of the presence of Núadu Argatlám in other Milesian pedigrees. Indeed, the

[408] CGH, 281–2.

[409] CGH, 427–8.

unremarked upon presence of at least three women, Róech, Ethniu, and Donu/Donann, within this patrilineal pedigree, is very strange, even more so as they are explicitly treated as male. This contrasts noticeably with the pedigree which traces Róech's ancestry to Lugaid m. Ítha and in which Róech is explicitly referred to as the daughter of Éochu (Rúad). If not for Róech's presence in both of these anomalous pedigrees of Fergus, it would be possible to reconcile Róech's patrilineal lineage with the standard scheme: Fergus's father, Ross m. Rudraige, descends from Ír and his mother, Róech, from Lugaid m. Ítha. This solution is an impossibility. Confusing matters still further are two versions of a long Cíarraige pedigree.[410] In the BB and Lec. copies of the earlier version of this pedigree,[411] Róech may be presented as Ross's father–it is unclear as can be seen in the table below–and given the epithet 'ródánae.' The longer pedigree is unambiguous; Róech Ródánae is definitely listed as Ross's father:

[410] This is the same Cíarraige pedigree which includes M'Auluim/M'Óluim and which was discussed in Ch. 3.

[411] This earlier copy (CGH, 287) terminates with Flann Féorna (†737). The later copy has been extended twelve generations and ends with Mathgamain m. Meic-Bethad (CGH, 391). I can find no reference to Mathgamain, but there is a death notice for a Mac-Bethad úa Conchobuir, king of the Cíarraige Lúachra, in AU 1086.2, AI 1086.3, and AFM 1086.13. The pedigree gives the names of Mac-Bethad's father and great-grandfather as Conchobor, and the chronology certainly would fit our understanding of the development of the genealogical material. Even so, I cannot be completely certain that the Mac-Bethad of the annals is the same as is found in this pedigree.

FIGURE 4.8 – GENELACH CÍARRAIGE

Rawl., Lec., BB[412]		**LL**[413]
Fergus		Fergus
Róech[414]	Ross Róig Ródanai[415]	Ross Róech Ródanai
Éochu		Éochaid
Cairpre[416]		Cairpre[417]
Lugaid		Lugaid
Lugair		Lugair
Lug		Lug
Ethniu		Ethliu
Danu		Donu
~10~		~10~
Óirne Cúlbennach[418]		Óirne Cúlbennach[419]
~3~		~3~
Allóiti		Ollóiti
Érech Febria		Érech Febria[420]
Míl Espáne[421]		Míl Espáne

412 CGH, 287–8..

413 CGH, 391.

414 Rawl.

415 Lec., BB

416 *hinc conueniunt fri Corco Ché nó Óche .i. im Chairpre*

417 *híc condrecat fri Corco [Ó]che im Charpre*

418 *i sunn condrecat is Fir Maigi Féine*

419 *sund condrecat ⁊ Fir Maigi Féni*

420 *is é side in dar[a] ócthigern déc ro gab hÉrinn.*

421 *iss é side in dara ócthigern déc ro gab hÉrind.*

Both versions are largely the same, notwithstanding the confusion over Ross and Róech, but differ in several important ways from the other Fergus < Érech pedigrees discussed earlier. The first is the presence of Óirne Cúlbennach who is given as the common ancestor of the Fir Maige Féine and of the Cíarraige. Further down the pedigree, six generations after Fergus, is Delmnae who would seem to be the eponymous ancestor of the Delbnae who are presented as members of Síl nÉbir elsewhere.[422] Oirbsiu/Oirbsen Már, five generations after Delmnae, seems to be another example of the unexpected presence of a member of the Túatha Dé within the Milesian pedigrees; since, according to *Cóir Anmann* and *Lebor Gabála*, Oirbsen was another name for Manannán mac Lir.[423] Although this equivalence is not made in the genealogical material, Oirbsen is accorded an association with a prominent body of water even within that context. All copies of the pedigree except that found in LL explain that Loch nOirbsen (Lough Corrib, co. Galway) was named for him, since he was drowned in his house when the lake burst forth. A different account is found in a passage of *Tochmarc Lúaine ocus Aided Athairne* listing the "four Manannáns," and is also referenced in *Lebor Gabála*[424]:

> *Ro bádar cethri Manannán and ⁊ ní a n-áenaimsir do bádar. Manannán mac Alloit, draí do Thuathaib Dé Danann, ⁊ a n-aimsir Thuaithi Dé Danann ro baí. Oirbsean immorro a ainm díles. Is é in Manandán sin ro baí a n-Araind ⁊ as fria side adberar Eamain Ablach ⁊ is é ro marbad i cath Cuilleann la Huilleann Abradruad mac Caithir meic Nuadad Airgedláim i cosnum rígi Connacht ⁊ in tan ro clas a adnocol is ann ro mebaid Loch nOirbsen fo thír conid uad ainmnigther Loch nOirbsean in cét Manannán.*[425]
>
> "There were four Manannáns, and they were not from the same time. Manannán son of Allot was a wizard of the Túatha Dé Danann, and he was from the time of the Túatha Dé Danann. Oirbsen, however, is his proper name. That Manannán was from Árann, and it because of him that Emain Ablach is so named; and he was slain

[422] CGH, 191, 235, 246.

[423] Sharon Arbuthnot (ed. & tr.), *Cóir Anmann–Part 1*, ITS 59 (London: ITS, 2005), pp. 111–2, 147, §148; idem (ed. & tr.), *Cóir Anmann–Part 2*, ITS 60 (London: ITS, 2007), pp. 45–6, 119, §158; R.A.S. Macalister, LGE IV, 129, 193.

[424] LGE IV, 129.

[425] Liam Breatnach (ed.), "Tochmarc Luaine ocus Aided Athairne," in *Celtica* 13 (1980), 10.

> in the battle of Cuillenn by Uillenn Abratrúad, son of Caither, son of Núada Argetlám, contending for the kingship of Connacht; and when his grave was dug, it is there that Loch nOirbsen broke forth over the land, so that from him, the first Manannán, Loch nOirbsen is named."

This anecdote clearly separates this Manannán, Allóit's son, from Manannán the son of Lir who is described as both a trader plying between Ireland, Man, and Britain and a wizard. This distinction, however, is probably artificial as *mac Lir* simply means 'son of the sea' and the Manannán mac Lir of the anecdote is not located within the pseudohistorical framework, as the other three are. As in the corpus the passage clearly links the formation of Loch nOirbsen to Oirbsen who is here presented unequivocally as a member of the Túatha Dé and definitively identified as the same person as Manannán. His father, Allóit, – or Alldóit as he is often referred to in the corpus – appears in a number of corpus items, including two of the early Leinster poems:

FIGURE 4.9 – ALLDÓIT

Núadu Necht, ní dámair anfhlaith[426]	*Énna, Labraid lúad cáich*[427]	*Genelach Osrithe*[428]	Síl Luigdech m. Ítha genealogy[429]
Gáedal Glass	Glass	Gáedel Glass	
[É]ber	Éber	Éber Scott	
Nóenal	Nóenal	Nóenal	Nóenal
Núadu	Núadu	Núadu	Núadu
Alldóit	Alldóit	Alldóit	Alldóit
Eirrgid	Arcid	Aircid	Aircid
~6~	~7~	~6~	~4~
Míl	Míl	Míl	Lugaid m. Ítha

In these items Allóit is treated as Núadu's son; but within the collection of Leinster genealogical material there are instances in which this relationship appears to be reversed; and Núadu (Fuildon Argetlám) is treated as Allóit's son.[430] The persistent but imprecise genealogical relationship between these two personages is all the more intriguing when one notices that a certain Allóit appears in the Rawl., Lec., and BB copies of the probably mid-eighth-century Cíarraige pedigee cited above:

> [...*Éber*] m. *Feithiul m. Óirne Chúilbennaich–i sunn condrecat is Fir Maige Féine–m. Fidbi Fáeburdeirg m. Muinremair m. Condnaich m. Allóiti m. hÉrech Febria m. Míled Espáin–is é side in dara ócthigern déc ro gab hÉrinn–m. Nóendi–im Nóende condrecat fri Síl nAmargin*

[426] CGH, 4.

[427] CGH, 6.

[428] CGH, 17.

[429] CGH, 333.

[430] CGH, 8, 16, 335. The third of these entries is not taken from a pedigree but from a regnal list of the kings of Ireland who came from the Lagin which does not give any patronymics. Nevertheless, the ordering of this regnal list matches the corresponding section of *Genelach Osrithe* in which Núadu Fuildon m. Alldóit appears, i.e. Alldóit's entry in the list is the one preceding that of Núadu rather than *vice versa*.

> *nGlúngil .i. Corcco Acrad Éile* (*is fuiri itá Caisil na ríg iniug*)[431] *₇ na h-Orbraige uile ₇ Corcco Artbi* (*₇ Túath Láegairi la Daiminis for Loch Érni dia fuilid húi Chaisidi .i. na leaga cona coibnesaib*)[432] *m. Nóenuill–i sunn condrecat fri Síl nÉbir ₇ hÉremóin–m. Sebil m. Gáedil Glais ₇rl.*[433]
>
> "Éber son of Fethéol son of Óirne Cúilbennach – here [the Cíarraige] join with the Fir Maige Féine – son of Fidbe Fáeburderg son of Muinremur son of Condnach son of Allóit son of Érech Febria son of Míl Espáin – he is one of the twelve young lords who took Ireland – son of Nóende – at Nóende [the Cíarraige] join to Síl nAmairgein Glúngil,[434] i.e. the Corco Acrad Éile, Cashel of the kings is there today, and all of the Orbraige and the Corco Artbi and Túath Láegaire of Devenish in Lough Erne from whom the Uí Chaisidi descend, i.e. the physicians with their branches – son of Nóenal, here [the Cíarraige] join with Síl Éber and [with Síl] nÉremóin – son of Sebel son of Gáedel Glas, etc."

Once again we find evidence that several conflicting versions of the Milesian scheme were under consideration during the process of settling upon the canonical version. Here, Míl is not the son of Bile as he is in virtually every other source, and the line of descent from Gáedel Glas to Allóit does not occur six or more generations before Míl; rather, Míl and Érech have been inserted into the middle of this line of descent. Given Míl's peculiar parentage as well as the presence of Érech, it would seem that this pedigree preserves a stage of the scheme's development during which Míl's immediate relatives were still in question and that the matter had not been completely resolved by the 740s.

The Lec. version of a pedigree of a branch of the Conmaicne entitled *Cenél nEdneand*[435] also preserves the line of descent connecting Érech and Fergus:

---

[431] *add* Lec.

[432] *add* Lec.

[433] CGH, 287–8.

[434] I know of no other reference to Síl nAmargein Glúngel, but since Amargein is, as we have seen above, Conall Cernach's father, this could simply be a different term for Conall's descendants.

[435] Its title in LL and Rawl. is *Genelach nEithne*, but this is clearly an error which has been corrected in the margins of LL though not in Rawl.; CGH 318–9.

FIGURE 4.10 – CENÉL NEDNEAND

…Fergus

Róech

Éochu Ruad

Cairpre Cennderg

Lugaid

Lugair

Lug

Dethniu

Danu

~7~

Éber

Ethéor

Airech Feabrua

Míl Espáine

I am unable to date this pedigree with any confidence. The most recent member I have been able to find any reference to is Cáirid m. Findcháim, 29 generations after Fergus, who interprets the dream of Díarmait mac Cerbaill in the latter's death-tale.[436] Díarmait is held to have died in 565 and ten generations follow Cáirid in *Cenél nEithne*. Using Diarmuid Ó Murchadha's calculation of 33.38 years per generation and assuming that Cáirid died within twenty years of Díarmait, the most recent member of the pedigree, Máel Brénainn Dall, most likely died sometime in the first quarter of the tenth century. Such a dating would be speculative in the extreme, but it would fit with Jaski's hypothesis that the genealogical compilations show evidence of having been updated c. 1000.[437]

[436] Dan Wiley (ed. & tr.), *An edition of Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill from the Book of Ui Maine* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2000), 129, 155.

[437] Bart Jaski, "The Genealogical Section of the Psalter of Cashel," 310.

Under the variant form of his name, Érech m. Febria also appears in the Lec. and BB copies of an undateable pedigree of the Corco Óche[438]:

FIGURE 4.11 – DE CHORCHO ÓCHE

Lec., BB
Fergus
Dubthach Donn
~5~
Ross
~3~
Fergus Óche[439]
Dubthach Dóeltenga
~3~
Corpre
Lug[440]
Ethniu
Donu
~7~
Éber
Airech Februa
Míl Espáne

Up until Corpre m. Loga the line of descent in this pedigree is more or less the same as that found in the other pedigrees in which Érech appears, but it diverges sharply after that point. Two personages with the name Fergus appear but neither can safely be equated with Fergus mac Róig.

[438] CGH, 392–3.

[439] *qui et Foga*.

[440] *sund condrecaid fri Ciarraidi* (BB ends here).

Róech does not appear at all; and, although someone named Ross is present, he is the son of a certain Iarél, not Rudraige as one would expect. Given the obscurity of the Corco Óche generally and the impossibility of dating this pedigree, one is left with little to say about the pedigree save to acknowledge its eccentricity.

IV.C. The Fir Bolg, Clanna Dedaid, and Rudraige

We have seen in the preceding chapter that the genealogical distinction between the Cíarraige and the Éoganachta may have been far weaker, or perhaps non-existent, in the earliest formulations of the Milesian scheme. Further, we have seen in this chapter that the Cíarraige are provided with three different lines of descent; and, although the presence of Fergus is a component common to each of these three competing pedigrees, the differing genealogical associations implied by each are mutually exclusive. Contradiction is endemic to the Munster genealogical tradition, and the ambiguity extends beyond which of several fictitious ancestors are assigned to the population groups in question but also to broader questions of genealogical affiliation. For example, as we have seen in Chapter 3 and as David Sproule has pointed out,[441] although the Éoganachta take their name from Éogan Már, not all of his putative descendants are reckoned to be members of the Éoganachta; and in point of fact the 'true' Éoganachta are only those dynasties who share Éogan's descendant (Conall) Corc mac Luigthig as their apical ancestor. Among the tributary peoples an even more amorphous 'ethnological' category, Érainn or Érnai, exists.

As an ethnonym – and I use the term loosely – the Érainn were a collection of population groups residing in the south and west of Munster over whom the Éoganachta claimed suzerainty. Although the Érainn are frequently referenced in genealogical tracts and other pseudohistorical texts, I have

[441] David Sproule, "Origins of the Éoganachta," 32–7.

been unable to locate any source which catalogues the specific population groups encompassed by the designation. Instead one must identify the key ancestral figures associated with the Érainn and then identify the peoples said to descend from them.

In the standard formulation of the scheme, the Érainn are attached to Síl nÉremóin via Óengus Turbech Temra. Óengus is one of the more important genealogical keystones of the organization of Síl nÉremóin, and from him are said to descend not only the Érainn but a variety of other population groups:

> *Óengus Turbech dá mac airegda leis .i. Fíachu Fer Mara sen Síl Chonaire i mMumain ⁊ Fer Alban ⁊ Dáil Ríata ⁊ Dáil Fíatach la hUltu.*[442]
>
> *Hic Óengus Tuirbech Temra condrecat rígrad Ulad ⁊ Alban ⁊ Érnai ⁊ Déissi Muman ⁊ Corco Roída fri Clainn Cuind.*[443]
>
> *…Énna* [*Aignech*] *<s>unn trá deligit Húi Néill ⁊ <Ul>aid ⁊ Dál Fíatach ⁊ Dál Ríata m. Óengus*[*a*] *Turbig Temra...*[444]
>
> *Ic Óengus Turbech condrecat Ulaid ⁊ Albanaig ⁊ Érnai frisna clanna remaind.*[445]

The following tree represents the genealogical relationships described by these passages:

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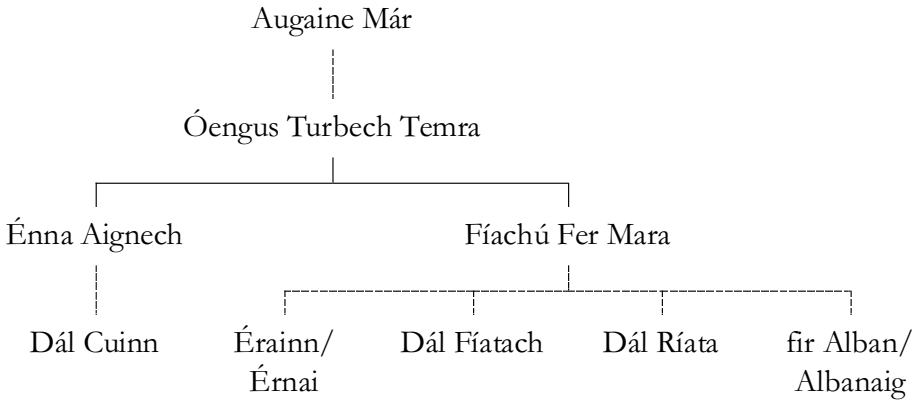
[442] "Óengus Turbech had two excellent sons, i.e. Fíachu Fer Mara ancestor of Síl Chonaire in Munster and the Men of Scotland and Dál Ríata and Dál Fíatach who reside among the Ulaid" (CGH, 129).

[443] "At Óengus Turbech Temra the royal families of the Ulaid and of Scotland, and of the Érainn, and of the Déissi of Munster, and the Corco Roída join to the descendants of Conn" (CGH, 137).

[444] "Énna Aignech – here the Uí Néill, and the Ulaid, and Dál Fíatach, and Dál Ríata divide [from one another] – son of Óengus Turbech Temra" (CGH, 159). This is clearly a mistake, since in every other instance it is at Óengus, rather than his son Énna, that the Uí Néill lineage joins to that of the other groups mentioned. Even so, it is very intriguing that here a distinction is made between the Ulaid and Dál Fíatach. In every other instance in which Óengus is made an ancestor of the Ulaid, Dál Fíatach is not mentioned, with the implication that the Ulaid being referred to are Dál Fíatach rather than Dál nAraide. This is somewhat unusual in that the two groups tend to be distinguished rather sharply within the corpus. The Dál nAraide are frequently referred to as *fír Ulad* ('the true Ulstermen'; CGH, 120, 154, 275). A passage from the LL copy of *Senchas Síl Ír* is the clearest example of the explanation of this distinction: *Coic ríg fhichet de Ultaib ro gabsat ríge hErenn cenmothát na sect rig ro gabsat de Dál Fiatach daig is do chlaind Oengusa Turbig do Dal Fiatach ⁊ do chlaind immorro Ollaman Fotla do Ultaib .i. do Dal Araide. Daig is iatsin na fírUlaid far fír* ("Twenty-five kings of the Ulstermen held the kingship of Ireland in addition to the seven kings of Dál Fíatach who held (it); because Dál Fíatach belong to the children of Óengus Turbech; whereas the Ulaid belong to the children of Ollaman Fotla, i.e. to Dál nAraide. Because it is they who are truly the true Ulsterman" (LL 329e58–330a1).

[445] "At Óengus Turbech Temra the Ulaid, the Scots, and the Érainn join to the kindreds above." (CGH, 358).

FIGURE 4.12 – ÓENGUS TURBECH AND THE ÉRAINN



It seems more than coincidental that Óengus connects these various population groups in a manner similar to that of Núadu Argetlám in the Airgíalla genealogical tracts,[446] but an examination of this phenomenon will have to wait. Of immediate relevance is the fact that the term 'Clann(a) Deda(i)d' is often treated as equivalent to the Érainn within the genealogical tracts and within pseudohistorical material in general.[447] The Dedad in question is a descendant from Óengus Turbech's son Fíachú Fer Mara. The names of his father and grandfather, Sen and Roshen ('Old son' and 'Very-Old') are absurd; no child has ever been named 'Very-Old.' Doubtless the impression meant to be given by these names is simply to emphasize Dedad's status as an ancestral figure, and Dedad is indeed the linchpin connecting various population groups via his sons. The number and names of Dedad's sons can vary significantly from item to item within the corpus. In MSE, the following sons of Dedad are listed: Íar, Dáire, Ross, Binni, Foroí, Glass, and (Cóemgen/Conget) Conganchness.[448] In a dossier of material pertaining to the Corco Duibne, however, two other sons of Dedad, Eochaid Fute, and Ailill, are mentioned; and we are told that Eochaid slew his brother out of envy and

[446] See II.A.b.

[447] CGH, 17, 188, 190, etc.

[448] CGH, 188.

earned the name Fute, a synonym for jealousy, thereafter.[449] We will return to Fute, but Dedad's most consequential sons are Dáire and Íar.

IV.C.1. Dáire mac Dedaid

Dáire's position within the regnal lists, especially in relation to the doctrine of the 'Pentarchy,' i.e. that for a time after the death of Conaire Már there was no king of all Ireland, is certainly intriguing, but a topic with remains outside the scope of the present inquiry.[450] Likewise, the anecdote in MSE that Óengus ind mac Óc prophesied that Dáire would die at the moment his daughter bears a son is certainly interesting from the perspective of folklore but irrelevant at the moment. Genealogically and literarily, Dáire is mainly known for being the father of Cú Roí, the giant, possibly-divine ruler of Munster in the Ulster Cycle. Cú Roí, for all of his attestation in more literary sources, only appears a handful of times in the corpus: in the acephalous Rawlinson regnal list, in the Airgíalla genealogical dossier, and in MSE. In the regnal list, it is merely noted that Cú Roí was king of Munster following the death of Eterscél, Conaire Már's father.[451] Within the Airgíalla genealogical dossier, Cú Roí is given as the ancestor of Dál Fíatach,[452] and in MSE the redactor asserts that Dáirfhine is another name for the Érainn and that they – and not Corco Loígde "as others think" – descend from Cu Roí.[453]

[449] CGH, 378.

[450] CGH, 188–90. In most sources the Pentarchy is said to occur after the death of Conaire Már, but there are instances in which it is held to have occurred after the death of Conaire's father, Eterscél (CGH, 120) or even before the time of Eterscél and Conaire (CGH, 187). Overall the chronology of and circumstances surrounding the Pentarchy are confused and would benefit from a dedicated study.

[451] CGH, 120.

[452] CGH, 154.

[453] CGH, 190.

IV.C.2. Íar mac Dedaid

Íar is, rather obviously, the eponymous ancestor of the Érainn, although I have not seen it explicitly stated in any source, and is the source of the Ogam Irish and Archaic Old Irish familial names maqi Iari and moccu Iair respectively. Íar is not well attested in the corpus. No narratives or anecdotes appear to attach to him, save his death at the hands of Núadu Necht[454] and that he is held to be the ancestor, often the father, of the legendary king of Ireland Eterscél Mór to whom the appellation moccu Iair is frequently applied.[455] Eterscél[456] is well known from *Tochmarc Étaíne*, but the population groups which seem to be most consistently considered members of the Érainn did not trace their pedigrees back to either Eterscél or to Íar but, rather, to Conaire Már, Eterscél's son. Íar appears only in only four corpus items, but it is also possible that the Ér m. Ebir of MSE is Íar in disguise.[457] His most consequential appearance occurs in a pedigree of the Múscraige Mittine:

> *...[Iar] m. Ítha m. Bregoin. Ic Bregoin condrecat ⁊ Síl mac Míled .i. Éber ó tát Éoganachta Muman ⁊ hÉrimón ó tát Leth Cuind ⁊ Lagin.*
>
> *Dá mac Ítha .i. Lugaid ⁊ Ír. Lugaid isin leith tess atá maróen is Éber. Is uad atá Corco Lóegde. hÍr immorro issin leith tuaíd for óen ⁊ hÉrimón. Is hó Ír atá Dál Músca et Bascind et Dubne.*[458]
>
> "Íar son of Íth son of Bregon. At Bregon [the Múscraige Mittine] and the descendants of the Sons of Míl – i.e. Éber from whom the Éoganachta of Munster descend and Éremón from whom Leth Cuind and the Leinstermen descend – meet.
>
> The two sons of Íth, i.e. Lugaid and Ír. Lugaid settled in the southern half along with Éber. The Corco Loígde descend from him. Ír, however, settled in the

[454] CGH, 21, 120, 189

[455] CGH, 1, 21 (+Lec.), 120.

[456] In the index of CGH, Eterscél appears as Etarscél moccu Iair. As a general principle, I have followed O'Brien's spelling and reconstruction of nominative forms throughout this dissertation. This, however, is an exception to that rule.

[457] Mac Neill considered "the double base *ér*, *iar*, to have arisen from a coexisting pair ĭēr-, ĭvēr-,"[457] ("Early Irish Population Groups," 61) and so, as argued in II.B.1, the Ér mac Ébir of MSE might have been conceived of as an ancestor of the Érainn.

[458] CGH, 372.

> northern half along with Éremón. Dál Músca and [Corco] Bascind and [Corco] Dubne descend from Ír."

Four aspects of this pedigree that are very much at odds with the standard formulation stand out. The first is that Ír is made a brother of Lugaid m. Ítha, rather than of Éremón and Éber. The second follows naturally from the first in that Íar is the son of Íth rather than of Dedad as elsewhere. The third is the absence of Óengus Turbech Temra, the means by which the Érainn are normally attached to the lineage of Síl nÉremóin. The fourth is that Íar and Ír may be treated as interchangeable.. Two contradictory lines of descent connecting Conaire Már to Íth can be reconstructed:

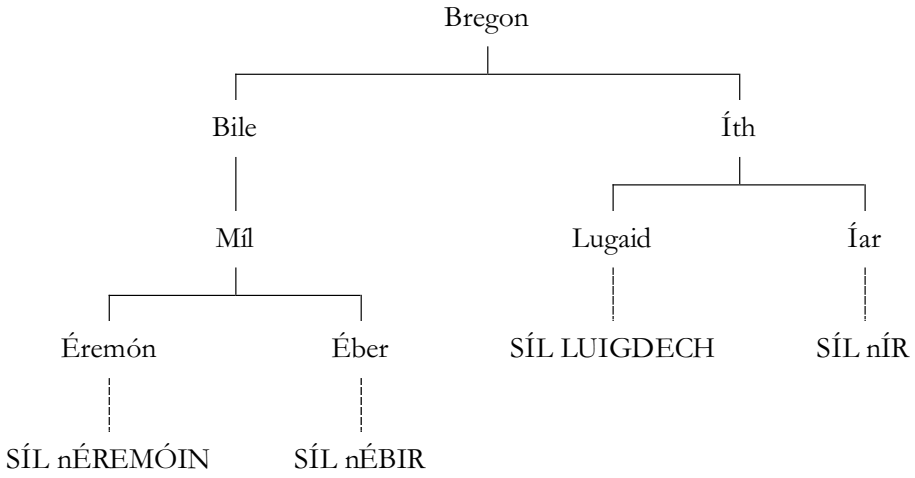
FIGURE 4.13 – CONAIRE MÁR'S LINE OF DESCENT (1)

Standard Formulation	Variant Formulation[459]
Bregon	Bregon
Bile	Íth
Míl	Íar
Éremón	
~>30~	
Óengus Turbech Temra	~5~
~10~	
Dedad	
Íar	
Eterscél	Eterscél
Conaire Már	Conaire Már

As for the Múscraige, themselves, the various branches of the Múscraige claimed descent from Óengus (or Cairpre) Músc, a near descendant of Conaire Már. What we have here, therefore, is a preserved scrap of a variant formulation of the scheme in which the Érainn (Síl nÍr, really) are linked more closely to Síl Luigdech m. Ítha than to either Síl nÉremóin or Síl nÉbir:

[459] CGH, 371–2.

FIGURE 4.14 – ÍAR MAC ÍTHA



The symmetry of this alternative arrangement is striking, especially when compared to the standard formulation, and the tidy schematization would suggest that this framework preceded those in which Ír/Íar was made a son of Míl. Íar and Lugaid are presented as counterparts to Éremón and Éber. The former are the ancestors of the *aithechthúatha* of Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga respectively, while Éremón and Éber are the ancestors of the *sáerchlanna* of the two 'halves' of Ireland. This variant is also likely to be the explanation for the attempt of the redactor of MSE, mostly unsuccessfully, to make clear the distinction between the descendants of Dedad and the Corco Loígde.[460]

IV.C.3. Fute mac Dedaid

Fute[461] appears in only two items, *Genelach Érand*[462] and *Genelach Corco Dubni*.[463] Fute's presence in *Genelach Érand* does not shed any new light on the problem of the Érainn, largely because I am unable to determine for whom this pedigree was written. Its title is unhelpfully vague, and I am

[460] CGH, 190.

[461] His name also appears as Futhi, Fuithe, Fuithi, and Fuíthe.

[462] CGH, 376.

[463] CGH, 378.

unable to confidently propose a date range for its composition. In the index O'Brien has listed one member of the pedigree, Fer Corp mac Con Filed, as belonging to the Múscraige, but I am unsure as to his reasons. Given that Fer Corp does not appear anywhere else in the corpus, I can only surmise that he arrived at this conclusion because *Genelach Érand* and its associated material has been placed between the Múscraige genealogical dossier and that of the Corco Duibne. I, however, can find no internal evidence that this pedigree applies to a branch of the Múscraige particularly given that the pedigree does not contain an eponymous ancestor. The two pedigrees which follow and attach to individuals found in *Genelach Érand* do not provide much help. The Furudrán mac Garbáin mentioned in the first of these *might* be the prior of Killoughy whose death is recorded in AFM 901.4. If they are the same person, then *Genelach Érand*, which terminates on the generation at which Furudrán appears, might have been compiled in the first half of the tenth-century; but we are still left without a clear idea of which population group this pedigree is intended to represent. The most recent important apical ancestor in the pedigree is Cachir m. Eterscéoil whom I cannot definitively find in the annals. It's not impossible that he is the same Cachir, lord of Fer Maige, who was slain in 843,[464] but this seems extremely unlikely given that the Fer Maige consistently traced their descent from Mug-Roth, who does not appear in *Genelach Érand.* Other aberrations within the pedigree are interesting – Dún Cermna is said to have been built by Cachir, rather than Cermna,[465] and it appears as though Ailill mac Máta has been included – but are not germane to this investigation.

[464] AFM 843.16.

[465] CGH, 376.

Genelach Corco Dubni is only slightly more informative:

> *Íar mac Dedad ó tát Síl Conaire Fuíthe mac Dedad ó táit Eraind .i. Síl Conairi 7 it Eraind side acht is uaisli Conaire conid uad-side slonter a shíl. Corc Duibfindi mac Carpri Músc athair Corco Dubni.*[466]
>
> "Íar mac Dedad from whom Síl Conaire descends [and] Fuíthe mac Dedad from whom the Érainn descend, i.e. Síl Conaire are Éraind, but Conaire is nobler, and it is from him that his descendants are named. Corc Duibfindi mac Carpri Músc is the father of the Corco Dubni."

Regrettably, we are still not told which Érainn population groups are supposed to descend from Fute, but the genealogy does concisely describe the preeminent status of Conaire's putative heirs within the groups considered to be members of the Érainn. At the same time, it would seem to present a new problem in that Íar is not presented as the ancestor of all of the Érainn, despite the strong likelihood that he is their ethnonym. I have no idea whether or not the contemporary genealogists viewed this as a problem; but if they did, one might expect that they would have recourse to an alternative eponymous ancestor in the form of Ailill Érann.

IV.C.4. Ailill Érann

Ailill Érann appears in three corpus items. The pedigree *Genelach Rígnalban* gives him as the son of Fíachu Fer Mara mac Óengusa Turbig Temra.[467] The LL version of *Geneloige Rí nUlad* also gives Ailill as the son of Fíachu Fer Mara, though the former's epithet *Érann* ('of the Érainn') is not included.[468] The kings of Ulster to whom the pedigree's title refers are those from Dál Fíatach, and the LL copy of the pedigree ends with Cú Ulad mac Conchobuir who died in 1157.[469]

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[466] The version found in BB, entitled *De Genelach Corco Duíbne*, gives a better reading than that of LL and provides the text I translate here (CGH, 378 (+BB)).

[467] CGH, 329.

[468] CGH, 322.

[469] AU 1157.2.

The remaining mention of Ailill Érann occurs in *Genelach Érand*, and his placement within that pedigree is yet another of its several aberrant qualities.[470] *Genelach Érand* does contain some of the fixtures of the standard Érainn pedigree in that it begins with Óengus Turbech and connects him to Dedad mac Sin. The line of descent connecting Óengus to Dedad, however, is full of names not found in cognate pedigrees, with the notable exception of Fíachu Fer Mara who still appears as the son of Óengus. Rather than presenting Ailill Érann as the son of Fíachu Fer Mara, the redactor of *Genelach Érand* has made him the son of (Corbb) Noithe who is otherwise unknown and appears six generations after Fute mac Dedad. In *Genelach Érand* Ailill also has the additional epithet *Dé Bolgae*; but, as far as I have been able to determine, no other source applies this additional moniker to Ailill Érann. That being said, there does appear to be a connection between Clanna Dedad, Clanna Rudraige, and the Fir Bolg, and this matter will be discussed later in the chapter. As we have seen above (IV.C.3), within the standard formulation of the scheme not all of the Érainn are held to descend from Íar mac Dedad, so Ailill Érann was, I believe, invented to provide all the branches of the Érainn with an eponymous ancestor and to integrate them into Síl nÉremóin. Fíachu earns the name from having been set adrift as a baby due to his being the product of incest.[471] The custom of setting people adrift so that God may determine their fate is found in several legal texts[472] and is specifically recommended for children born of incest.[473] If the child came back ashore, then he or she was allowed to live but was raised as a slave. The implication of this legal principle is to preclude any claim to autonomy by Fíachu's descendants.

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[470] CGH, 376.

[471] R.A.S. Macalister, LGE V, 285, 287.

[472] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: DIAS, 1988), 219–21.

[473] *CIH* 744.28.

IV.C.5. Conaire Már

Conaire Már is primarily known from *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* in which an account of his conception by incest, accession to the kingship of Tara, and tragic death is related.[474] A very different account of his installation and reign is found in the stories *De Shíl Chonairi Móir*[475] and *De Maccaib Chonairi*,[476] but his parentage is stable across all versions of his biography: he is the son of Eterscél, a descendant of Íar, and Mess Búachalla.[477] That Conaire Már was the son of Éterscél is the stable center around which a number of contradictory lines of descent revolve. The different means by which Eterscél is attached to Íar and thence to the Milesian scheme more broadly have already been discussed (IV.C.2). Conaire himself appears in CGH at least five times.[478] As is typical of the ancestor figures of the Érainn, Conaire's exact role as apical ancestor is more alluded to than explicitly laid out, and he appears in only two pedigrees, already discussed: *Genelach Rig nAlban* and *Genelach Múscraige Tíre*.[479] The line of descent given in these two pedigrees also appears to be reflected in the line of Munster royal succession given in MSE.[480]

[474] Eleanor Knott (ed.), *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Dublin: DIAS, 1936).

[475] Lucius Gwynn (ed.), "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," in *Ériu* 6 (1912), 130–43.

[476] Lucius Gwynn (ed.), "De Maccaib Chonairi," in *Ériu* 6 (1912), 144–53.

[477] The parentage of Mess Búachalla, on the other hand, is somewhat contested. The issue is whether she was the result of a union between Ess, her mother, and a denizen of Brí Leith, or whether Éterscél was her father. A summary of the issue is presented in *De Shíl Chonairi Móir* (135–6, 140).

[478] CGH, 120, 189, 329, 367, 372. It seems likely that Conaire Cáem, another important apical ancestor of the Érainn, is a double of Conaire Már; the matter will be discussed presently.

[479] CGH 328–9, 367.

[480] CGH, 188–90

FIGURE 4.15 – CONAIRE MÁR'S LINE OF DESCENT (2)

Genelach Rig nAlban[481]	*Genelach Múscraige Tíre*	*Mínigud Senchais Ébir*
Dedad		Dedad
Íar		Íar
Ailill Án		
Éogan		Éogan
Eterscél		Eterscél
Conaire Mór	Conaire Mór	Conaire Mór
Cairpre	Cairpre Findmór	Cairpre Findmór
Dáire Dornmár	Dáire Dornmár	Dáire Dornmár
Cairpre Crommchenn	Cairpre Crommchenn	Cairpre Crommchenn
—	Ailill	
Lugaid	Lugaid	
[Mug Láma, LL]	Mug Láma	
Conaire Cáem	Conaire Cáem	
Coirpre Rigfhota	Cairpre Músc, *cui nomen Óengus*	

We see from the two pedigrees that Conaire is explicitly claimed as the ancestor of the kings of Dál Ríata and the Múscraige, and, in another pedigree he is also given as an important ancestor of the Corco Baiscinn.[482] The means by which these three population groups are said to relate to Conaire

[481] The LL copy is clearly based on the same source but has many omissions: …*[Éochu] Ríatai (is é-side Carpre Rigfhota) m. Conaire m. Moga Láma m. Lugdech m. Corpri m. Dáre m. Corpri m. Conaire m. Eterscéoil m. Éogain m. Ailella m. Dedaid* (CGH, 328–9 +LL).

[482] CGH, 380.

is somewhat variable, and the ambiguity is largely, if not entirely, the result of a confusion common to both the sagas and the genealogies between Conaire Mór m. Etersceóil and Conaire Mór/Cáem m. Moga Láma. Before examining the corpus items which demonstrate this confusion, it is useful to look more closely at how the three population groups in question are said to relate to one another. Notwithstanding discrepancies regarding their personal names which will be discussed below, the eponymous ancestors of Dál Ríata, Múscraige, and Corco Baiscinn are Eochaid Rígfhota/Ríatae, Óengus Músc, and Ailill Baiscinn respectively. There are several configurations by which they are related to one another, and they are frequently placed side by side as in this discursive passage following *Genelach Múscraige Mittine*:

> *Co tarscensat Mumain i n-amsir meic Ailella Óloim .i. Corpre Musc mac Moga Láma et Ailill Basschaín a lánainm dó dano. Carpre mac-side Óengusa meic Moga Láma.* [*Oc Mud Láma condrecaid alaili.*] *Ci at-berat araile betis bráthir na trí Carpri acht* [*is fíri*]*is ó athrib écsamlaib ro-génatar. Is inund immorro a mbundad for cúl ut praediximus. At-berat araile immorro at bráthri Óengus Músc ⁊ Ailill Baschaín ⁊ Eochaid Riatai .i. trí meic Carp[ri] m. Conaire m. Messi Búachalla.*[483]
>
> "And they overran Munster in the time of the son of Ailill Ólom, i.e. Corpre Músc son of Mug Láma and the full name for him is Ailill Basschaín. Carpre is the son of Óengus son of Mug Láma. [At Mug Lama, others join to them.][484] Others, however, say that the Cairpres may have been brothers, but [it is truer that][485] they are born from different fathers. The tracing of their origins is the same as we have said previously. Others, however, say that Óengus Músc and Ailill Baschaín and Eochaid Ríatai are brothers, i.e. the three sons of Cairpre son of Conaire Mór son of Mess Búachalla."

A similar passage from *De Shíl Chonairi Móir* demonstrates how the confusing relationship between these competing genealogical doctrines was of concern even to the writers of the pseudohistorical sagas:

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[483] CGH, 372.

[484] +Lec.

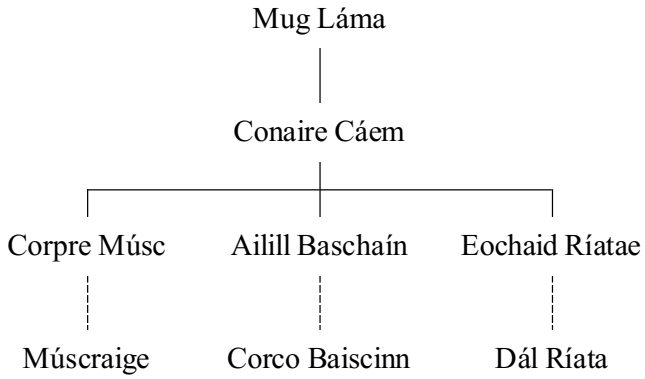
[485] +Lec.

Ba ri Erend Mac Con. Faeis Ailill Ulom leis, uair ise Ailill ⁊ Sadb ingen Cuind Cetcathaig ranalt Mac Con. Atberat araile conid aire sin tancatar ar dus a Mumain, .i. tri meic Conaire meic Mogalama; ut dicunt alii .i. Oengus, otait Muscraide Erind (⁊ Corco Duibne, alii dicunt: alii uero non); ⁊ Ailill Bascain, otait Corco Baiscind; Eochaid Rigfhota, otait fir Alban ⁊ Dal Riatai. Tri hanmand doib dono .i. tri Cairbri, .i. Carpri Muce ⁊ Cairpri Bascain ⁊ Cairpri Rigfhota. Ate rogabsat dibad a nErna Muman, Íar tidacht a Feraib Breag; uair is ac Muscraib airthir Breag rogenair Cairpri Muse. Is aire rater Cairpri Muse fris, et ideo uocatur Muscraige.[486]

"Mac Con was king of the Érainn [sic]. Ailill Ólom slept at his house, for Ailill and Sadb daughter of Conn Cétchathach it was, who had fostered Mac Con. Some say that is primarily the reason that they (i.e., the three sons of Conaire [son of] Mogalama) came into Munster; *ut dicunt alii*–Oengus from whom the Muscraige of Ériu descend (and the Corco Duibne *ut alii dicunt* : *alii uero non*) ; and Ailill Baschain, from whom the Corco Baiscinn descend; and Eochaid Rígfhota, from the men of Alba and the Dalriatai descend. Three names, then, have they–The three Cairbre's [sic]: Cairbre Musc, Cairbre Baschain and Cairbre Rigfhota. 'Tis they who took possession in Érainn of Munster after coming from the Fir Breg, for Cairbre Musc was born in the Muscraige of eastern Bregia. Therefore he is called Cairbre Musc, *et ideo uocatur* Muscraige."[487]

A number of distinct genealogical configurations are referred to in these two passages, and none is actively endorsed by the redactor of either. One configuration, the standard formulation, has Conaire m. Moga Láma as the father of the three brothers:[488]

FIGURE 4.16 – CONAIRE MAC MOGA LÁMA (1)



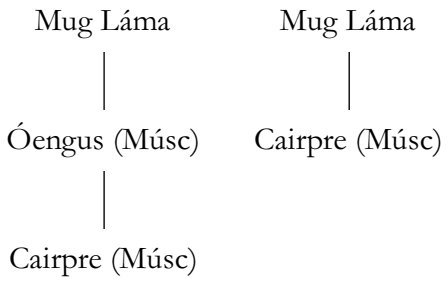
[486] Lucius Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 137.

[487] Lucius Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 141.

[488] CGH, 328 (+LL), 367, 372, 380, 429 (+BB, Lec.[2]).

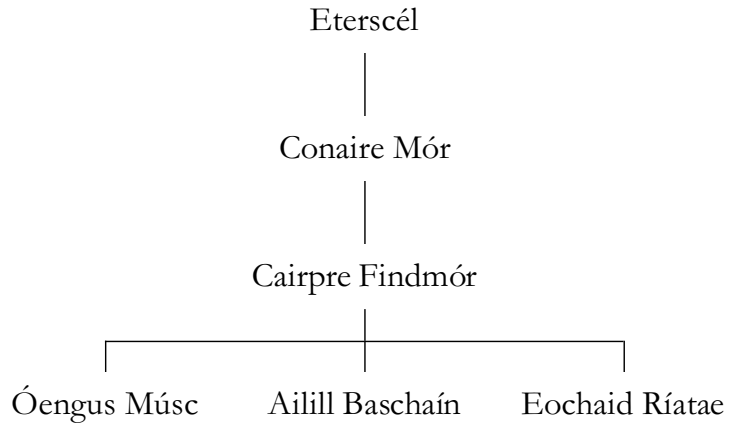
The second configuration is structurally identical to the first, but Conaire Mór m. Messi Búachalla replaces Conaire Cáem m. Moga Láma as the father of the brothers. A third configuration is, as far as I can tell, confined to the LL version of the Múscraige genealogies and omits both Conaires entirely, instead attaching the Múscraige's eponymous ancestor directly to Mug Láma.[489] This arrangement has two variations since their eponymous ancestor is sometimes named Óengus Músc and sometimes Cairpre Músc[490]:

FIGURE 4.17 - CONAIRE MAC MOGA LÁMA (2)



A fourth configuration is indistinguishable from the second, except that Conaire Mór's son, Cairpre Findmór, is inserted between Conaire and the three brothers[491]:

FIGURE 4.18 – DESCENDANTS OF CONAIRE MÁR



[489] CGH, 367, 371.

[490] See, for instance, the LL version of *Genelach Múscraige Tíre*:…[*Carpre*] *Músc cui nomen Óengus* (CGH, 367).

[491] Lucius Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 133, 138.

In addition to these four genealogical configurations, another variable presents itself in the doctrine, sometimes applied in these passages but sometimes not, namely that the three brothers were in actual fact all named Cairpre.[492] A lengthy gloss to the opening passage of De Maccaib Conaire, indicated by parentheses, attempts to square the circle by explaining that the contradiction is due to the fact there were two sets of brothers who were all named Cairpre:

> *Trí bráthir Cairpre Músc ⁊ Cairpre Bascháin ⁊ Corpre Rigfota. Tri meic Conaire meic Etersceóil húi Ieir (idem ⁊ Conaire mac Messe Buachalla) ocus Sárait ingen Chuind meic Oenláma Gaba (no Caiphe) mathair mac Conaire. (Batar tra na hanmand chetnasa for maccaib Conaire meic Moga Láma ⁊ ba Sárait ingen Chuind cetchathaig a mmathair saide; ⁊ dano ba hindua dond Incel thóesech, lasro marbad Conaire Mór, in tIncel romarb Conaire mac Moga Láma; masa Incel ros-marb : aliter enim alii dicunt : 'Rathuit Conaire, ní chél, la Erc .h. Echach Domlén : (.i. di Lagnib) is and rongáet cliamain Cuind isin leittir ós Liath-Druimm.*)[493]
>
> "Three brothers were Cairbre Músc, Cairbre Baschain, and Cairbre Rigfhota, the three sons of Conaire son of Eterscél grandson of Íar (he and Conaire son of Mesbuachalla are the same), and Sárait daughter of Conn mac Óenláma Gaba (or Cáiphe) was mother of the sons of Conaire. (The same names indeed had the sons of Conaire mac Mogaláma, and their mother was Sárait daughter of Conn Cetchathach; moreover a descendant of that chieftain Ingcél by whom Conaire Mor was slain, was the Ingcél who slew Conaire mac Mogalama–if indeed Ingcél slew him : *aliter autem alii dicunt*: 'Conaire fell (I shall not omit it) at the hands of Erc grandson of Eochu Doimlén [i.e. of the Leinstermen]; the son-in-law of Conn was stricken on the acclivity of Liathdruimm.'"[494]

The attempt to reconcile the discrepancy is too clever by half. In endeavoring to demonstrate that the two Conaires are separate figures separated chronologically by several centuries, the glossator has actually provided evidence that the two are in fact doublets of one another. The parallelism between their names as well as those of their respective, sons, wives, fathers-in-law, and murderers is too exact. Even the attempt to synchronize each Conaire within his specific period of legendary history is confused. As the son-in-law of Conn Cétchathach, Conaire m. Moga Láma would precede

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[492] CGH, 372; Lucius Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 137, 141; idem, "De Maccaib Conaire," 147, 150.

[493] Lucius Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 147.

[494] Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 150.

Erc by five generations according to the standard chronology. Another lapse occurs in assigning Erc to the Lagin, rather than to the Airgíalla to whom he would properly belong as a descendant of Eochu Doimlén. These mistakes are compounded still further by continued nominal and chronological inconsistencies throughout the narrative. Cairpre Rigfhota's name changes to Fíachra and thence to Fíacha within the span of two sentences.[495] Such a discrepancy would be unremarkable and attributable to any number of mistakes made by the scribe or copyist except for the fact that neither Fíacha nor Fíachra are alternative names for Cairpre/Eochaid Rigfhota in any other source of which I am aware. Moreover, the chronological setting of the narrative skips forward nearly two centuries without any comment. The tale begins in the near aftermath of *Togáil Bruidne Da Derga*, roughly the time of Christ, but pseudohistorical figures of the second century, such as Mac Con and Ailill Aulomm, continually intrude. For example, Éogan Már plays an important part in the saga by coming from Munster to Tara to tell the sons of Conaire that Ingcél is being hosted by the king of the Érainn, Nemed mac Srobcind. According to both the Rawlinson and LGE regnal lists, however, Nemed mac Srobcind slew Conaire Cáem, rather than Conaire Már.[496]

More discordant still is the note which the glossator adds claiming that Éogan Már was the son of Eterscél mac Éogain and therefore Conaire's brother. An Éogan Mór belonging to the Érainn is mentioned once in the corpus – he is the son of Céte m. Dedaid – and it is possible that this is who is intended in *De Maccaib Conaire* though it seems unlikely given the parentage of the Éogan Már of the tale.[497] Indeed, arguing against such an interpretation is the fact that Éogan Mór m. Céti only exists in the LL redaction of the corpus item in question. The passage explains that there are twelve

[495] Lucius Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 148, ll. 29, 31.

[496] CGH, 151; LGE V, 334, 525.

[497] CGH, 377.

chief families of the Érainn and twenty-four *forshlointe* and lists the ancestors of each of the families. In LL the common father of these twelve[498] brothers is not made explicit, but Céte m. Dedaid is named as their father in BB and Lec. In Lec. and BB, however, the brother named Éogan Mór in LL is named Énna Mór, and this would seem to be the better reading given that the brother preceding Éogan/Énna Mór in the list is named Énna Bec.

Returning to *De Maccaib Conaire*, the bias of the tale promotes both the peoples claiming descent from Conaire, the Múscraige in particular, as well as the Éoganachta. Indeed, the interests of both groups are presented as intertwined from the time that the peoples of Síl Conaire were believed to have arrived in Munster.[499] Prior to their attack on Ingcél Cáech and Nemed m. Srobcind, anachronistically referred to as the king of Cashel, Cairbre Músc composes an encomium, "*folta dar ési flatha*,"[500] for Dergthene, one of the Éoganachta ancestral figures. Following their deposal of Nemed, we are told that "the sons of Conaire ruled the lands of Munster"[501] and that Cairbre Músc, and by extension the Múscraige one presumes, settled "from Brosnach to Dergmonai along Loch Léin where the Érainn are, across Munster; so that each ridge runs side by side with a ridge of the Eoganacht-people for the sake of mutual assistance and friendliness with these in perpetuity."[502] This is not the only origin legend detailing the special relationship between the Éoganachta and the

[498] It will not surprise those familiar with Irish texts proposing such neat genealogical, political, or legal schematizations to learn that in LL there are, in fact, only nine brothers listed and only eleven listed in BB and Lec.

[499] There is a deep contradiction at the heart of the migration narrative concerning the Múscraige which proves its artificiality. Namely: both Conaire Már and Conaire Cáem were kings of Munster and ancestors of the Múscraige, yet the Múscraige must 'arrive' in Munster and receive their territory from the Éoganachta.

[500] To the best of my knowledge, this poem is not attested anywhere, but the "*dán dogheni Coirpri Musc do Fiachaig Muillethan*" mentioned in *Frithfholaid ríg Caisil fri Túatha Muman* is most likely another reference to it (J.G. O'Keeffe, *Irish Texts–Fasciulus I*, 20, §9).

[501] *Is de sin gabsat meic Conaire crích Muman* (Lucius Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 149, 152).

[502] *…ótá Brosnaig co Dergmónai iar Loch Léin, atá hErand dar Mumain; co fil cach immaire and taéb fri taev fri immaire nEoganachta, fobíth immfhortachta ⁊ comairchisechta dóib co bráth* (Lucius Gwynn, "De Maccaib Conaire," 149, 152).

Múscraige. In "The Finding of Cashel" the king of the Múscraige is the first to give hostages to Conall Corc, earning the Múscraige freedom from taxation, a status confirmed in the *Frithfholaid* tract.[503]

Ultimately, the sorting of the Érainn into Síl Conaire and "the Érainn" seems to develop from the disintegration of the Munster power hierarchy which immediately preceded that of the Éoganachta. "Érainn," as a broad 'ethnological' category, which appears to have meant in practice "a population group of lower status than mine," was stratified, with the favored vassals of the Éoganachta accorded a means of distinguishing themselves from the less-favored. We can see the practical effects of such a distinction in scattered references to the attempt by the Corco Duibne, frequently rejected by the redactor of the text in question, to claim membership within Síl Conaire by making Corc Duibne the son of Óengus Músc or via some other unstated means.[504] The distinction is reinforced in the origin legends of various Munster population groups. In "De Maccaib Conaire" the three Cairbres, despite being of "the Érainn" themselves, are consistently portrayed as antagonists of the Érainn of Munster. Antagonism between Munster population groups in alliance with the Éoganachta and those in opposition to them is also a central theme of "De Shíl Chonairi Móir" and "Cath Cinn Abrad" in which the three Cairpres, led by Cairpre Músc, are allied with Ailill Aulomm against Mac Con, who is presented as king of the Érainn of Munster in both tales.

[503] "A tax collector from the king of Cashel over Eastern Munster except for the Uí maic Láire, and the Déissi, and the Múscraige" (*Rechtaire tobaig o ri Caisil for Aurmumain acht Hui maic Laire ⁊ na Déisi ⁊ Muscraige*; §9).

[504] CGH, 378–9; Lucius Gwynn, "De Shíl Chonairi Móir," 137, 141.

It is very clear, from these sagas and *Frithfholaid Rág Caissil*, that the Múscraige enjoyed a relationship of special status with the various septs identifying themselves as Éoganachta at a very early period, possibly from the very beginning of the invention of the Éoganachta as an ethnological category.

IV.D. Síl Luigdech meic Ítha

There is a great deal of confusion between the population groups comprising Síl nÍr and those comprising Síl Luigdech meic Ítha. In theory, the only notable historical group to belong to Síl Luigdech is the Corco Loígde, but there are strong indications that this was not the case at the outset of the scheme's development. The Corco Loígde are sometimes directly equated with the Dáirfhine,[505] as in the LL and BB versions of the pedigree which begins the section of the corpus dedicated to Síl Luigdech;[506] but in MSE the scribe explicitly refutes this doctrine, insisting instead that the Dáirfhine are actually equivalent to the Érainn rather than the Corco Loígde.[507] The source of this particular confusion is fairly apparent, namely the existence of two prominent Munster ancestral figures named Dáire: Dáire mac Dedaid, of the Érainn, and Dáire Sírchréchtach/Doimthech, of Síl Luigdech.[508] Indeed, when one collates the information found in the corpus concerning Síl Luigdech and the Corco Loígde, it is readily apparent that, in the course of the scheme's early development, the placement of the population groups deemed to be of the Érainn – including, it seems, the Corco Loígde – was highly unstable. The standard pedigree of Síl

[505] CGH, 190, 256.

[506] *Genelach Darine .i. Síl Lugdach m.Ítha* (CGH, 256).

[507] *Érnai ⁊ Dáirfhine do rád friu-side ó Dáre mac Dedaid a patre Con-ruí ⁊ ní Corco Laígde ut alii putant* ("Érainn and Dáirfhine they are called from Dáre mac Dedaid, [i.e.] from the father of Cú Roí and not Corco Laígde as others think"; CGH, 190).

[508] This second Dáire has two epithets, Sírchréchtach and Doimthech. He is assigned one or the other seemingly at the whim of the scribe, so that the two appear to be used interchangeably. Both epithets also demonstrate a fair degree of variation in spelling.

Luigdech is reflected in a long pedigree found in the various recensions of the corpus.[509] The variation in its title across the five recensions reflects the genealogical uncertainty surrounding Síl Luigdech. The Rawl. copy is entitled simply enough "Genelach Síl Lugdach meic Ítha;" but the LL and BB[1] versions directly equate Síl Luigdech with the Dáirfhine; and the Lec. and BB[2] versions, despite lacking any real difference in content, omit any mention of Síl Luigdech, terming the lineage Síl nÁengusa Bulgae instead:

FIGURE 4.19 – PEDIGREE OF THE CORCO LOÍGDE

Genelach Síl Lugdach Meic Ítha (Rawl.)	Genelach Darine .i. Síl Lugdach m. Ítha (LL, BB[1])		Do Genelach Síl nÁengusa Bulgae[510] (Lec., BB[2])	
Bregan	Bregon		Breogan	
—	Íth		Íth	
Lugaid	Lugaid		Lugaid	
Eithliu	Eithliu		Eithliu	
Lug	Lug		Lug	
—	Lugmanrach (LL)		Lugmanrach (Lec.)	Lumundrach (BB[2])
Tecmanrach?	Techmanrach?		Deagmanrach (Lec.)	Degumrach (BB[2])
Fer Suilne	Fer Suilme (LL)	Fer Fuillne (BB[1])	Fer Uillne (Lec.)	Fer Uindle (BB[2])
Sidebolg	Sidebolg		Sithbolg	
Dáire Domtig? *nó* Sírchréchtach	Dáire Sírchréchtach (*nó* Domtig, BB[1])		Dáire Sírchréchtach	
Lugaid Loígde	Lugaid Laígde		Lugaid Laíge	
Mac Con	Mac Con		Mac Con	
Macnia	Macnia		Macnia (Lec.)	Macnia (BB[2])
~11~	~10~		~10~	
Dúngalach	Dúngalach		Dúngalach	

[509] CGH, 256.

[510] …*amal derbus Saltair Caisil ⁊ Lebar Oilén Insi Dúin* ("As the Psalter of Cashel and the Book of Inchydoney state/assert").

I am unable to date any of the members of the pedigree, but the assertion in Lec. and BB^2 that this pedigree comes from the Psalter of Cashel probably means we can safely assume an early eighth-century date of composition. One immediately notices the presence, within the line of descent, of Lug m. Eithenn/Eithlenn, whom we previously encountered also intruding into the putatively Milesian pedigrees of Fergus m. Róig.[511] This is certainly valuable in itself, providing still another piee of evidence that the genealogical distinction between the Túatha Dé and the Milesians was a secondary development. Far more interesting for immediate purposes, however, is the passage concerning the children of Dáire Sírchréchtach:

> *Coic meic dano la Dáire Sírchréchtach: Lugaid Lóegdi a quo Corcco Lóegdi; Lugaid Cál a quo Callraige; Lugaid Oircthi a quo Corco Oirgthi; Lugaid Láechfes a quo Láechfhes Laigen; Lugaid Corp a quo Dál Mis-Corb Laigen; Lugaid Coscaire a quo Coscaire lasna Déisse dia mbáe Daníel mac Fothaid.*[512]
>
> "The five sons of Dáire Sírchréchtach: Lugaid Lóegdi from whom the Corco Loígde descend; Lugaid Cál from whom the Callraige descend; Lugaid Oircthi from whom the Corco Oirgthi descend; Lugaid Láechfes from whom the [Laígis] of Leinster descend; Lugaid Corp from whom Dál Mis-Corp of Leinster descend; Lugaid Coscaire from whom the [Coscraige] residing amongst the Déissi descend[, and] from whom Daniél mac Fothaid descended."

There is a widespread genealogical doctrine that Dáire had a number of sons, all named Lugaid.[513] The precise number and names of these Lugaids varies, though five is probably the most common number. A variant which assigns Dáire only three sons named Lugaid and also makes him the grandson of Conall Cernach is preserved in a discursive passage concering Conall's descendants:

> *Callraigi .i. Trebulchallraigi fri Lochaib Éirne aniair ⁊ Corcco Laígde la Mumain ⁊ Corco Oircthen la Mumain; trí meic insin Dáire meic Íréil Glúnmáir m. Conall Cernaich. Hit é inso na trí Lugdaig meicc Dáire .i. Lugaid Cál a quo Calraige, Lugaid Leog a quo Corcco Lóegdi, Lugaid Orc a quo Corco Octhi.* [514]

[511] CGH, 281–2, 427–8.

[512] CGH, 256–7.

[513] LGE V, 45, 67, 91–2, 101, 317.

[514] CGH, 155.

> "Calraige, i.e. the three-fold Calraige upon the east of Lough Erne, and Corco Laígde in Munster, and Corco Oircthen in Munster. Three sons of Dáire son of Írél Glúnmár son of Conall Cernach. These are the three Lugaids, sons of Dáire, i.e. Lugaid Cál, from whom the Calraige descend, Lugaid Leog from whom the Corco Loígde descend, Lugaid Orc from whom the Corco Orcthi descend."

The scribe then continues, giving the usual arrangement except with Íth as Míl's son rather than Breogan's:

> *At-berat fairenn cóic meic Dáiri meic Sidebuilc cóic Lugdaig: Lugaid Loígde ⁊ Lugaid Cal-, Lugaid Orc, Lugaid Lon, Lugaid Fer Corb cóic mc Dáire m. Sidebuilc m. Fir Fuilni m. Tecmanndrach m. Lugmandrach m. Loga m. Eithnenn m. Lugdach m. Ítha m. Míled Espáin.*[515]
>
> "A number of others say that the five Lugaids are the five sons of Dáire m. Sidebuilc: Lugaid Loígde and Lugaid Cal-, Lugaid Orc, Lugaid Lon, [and] Lugaid Fer Corb are the five sons of Dáire m. Sidebuilc m. Fhir Fuilni m. Tecmanndrach m. Lugmandrach m. Loga m. Eithnenn m. Lugdach m. Ítha m. Míled Espáin."

I suspect that the version of this doctrine assigning Dáire three sons rather than five is the older one, since the three sons, Lugaid Cal, Lugaid Leog/Loígde, and Lugaid Orc, are common to all variations regardless of the number of Dáire's sons. A mass of material pertaining to Síl Luigdech which O'Brien did not reedit for CGH, was edited and translated by O'Donovan in 1849 under the title *Genelach Corca Laidhe* (=GCL).[516] Copies of this genealogical dossier appear to be unique to BB and Lec. The material encompassed by this dossier is frequently at odds with the standard formulation and demonstrates a clear bias in favor of Síl Luigdech. Evidence for this bias takes the form of enumerating the members of the lineage who attained the kingship of Ireland – Dáire Sírchréchtach, Lugaid Mac Con, Eochaid Apthach, Eochaidh Étgudach, Fothaid Aircthech, and Fothaid Cairpthech – and that four of them – Mac Con, Dáire Sírchréchtach, Fothaid Cannaine, Lugaid Mal – were overkings of Europe and/or the world.[517] The bias in favor of Síl Luigdech is also exhibited

[515] CGH, 155.

[516] John O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* (Dublin, 1849), 1–144.

[517] John O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 2–5.

not only by the mention of the doctrine that the kingship of Munster alternated between the descendants of Dergthene and Síl Luigdech, a tradition found in the Éoganachta's own genealogical dossier,[518] but also by the assertion that the alternation ended due to Ailill Aulomm's injustice.[519] The tale *Cath Maige Mucrama* (=CMM) details Ailill's ruling concerning the musician Fer Fí and Mac Con's accusation that it was unjust; but, unlike the compiler of *Genelach Corca Laidhe*, the compiler of CMM does not actually endorse Mac Con's view of the matter.[520] Another tell-tale sign that the compilation of this material was commissioned by the Corco Loígde is the discursive passage detailing the (pre-Patrician!) association between the Corco Loígde and Saint Cíaran of Saigir, whose mother is said to be of the Corco Loígde:

> *…Lighain inghen Maine, is í máthair Chiaráin t-[S]airi; is and ro genir ac Findtracht Chléri, acus is aingil rus frithailsid hí. Gradha nimhi rodus bhaist hé. Is and ro baí in toiseach ro chreideadh do chrois i nErind, ár is dech mbliadhna fichet remh Phátraic do ghabh Ciarán Saighir….Is hé do thairrngir do Uibh Etersceóil righi agus aireochus d'á síl co bráth, acus is é forfhácaibh do righ Chorco Laighi enicland righ cúicidh dhó ar creidem chroisi aco ar dús. Acus is é Ciarán sindser naemh Erend….*[521]
>
> "…Ligain[522] daughter of Maine, she is the mother of St. Ciarán of Saigir; and he was born at Findtracht Cléri; and angels used to minister to her. The choirs of heaven baptized him. He was, therefore, the first [person] in Ireland who believed in the cross, for Ciarán founded Saigir twenty-seven years before [the arrival of] Patrick….It is [Ciarán] who promised to the Uí Eterscéoil that kingship and sovereignty would belong to their descendants forever, and it is he who bestowed the honor-price of a king of a province upon the king of Corco Laighi, on account of his having been the first to have faith in the cross. And Ciarán is the first of the saints of Ireland…"[523]

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[518] CGH, 190.

[519] "And three of those whom we mentioned previously, Mac Con and the two Fothads, took the kingship of Ireland after Ailill Eolam had broken [the terms of] the corulership and of the covenant with Macniad" (*Acus do ghobhadar trí ríhga d'a ndubhramar reomhaind ríghi nÉrend díbh taréis in chomhfhlaithiusa acus na comhaentadh do bhrised d'Ailill Eolam ar Maicniad .i. Mac Con agus in dá Fhathadh*; John O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 6–7).

[520] Máirín O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, 41, §9.

[521] John O'Donovan, *Miscellan of the Celtic Society*, 18, 20, 22.

[522] O'Donovan notes that her name is more usually rendered Liadhain or Liedania (*Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 20, n.).

[523] Translation is my own.

Given its strong bias in favor of Síl Luigdech, it is unsurprising that the list of population groups assigned to Síl Luigdech in GCL is quite extensive. All the groups mentioned are found in the discursive passages concerning the sons of Dáire Sírchréchtach cited above; but more information is given concerning them; and several are further subdivided:[524]

- Dartraige[525]
- Calraige Luirg
- Calraige an Chalaig
- Calraige Insi Nisc
- Calraige Maige Muirisc in the territory of Uí Amalgaid
- Corco Oirce
- Corco Loígde south and north and east and west
- Laigis in the territory of the Uí Enechglais in Cualu
- Dál Messin Corb in Leinster
- Coscraige in the territory of the Déissi

Despite having presumably been commissioned by a branch of the Corco Loígde, who are treated as the preeminent people of Síl Luigdech throughout,[526] the pedigree of the Corco Loigde found near the beginning of this collection of genealogical material is strangely confused:

> *Lugaidh Laighi, a quo Corco Laighi, mac sidhein Dairi Sirdrechtaigh. Ainm aile dó Sein-Lughaidh. Mac dó Lughaidh aili .i. Mac Con, acus [dó] ba Lughaidh [ainm] Dairi ma's fír do dhroing do na fileadhaibh beos. Maicniadh [gnath] ainm Luighdheach Laighi. Mac oiredga ac Mac Con .i. Maicniadh. Clann mhaith ac Macniadh .i. Aenghus Gaifuileach a quo Uí Etersceóil; acus Duach a quo Uí Cobhthaich; acus Fiachra, a quo Uí Floind Arda. Trí meic aili dó na trí Fothaidh…Trí meic aili dó trí meic Aencherda Berra, agus Findcháemh inghen Ronáin a máthair, agus do Cheardraidh Theamhrach don cherd'sa seilbh ar a robadar tseilbh ar tús.*

[524] John O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 6–9.

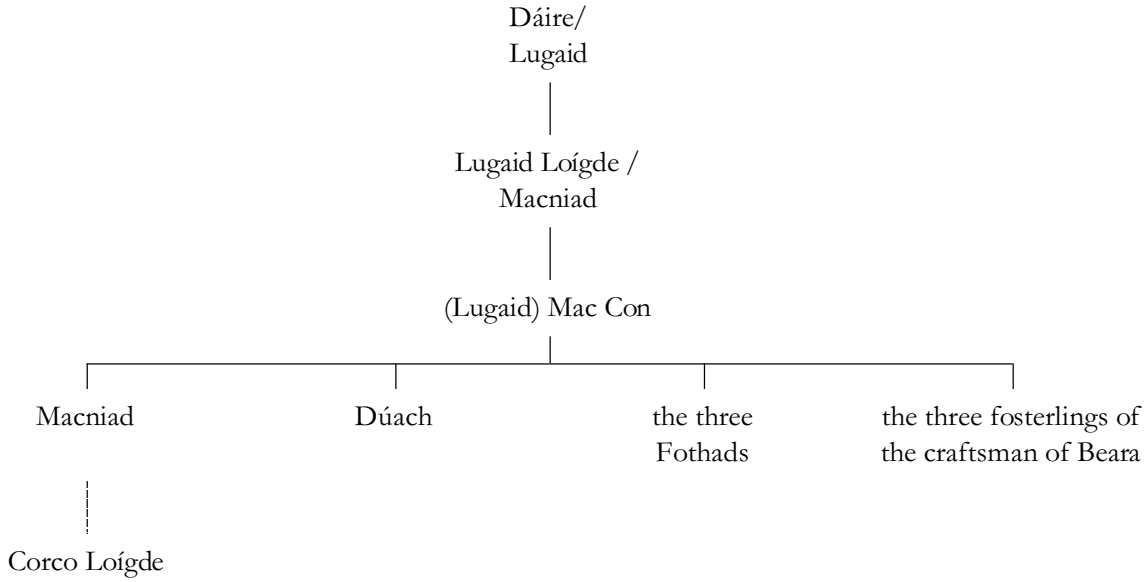
[525] It is specified later that the Dartraige descend from Lugaid Cal (John O' Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 26, 28–29).

[526] From a poem on the six Lugaids, sons of Dáire Sírchréchtaig: "Swift Lugaid Laighi, Lugaid Laidhi was nobler than his brothers" (*Lughaidh Laighi lúath / Fa hé Lughaidh Laidhi / Fa saíri do'n chúan*; John O' Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, 32)

> "Lugaid Loígde, from whom the Corco Loígde descend, was the son of Dáire Sírchrechtach. Sen Lugaid was another name for him. Another Lugaid was his son, i.e. Mac Con, and, moreover, Lugaid was a name for Dáire if the poets are correct. Macniad is the usual name of Lugaid Loígde. Mac Con had a preeminent son, i.e. Macniad. Macniad had good offspring i.e. Áengus Gaífhuileach, from whom the Uí Etersceóil descend; and Dúach from whom the Uí Cobhthaig descend; and Fíachra, from whom the Uí Floind Arda decend. The three Fothaid were another three sons [of Mac Con]…the three sons of the chief craftsman of Beare were three other sons [of Mac Con], and Findcháem daughter of Rónán was their mother, and the craftsman into whose care they were [placed] was of the Cerdraige of Tara."

When one incorporates the various aliases of Dáire, Lugaid Loígde, and Mac Con, the passage produces the following tree:

FIGURE 4.20 – SONS OF LUGAID MAC CON



I think that the repeating pattern, Lugaid-Macniad-Lugaid-Macniad, is largely the result of conflating Lugaid Loígde and (Lugaid) Mac Con. Both are, after all, variously named the apical ancestor of the Corco Loígde, and we are probably justified in treating pedigrees which attach to one or the other as functionally identical.

IV.E. Mug Roith and the Fir Maige Féne

The Fir Maige Féne, or Men of Fermoy, were a subaltern group generally depicted as implacably hostile to the Éoganachta and their allies. In all sources they descend from Mug Roith, a legendarily powerful druid who learned magic from Simon Magus. The manner in which Mug Roith connects the Fir Maige Féne to the Milesian scheme appears to have been revised at least three times, if not more. Most commonly, Mug Roith is the product of a union between Fergus m. Róig and Cacht, daughter of Cathmind, the king of the Britons.[527] In *Mínigud Senchais Síl Chuind*, however, he is listed as a son of Conn Cétchathach along with Art Óenfer, Crinna, and Cellach, though the passage relates that all of them failed to produce offspring save Art alone."[528] A third configuration has Mug Roith descend from Óirne Cúlbennach, through whom they are related to the Cíarraige.[529] The Fir Maige Féne's close relationship to the Cíarraige is also apparent in *Genelach Fer Maige* in which Mug Roith descends from Cíar m. Fergusa m. Róig, the eponymous ancestor of the Cíarraige.[530] As for Óirne, his ancestry is detailed in only a single item of the corpus, *Genelach Cíarraige*, in which he descends from Érech (Febria) m. Míled:

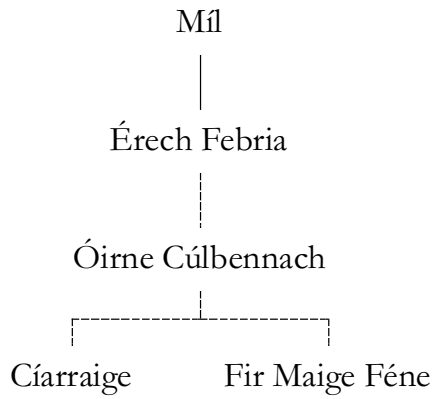
[527] CGH, 279–80, 285, 385. The name Cathmind seems to be adapted from the same Brythonic name (*Catumandos) which developed into AS Caedmon (Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1953), 554).

[528] …*quorum proles defecit sed Artt tantum* (CGH, 133).

[529] CGH, 285–6, 385, 391.

[530] CGH, 385.

FIGURE 4.21 – ÓIRNE CÚLBENNACH



Curiously, the only pedigree which actually details the line of ancestry connecting Mug Roith and Óirne, i.e. the third variant listed in *Genelach Síl Moga Ruith*, seems to contain a portion of the standard Dál Fíatach pedigree:

FIGURE 4.22 – FIR MAIGE FÉNE AND DÁL FÍATACH

Genelach Moga Ruith[531]	*Geneloige Rí nUlad*[532]
Óirne Cúilbennach	
Dricthe Duthbennach	
Fóetu[533]	Fíatach Find (+La.)
	~7~
Dallán	Dallán
Forggo	Forgo
~4~	Muiredach Muinderg
Alldóit	
Mug Roith	

[531] CGH, 286.

[532] CGH, 322. See also Kuno Meyer, "Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," in *ZCP* 8 (1912), 336–7.

[533] Fóetu, as O'Brien reconstructs the nominative, does not appear to be a name otherwise used. Considering that it appears in its genitive form Fóetach, I think that Fóetu should be properly identified as Fíatach (gen. Fíatach) Find, though I am at a loss to explain the difference in vocalism. Fíatach Find himself certainly does appear under several other names. He is frequently called Fíachu Find (CGH, 274, 275, 277 +La., LL, Lec., BB, 406), and Fíachu Find is sometimes also called Fíachu Findmas/Findamnas m. Iarél Glúnmáir m. Chonaill Chernaig (CGH, 277, 324).

It is true that the parallel lasts for only two generations, but Forggo and his son Muiredach appear as kings of Ulaid in a pair of corpus items.[534] When filling out the line of descent connecting Mug Roith to Óirne Cúlbennach, it seems unlikely that two kings of the Ulaid should be picked out for inclusion purely by chance, though I have no explanation for this phenomenon at the moment.

The fourth configuration by which Mug Roith's ancestry is accounted for is the most unusual. In this configuration, Mug Roith descends not from a son of Míl nor even Lugaid m. Ítha, but rather from a certain Nóende. This version clearly shares its origin with the variant pedigree of the Cíarraige Lúachra:

[534] CGH, 277, 406.

FIGURE 4.23 – NÓENDE

Genelach Moga Ruith[535]	*Genelach Cíarraige Lúachra*[536]
Umall (+ LL, La.)	Nóenal
Nóende	Nóende
	Míl Espáin
	Érech Febria
Allóit	Allóit
Matheirne	Condnach
Magdon	Muinremar
Mathrae	Fidbe Fáeburderg
Mathrán (LL, La.)[537]	Óirne Cúilbennach
Lug	
~3~	
Mug Roith	

The foregoing demonstrates that three separate doctrines regarding the origins of the Fir Maige Féne were worked out in the early development of the scheme and seem to illustrate the general trends by which the Milesian scheme developed. The first doctrine places the Fir Maige Féne outside the main apparatus of the Milesian scheme by having Mug Roith share a common ancestor (Nóende) with Míl rather than descending from Míl himself. This formulation is solely represented by the second variant included in *Genelach Síl Moga Ruith*.[538] The second doctrine introduces Óirne Cúlbennach as the common ancestor of both the Fir Maige Féne and the Cíarraige and thereby integrates both population groups into the Milesian scheme via descent from Érech Febria m. Míled. The third doctrine reflects the standard formulation of the scheme in which Mug Roith and the Fir

[535] CGH, 286.

[536] CGH, 288. The Rawlinson copy is untitled. I have supplied the title provided in Lec. and BB.

[537] Rawl. has Mathl[án], but this seems unlikely to be the correct reading given that two preceding names derived from *máthair*.

[538] CGH, 285.

Maige Féne are placed within Síl nÍr and given a descent from Fergus. Moreover, I think that the order in which I have presented these doctrines likely represents the relative chronological order by which they developed:

1) non-Milesian, descent from Nóende

2) Milesian, descent from Érech Febria, a son of Míl who is quickly worked out of the scheme

3) Milesian, descent from Fergus m. Róig. The earliest example of the third doctrine, the first pedigree provided in *Genelach Síl Moga Ruith*,[539] still appears to be very early given that it ends with Cú Allaid m. Laisre[540] whose death is recorded in AU709.

[539] CGH, 285.

[540] Láre (LL), Mac Láre (La.).

V. CONCLUSIONS

V.A. Critical Inflection Points

My inquiry into the early development of the Milesian scheme has led me to conclude that two fundamentally transformative events were most important in providing the scheme with the general structure which it was to maintain throughout its further elaboration. The first of these indispensable occurrences was the transmission to Ireland *circa* 650 of Isidorian texts, specifically his *Etymologies* but perhaps others as well. The second is the compilation of the Psalter of Cashel under the direction of Cathal mac Finguine *circa* 740.

V.A.1. The Transmission of Isidore

It has, of course, been long noted that Isidore's speculative etymologies provided the basis for the methodology of the Irish pseudohistorians. Investigations into the role of Isidore's writing on the development of the pseudohistories have naturally focused upon how these doctrines developed *after* the transmission of Isidore. What preexisting pseudohistorical doctrines these new, 'Isidorian' doctrines displaced has hardly been considered, if at all. This is understandable. Whatever preexisting notions may have existed concerning the origins of the Irish and their history do not survive as independent texts, nor do we have any relevant sources which can reliably be said to predate Isidore. That being said, I do believe I have identified traces of some of these pre-Isidorian doctrines.

In these earlier schemes various population groups appear to have descended from (semi-?)divine figures, particularly Núadu and Lug. Given that the Túatha Dé, including Núadu and Lug, are almost certainly euhemerized pre-Christian deities, it would make quite good sense that they should be viewed as the ancestors of various dynasties until a new scheme based upon Biblical and Classical

historiography could be sufficiently elaborated. The notion is wholly at odds with the basic tenets of the Milesian scheme, and I find it highly implausible that any doctrine in which these personages served as important ancestral figures was innovated after Isidore's transmission. Despite the obsolescence of this approach once the basic form of the Milesian scheme had been established, some effort appears to have been taken to assimilate these figures into the Milesian scheme at least in its early stages of development in the seventh and eighth centuries. Therefore, we find Núadu placed within the Síl nÉbir line of descent and variously described, in explicit terms, as the ancestor of all Síl nÉbir, the peoples of Munster, and/or the Éoganachta. Although most references to Núadu come from genealogies of Munster or Leinster population groups, the gloss in LGE's third recension that Íarél Fáith m. Éremóin is simply another name for Núadu Argatlám indicates that he was an ancestral figure in Leth Cuinn as well and that his role as such continued until as late as the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

V.A.2. Cathal mac Finguine and the Psalter of Cashel

As Jaski has already demonstrated, despite the attribution of the Psalter's compilation to Cormac mac Cuilennáin (†908), the Munster genealogical collection contains a core of material dating to around 740 – and some which may be drawn from even earlier sources – which is said to come directly from the Psalter.[541] Whether this eighth-century collection was known from its inception as the Psalter of Cashel; or whether it acquired that name during its updates c. 900 and c. 1000 is unknowable; but it is certainly possible given that two pedigrees directly attributed to the Psalter terminate with persons who died in the mid-eighth century.[542] I strongly suspect that this compilation of this Munster material was in fact the first Irish text deliberately produced for the

[541] Bart Jaski, "The Genealogical Section of the Psalter of Cashel," 309–11.

[542] CGH, 197–9, 224.

purpose of gathering together disparate genealogical materials. If this is indeed the case, it prompts one to wonder why the compilation was made at this period. I think that this period, the first half of the eighth century, was the critical period in which the Éoganachta solidified their hegemony over Munster. Newly secure in their place at the apex of the province's power structure, these dynasts were now able to turn their attention to clearly differentiating themselves from their subordinate allies and the previous hegemons of the province and, in so doing, attempt to restrict claims to the provincial kingship to the Éoganachta alone. If I am correct in seeing Corbb Aulomm, Ailill Aulomm, and Moshauluim as merely different manifestations of an ancestral figure endemic to Munster, then his presence in Cíarraige pedigrees dating to the 740s may actually be an example of the genealogical doctrines the Éoganachta sought to obscure.[543] A good indication of the instability and relative novelty of the approach taken by Éoganachta propagandists is the simple fact that the title heading Cathal mac Finguine's pedigree describes him as a member of the Éoganacht Chaisil rather than of the Éoganacht Glendamnach, as he properly is. It would seem, therefore, that even the various branches of the Éoganachta, including the core group comprised of the three eastern dynasties (Éoganacht Chaisil, Éoganacht Glendamnach, and Éoganacht Airthir Clíach), had not been entirely distinguished from one another by this stage.

V.B. Did the Pseudohistorical Project Begin in the North or the South?

As one works with this material, one inevitably begins to wonder where it first developed, and I have come to a rather unintuitive conclusion. It seems to me that Síl Cuinn, the Uí Néill specifically, had firmly worked out the details of their origin legends by the time the Éoganachta began to do the same. This is indicated, I believe, by the fact that virtually all of the Éoganachta origin legends are dependent in some way upon the preexistence of those of Síl Cuinn. This is especially true for the

[543] CGH, 287.

story cycle concerning Ailill Aulomm, Éogan Már, and Lugaid Mac Con, but is also, with one exception, the case for tales centered upon Conall Corc which make reference to figures from the Síl Cuinn line of descent such as Feradach Find Fechtnach and Níall mac Echach (i.e. Noígíallach). Another oddity complicating matters is that the Conall Corc legends are thoroughly Christianized, yet Núadu still appears in the oldest Éoganachta genealogies. By contrast, the Uí Néill origin legend contains no overt Christian symbolism or motifs. Their origin legends depend upon a native ideology of kingship and sovereignty along with the symbolic motifs by which this ideology was understood. For example, Conall Corc attains the kingship of Cashel through divine revelation, albeit indirectly; whereas Níall Noígíallach's ascent is assured via an ordeal administered by his father's druid-smith and his willingness to kiss sovereignty in the guise of a hag. Similarly, while we find two Uí Néill propagandistic texts, *Baile Cuind Chétchathaig* and *Baile in Scáil*, in which the sovereignty of Ireland is literally bestowed upon Conn by means of a drink gifted to him by the embodiment of the sovereignty of Ireland, this motif is totally absent from Éoganachta propagandistic texts. In the latter's origin legends sovereignty has been gained by obedience to the Church and is guaranteed by continued deference to Cashel. Indeed, the inversion, or perhaps even mockery, of the expected *hieros gamos* motif in Munster tales – the attack by Eterscél moccu Iair on the *síd* of Brí Léith and Ailill Aulomm's rape of Áine for instance – may be another element of this Christianizing impulse in the Munster material.

We are left with an odd state of affairs that I think is best explained by positing the following stages of development:

> 1) The narrative core of the Síl Cuinn/Uí Néill origin legends was developed quite early and reflected, therefore, native symbols and ideologies of sovereignty rather than Christian ones. Given the impact of Isidore, it may not be unreasonable to consider the basic core of these narratives to have predated the transmission of his works, say the early seventh century.

2) Following Isidore's reception, the doctrine of Spanish origins became the essential basis for the development of a Christianized pseudohistory and genealogical scheme. This change occurred in both the North and the South of the country. The Muimne-Luigne-Laigne version of the scheme was likely formulated at this stage.

3) As their control of Munster strengthened, the Éoganachta sought to distinguish themselves genealogically from their rivals and subordinates. Síl nÉbir was invented, and the Psalter of Cashel was compiled c.740 in order to codify this new doctrine. The Ér-Orba-Ferón-Fergna version of the scheme may have been intended to counteract this new doctrine introduced by the Éoganachta by placing within Síl nÉbir at least two groups which would eventually be reckoned as *fortúatha*, i.e. the Érainn and the Orbraige.

4) Thereafter, Síl Cuinn propagandists incorporated Síl nÉbir into their own version of the scheme. A few subordinate groups in Leth Cuinn were made *fortúatha* or *forslointe* by assigning them to Síl nÉbir; the same method is employed in the reverse in the South.

5) Any earlier doctrines in which pre-Christian divinities were held to be ancestral figures of any of the peoples of Síl Cuinn are suppressed. References to Southern versions of such doctrines survive due to both their early compilation as well as Munster's political fragmentation – the Éoganachta were clearly never able to exert the sort of cultural or political dominance over Munster which the Uí Néill exercised over Leth Cuinn.

V.C. The Corco Loígde and Early Munster History

A confederation headed by the Corco Loígde appears to have been the dominant power in Munster prior to the Éoganachta's ascent. Despite their genealogical isolation in the Milesian scheme's full elaboration, in which Síl Luidech m. Ítha is said to encompass only the Corco Loígde and Calraige, the Corco Loígde's own genealogical collection connects them to many more groups and may be broadly indicative of their former range of influence. For instance, one finds them associated with the Uí Maine[544] and, *mutatis mutandis*, the Uí Fhailge.[545] Their own propaganda also claims that the

[544] CGH, 57.

[545] Compare *Genelach Ua Fáilge* (*…Nath Í m. Ailella m. Óengus Find nó Buidgelta m. Rosa Failgi m. Cathaír Már. Óengus Dub a quo Uí Maine*; CGH, 57) with *Genealach Corca Laidhe* (*Cethri meic Aenghusa, mic Maicniadh .i. Nathi, Maine, Oilill Beac, Aenghus Duibhfhleasc…Máine Cerr mac Aenghusa Builc, a quo Uí Aithne, agus Cenél Maithne [no Maine] et ceteri*; John O'Donovan, *Celtic Miscellany*, 18).

three Fothaids were of Síl Luigdech and that the Úaithne Tíre and Úaithne Clíach descend from Fothad Airgthech.[546] The poem *Can a mbunadas na nGaedel*, written no later than 887, asserts that Síl Luigdech was comprised of the Corco Loígde, the Érainn, the Orbraige, the Múscraige, and the Corco Baiscinn.[547] The same poem also claims that the Gaels were without wives when they arrived and so married women of the Túatha Dé.[548] This could be a doctrine formed in deliberate imitation of the myth of the rape of the Sabine women, but it could also be an explanation for the presence of female personages, Róech and Ethniu/Ethliu most notably, in some of the early pedigrees.

The geographic distribution of these various groups, at least in the historical period, would indicate that the Corco Loígde exerted considerable influence not only within Munster but also beyond its borders. Several of the marcher kingdoms here associated with the Corco Loígde, i.e Corco Baiscinn, Múscraige, and the Úaithne, are consistently characterized as vassal states of the king of Cashel in our sources. All of these population groups resided along the banks of the Shannon and/or the Connacht-Munster border. The Érainn, who despite the imprecision of the designation seem to have been most closely associated with the southwest of Munster, and the Orbraige, who resided near to Cashel, cannot be said to have resided along the marches of the province. Of greatest interest are the connections to the Uí Maine, the Uí Fhailge. Uí Maine was a marcher kingdom along the Connacht-Munster border on the Connacht shore of the Shannon opposite the territory of the Múscraige. They had numerous genealogical pretensions, claiming at various points to be members of Síl Cuinn,[549] of the Uí Néill,[550] and of the Dál Cais.[551] The Uí Fhailge resided near

[546] John O Donovan, *Celtic Miscellany*, 42.

[547] Máel Muru, "Can a mbunada na nGaedel," *Lebor Bretnach*, 260, 262, §72–3.

[548] Máel Muru, "Can a mbunada na nGaedel," *Lebor Bretnach*, 250, 2581, §55.

[549] CGH, 130, 133.

the upper reaches of the Barrow and, in the historical period, were vassals of the Laigin, serving as one of their buffer-states along the Munster border. This Leinster connection is also indicated by the version of the doctrine of the Five Lugaids in which Dál Messin Corb, the fifth- and sixth-century kings of Leinster, and the Loígis, another buffer-state on the Leinster side of the border, are assigned to Síl Luigdech.[552] This distribution suggests that the Corco Loígde, or whatever the confederation they led was called, expanded the reach of Munster across the Shannon and into Southern Connacht and across the Barrow and into Leinster. The turmoil attendant on the rise of the Éoganachta appears to have provided the opportunity for some of these marcher vassals to revolt and/or allowed for their domination by rival dynasties in Leinster and Connacht. If we interpret these genealogical reconfigurations as representative of shifting political relationships, then the overall picture appears to be of one in which Munster dominance over Leinster and the Midlands in the prehistoric and early historical period waned considerably. This trend reached its climax with the alienation of Osraige to Leth Cuinn in 859 and may explain why Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga were two such unequal 'halves' by the tenth century.

V.D. Next Steps

As the title of this dissertation suggests, this investigation has been only a preliminary survey of the genealogical scheme intended to identify important areas for further research. This study has also affirmed the merit of Ó Muraíle's suggestion that each copy of the corpus be edited separately so that we would have "a series of perhaps seven or eight rather slimmer volumes, each comprising the

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[550] CGH, 133.

[551] CGH, 238.

[552] CGH, 256.

text of a single collection."[553] The reconstruction of the text of each redaction by means of O'Brien's complicated system of footnotes and variant readings which is required to compare the various versions of any corpus item is extraordinarily tedious and prone to error – eye-skips are a particularly pernicious problem when working through the critical apparatus. The chief benefits of such an editorial approach is that each individual corpus item could be easily compared, permitting the reader to more readily see the relationships between the various versions, while *also* allowing each redaction to be examined in a holistic manner as a deliberately constructed and ordered text in its own right. Continuing advances in computer technology make this option even more attractive. Crossindexed electronic editions of each redaction, so that the reader may immediately jump between cognate sections within the various redactions, would be invaluable. An electronic approach would also allow the construction of an index common to all versions, again allowing the reader to examine all citations of ancestral figures, population groups, dynasties, etc. across all the copies of the corpus simultaneously. It would also be desirable to include citations to other texts in this index. For instance, if one were to look up Ailill Aulomm in this central index, one would see citations not only for every appearance he makes in the corpus but also for every saga, annal entry, poem, etc. in which he appears. It would then be possible to link these citations to hypertext versions of these texts, i.e. the format in which many of them appear on Cork's Corpus of Electronic Texts (CELT).[554] Completion of such crossindexing and crosslinking would necessarily be a long term and secondary project. Complete electronic editions of each redaction should take primacy.

[553] Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "The Irish Genealogical Collections," 138.

[554] http://celt.ucc.ie

Besides editorial work, I believe that the next stage of my research should put a particular focus upon Munster. Over and over again, I have found that the material which conflicts most with the canonical formulation of the Milesian scheme comes from Munster. In order to more properly investigate the issues I have identified within the Munster genealogies and in order to continue to test my working hypotheses, a wide survey of the early Munster material needs to be made. A necessary first step would involve cataloguing every known population group of the province and then carefully comparing the extant sources pertaining to each one. For the Múscraige, for instance, I would sort all the genealogical information concerning them from the corpus by redaction and then add additional, and often contradictory, data from their own origin legends (e.g. *De Maccaib Conaire*) and other pseudohistorical sources. The same should also be done for many of the Munster ancestral figures, especially Ailill Aulomm, Conaire Már, Mug Roith, etc. In my own experience, this approach has the benefit of allowing one to examine a group's genealogical assocations diachronically, revealing trends which might otherwise be obscured.

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