

The Expansion of Two Royal Tribes of Connaught

By H. T. KNOX.

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The historical facts of the growth of the ruling tribes will, in my judgment, explain much that is obscure in the legends, as I have indicated in an article on the Early Tribes of Connaught in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* for 1900, vol. xxx, wherein I referred generally to the position of the Connachta as supporting the early kings of Connaught of the Hy Briuin race as the Silmurray supported the O'Conors. Now I purpose to notice in some detail what has occurred in our own neighbourhood as a repetition of what occurred before, and thus show what that remark meant precisely.

Whatever doubt may be regarding the descent of the Hy Briuin of Brefne and Seol and Umhall from Brian Orbsen, there is no doubt that the Hy Briuin of Ai are his descendants. These in later times were called the Silmurray, though some clans, the Silmaelruain or O'Flynnns for instance, were not descendants of Muredach Mullethan. These tribal names illustrate the course of change and the difficulty which may arise from change of use. By the 12th century the Hy Briuin Ai came to be called Silmurray, and the Hy Briuin Brefne were coming to be called merely Hy Briuin, and their country Tir Briuin. But for the fulness of the record since the 5th century we might suppose that the Silmurray had driven out the Hy Briuin Ai.

As far as we know all the Hy Briuin Ai descended from Brian's son Duach Galach. The Tri Tuatha asserted a descent from Brian. Their common origin among themselves need not be disputed, but they are of the race called Corca Chonluain in Tirechan's notes in the *Book of Armagh*, which is the earliest record, and which is not likely to have misdescribed Ith and Ono, descended according to the *Tripartite Life* from Erc son of Bron. Therefore they are not of the race of Brian unless he also was of that race, which is not impossible, but is not likely as Tirechan distinguishes between sons of Brian and sons of Bron at Duma Selca.

As Corca Chonluain then or soon after occupied the land of the Tri Tuatha, and as Baslick was in the land of the Ciarraige, the demesne land attached to Croghan was but a small tract.

Brian's race, sprung from the ancient Fir-Craibe as I suppose, and supported by the Conmaicne and Ciarraige tribes, established itself about Croghan. Families sprung from the Hy Briuin kings were settled in estates in Moy Ai and the adjoining territories at the expense of the Delbhna Nuadat, of the families of Moylurg and Tirerrill, of the Ciarraige and of the Corcamoe. If we exclude the barony of Carbury and the Tri Tuatha, the diocese of Elphin defines the hereditary estates of the Silmurray at the accession of King Torlogh Mor.

That great King raised the power of his family. At his death Ruaidhri's brothers had to be settled in estates. In 1181 we find Brian Luighnech and his sons fighting with Donnell son of Lonnell Midheach for supremacy in Carbury. Brian Luighnech's descendants became the O'Conors of Sligo.

The O'Naghtans and O'Mullalys were driven out of Moenmoy, and King Ruaidhri's son Conor Moenmoy seems to have taken it as his estate, for the account of the wars between his son Cathal Carrach and Cathal Crobhderg, given in the *Annals of Lough Ce*, shows that the former had a lordship there.

The same *Annals*, describing Richard de Burgo's conquest of Connaught, show that Ruaidhri's sons Torlogh and Aedh were settled in Carra, and the Clan Murtough Mweenagh and the Clan Manus in Clann Cuain and Umhall.

Had there been no English conquest of Ireland we should have found, after a few generations, a Siltorley forming a large mass in South Mayo, with a detached clan in Carbury and another in Hy Maine. This Siltorley would have borne to the Silmurray the relation which the Silmurray bore to the Ciarraige and Conmaicne.

The Hy Maine present a like growth. The diocese of Clonfert comprises the territories of the Hy Maine themselves, whose great tribal divisions are shown in the deaneries of the Taxation of 1306. The principal families who gave sub-kings or chiefs to these territories descended from the early kings of the Hy Maine. In the 12th century they stood to the O'Kellys as the Silmurray to the O'Conors. We know not for certain what tribe held the deanery of Athenry in the beginning of the 12th century, but we know that it could not have been a tribe of the Hy Maine, because in that case the deanery would have been in Clonfert diocese. The rest of the Kingdom of Hy Maine was held by the Sodhans and the Corcamoe, except the part which had been taken from them by the Silmurray.

In the 13th century we find the O'Kellys settled in that northern part of their kingdom which was inhabited by subordinate tribes who were not Hy Maine. From the O'Kellys that part of their kingdom took the name of Cantred of Clantayg in the de Burgo settlement, as they were descendants of Tadhg Taillten. All O'Kelly families known to descend from that Tadhg were in places outside the diocese of Clonfert, except a few in the old deanery of Othir, that is about Kilconnell and Kilmacnoven baronies. Clantayg and Hy Many cor-respond to Siltorley and Silmurray. The extension of the O'Kellys into the lands east of the Suck seems to have been a consequence of the English conquest and the breaking of the power of the Silmurray clans. The settlement in the deanery of Othir seems to have been due to that cause, as it was in the King's Cantred of Omany.

These are but two examples of processes which seem to have gone on in Ireland from time beyond history or legend—change of name and change of position of centre of tribal power. The King's family depended upon the support of a large body of closely related clans forming the royal tribe, who settled in a more or less compact block, new families being provided with estates by extension into neighbouring lands of feebler tribes, and all having privileges as members of the tribe.

In course of time the new collateral clans would become numerous and take a new tribe name, and, when strong enough, treat the earlier royal tribe with little respect, as more remotely connected with the royal family, reserving for themselves the privileges of the royal tribe.

Upon such considerations and examination in detail of legends and annals, I have arrived at the conclusion that the Delbhna and Luighne and Gailenga and Cianacht of Meath and Connaught are the tribes, called collectively Tuatha De Danann from a very remote ancestor, which held a supremacy there next before the Domnonian clans, now called Eremonian.

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Notes on the Family of O'Kelly.

By RICHARD J. KELLY, Barrister-at-Law, Vice-President.

The following interesting notes upon the ancient family of O'Kelly and the *Book of Hy Many* have been obtained from various acknowledged sources. I print them in this Journal with a view and hope that the publication may be the means of eliciting some further and more detailed information. It is my intention ultimately, directly or indirectly, to publish a more

complete record in permanent form of a great and distinguished County Galway Family with which I have the honour of being connected and whose name I bear, and I hope I may be aided in this enterprise by information authentic “ accurate and authoritative.”

EXTEACT FROM ED. O'REILLY'S
TRANSACTIONS OF THE HIBERNO-CELTIC SOCIETY
For 1820, Vol. I., p. i. (at R. I. Academy.)
DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK OF HY MANY.

A.D. 1423.—Under this year the Four Masters record the death of Faelan Mac a Gabhan, a learned historian. He was the transcriber of a great part of the Book of the O'Kellys, a valuable Irish MS, now in the library of Sir William Betham, and the original author of some of the tracts contained therein.

At folio 103 of that book, is given a poem of 228 verses, the composition of this author. It begins,

“ Adhamh ar nathair etc.,”

“ Adam father of us all,” and gives the names of the wives and daughters of several of the Pagan heroes and deities. This is followed at folio 104, with an account of the wives of the patriarchs, and a synchronism of the Roman Emperors, with the Monarchs and provincial kings of Ireland, from Julius Cæsar and Eochaidh Feidhlioch Monarch of Ireland, to the Emperor Severus, and Art the Solitary, Monarch of Ireland, from A.D. 220 to 250, in which latter year he died. After this follows to the end of folio 3 an account of the Jewish High Priests and the first Christian Bishops, the officers of St. Patrick's household and different members of his family.

We cannot say whether these latter tracts are the original production of Faelan Mac a Gabhan or not, but by a memo, at the bottom of folio 3, col. 2, it is said they were written by Faelan Mac a Gabhan an scel (of the histories) for his lord and friend, Bishop Muirheartach O'Kelly.

This prelate was Bishop of Clonfert from A.D. 1378 to 1394, at which time he was translated by Pope Boniface IX. to the See of Tuam, over which he presided until his death, on the 29th of September, 1407.

The large vellum MS. of Sir William Betham has been so often mentioned in this work, that it may gratify the curiosity of our readers to give them a short account of its contents.

It may very property be called the *Leabhar Uí Maine*, or the *Book of the O'Kellys*, as it contains sufficient proofs to show that it was for them that it was compiled, and that it remained in possession of a branch of that family until at least the year 1757.

It is a very valuable document, written on vellum of the largest size, and wants some leaves in the beginning and the end. In its present state it commences at folio 24, with an account of the descendants of Nial Naoighiallach, and gives the pedigrees and filiations of the most noted families who trace their origin to that Monarch.

In this part are introduced several of the valuable historical poems of Giolla Caoimhghin, Giobla na naomh Ó Dunn, Erard Mac Coise, Flann Mainstreach, Fotha Ua Cann, etc., etc., of whose works we have given a particular description in the course of this work.

There are also contained in this part several other ancient historical poems, with the names of whose authors we are at present unacquainted.

From folio 29 there is a chasm to folio 39, where we meet an account of the descendants of Maine, son of Nial, of which the principal were *The O'Kellys*, *The O'Maddens*, and other ancient tribes of Roscommon and Galway.

At folio 40, 6 col., 1, is a catalogue of the Kings or Princes of Hy Many, from Ceallach, the great ancestor of the family of O'Kelly, from whom they take their name, to *Donogh*, son of Maoileaghlainnt *O'Kelly*, who was killed on the 10th of October, 1427, in which year this part of the Book was written.

This account is in prose, supported by the authority of ancient poems, and ends at folio 46, from which to 57 there is another chasm.

At folio 57 is part of the *Leinster Book* extracted from the Book of Glendalough, giving an account of the descendants of Cathaoir Mór, King of Leinster and Monarch of Ireland, at the close of the 2nd century.

Another chasm occurs from folio 58 to folio 65, where we meet with an account of the men of Ulster, with pedigrees of the principal families of that province extracted from the *Book of Saul Abbey*, in the County of Down, founded by St. Patrick in the year A.D. 432.

In this account are comprehended the descendants of Ir 3rd son of Milesius, who made settlements for themselves in other Provinces, such as the O'Connors of Kerry and Corcanroe, the O'Loughlins of Burren, The O'Moores of Leix, the O'Farrells of Annally, etc.

At folio 80 commences the *Munster Book*, with "Eber a quo dicitur Hibernia" in Irish letters, containing a great quantity of the early history of Munster, and the pedigrees and filiations of the chief families descended from Heber the eldest son of Milisius.

At folio 91, 6 col. 2, the *Leabhar Breathnach*, or *Book of the Britons*, commences with Ego Nennius, in Irish characters, and continues to folio 94 a, col. 1.

At the head of this tract is a memo, which says that Nennius was the author, and that Giolla Caoimhghin translated it into Scotie.

At folio 94 a, col. 1, is Eocaidh Ó Floinh's poem of 231 verses, beginning "Athair Cháichcoimsid nime," tracing the ancestors of the Irish, through the Patriarchs to their arrival in Egypt under Niall son of Fannins Farsaig (the Persian),

At folio 95 a, col. 1, the *bainseanchas* or *History of Women*, giving an account of the wives and mothers of the Kings and Chiefs of Ireland, first in prose, and then in a poem of 374 ranns, beginning "Adhamh aan athair na dáeine, by Giolla Modhudha O'Cassidy.

At folio 100, 6 col. 2, Flann Mainstreách's poem of the synchronisms of the Kings and Emperors of the Assyrians, Persians, Irish, Greeks, Romans, etc.

At folio 103 a, col. 2, Faellan Mac a Gabhan's productions, as above mentioned, to folio 3.

From folio 113 to the end of folio 127, Divine poems, Prophecies, etc., ascribed to Sts. Benin, Bercan, Beg Mac De Diring Draoi Geoffry O'Desy, Donogh Mor O'Daly, Maolmuire O'Lenain, etc., etc.

At folio 127 a, col. 1, begins an account of the Israelites from the days of Abraham, etc., to folio 133, where is an account of the death of Dermot, son of Fergus Ceirbheoil, Monarch of Ireland, from A.D. 544 to 565.

At folio 135, *The Book of Rights*, ascribed to St. Benin, of which we have already given a particular account.

From folio 139 to folio 143, historical poems by Giolla Caoimhghin, John O'Dugan, and other of our most esteemed bards and historians, wrote in 1372, ollav or historian of the O'Kelly.

At folio 143, commences the Dinn Seanchas, or history of noted places in Ireland.

We have given a full account of this production when treating of Amergin M'Amalgaidh, A.D. 550, and of the *Book of Ballymote*, under the year 1390.

At folio 172, John O'Dugan's poem on the wonderful things of Ireland, 490 verses, beginning "Eire Iarthar talmhan toirigh" "Western Erin of Fruitful Lands."

At folio 173, an historical poem on the building of Babylon,

On the same folio Giolla Caoimhghin's poem, beginning "Andal ladh anall , etc.," followed by these poems on Irish topography, etc.

At folio 174, O'Dugan's Irish Vocabulary, beginning "Forus focal isaidhtear libh" on the same folio, by two poems on the Birth of Christ.

At folio 175, John O'Dugan's poem on the battles of Cormac O'Cuinn, beginning "Teamhair an righ Cormac."

At folio 176, are three anonymous historical poems.

At folio 177, commences a vocabulary of hard words, and etymology of some proper names in alphabetical order.

At folio 184, another vocabulary, not in alphabetical order ; and on the same folio, the etymology of Irish proper names.

At folio 108, the Monarch Cormac's royal precepts to his son Cairbre Liffichear.

At folio 190, account of several remarkable things in Ireland, of which there were three of each kind.

At folio 191, col. 2, commences the Irish prosody ; an account of the Bardic profession and qualifications necessary to the different order of Bards, the Uraiceaph, or Primer of the Bards ; account of the Ogham, or secret writing, etc., to folio 201.

From folio 201, to the end of the book at folio 216, are several poems by our earliest and most esteemed Fileas.

Some of these are authentic History, and others are mixed with fable.

Of this latter description are the poems of the Knights, or Heroes of the Red Branch : such as Cuchullen, Conall Cearnach, Curaidh Mac Daire, Fergus Mac Roigh, etc., and of the Fianna Eirionn, or famous Irish Militia, commanded by Fionn Mac Cubhail (the Fingale of McPherson) such as Coll Mac Moirne, Dermot O'Duibhne, Caoilte Mac Ronan, Conan Maol, Oisín, the Poet Oscar, son of Oisín, etc., etc.

From the above short account it will be seen that this book contains the chief part of the matter to be found in the Books of Ballymote and Leacan ; in addition to which are several other valuable pieces which render it a most interesting document to the Irish historian and antiquary.

*Extracted and Copied from O'Reilly's books at the Royal Irish Academy
by Juanita A. Kelly, 1901.*

The Book of Hy Many is at the Royal Irish Academy, most of it perfectly clear, some holes in parchment and parts blurred, as in the O'Kelly of Gallagher Pedigree, but all readable with strong glasses ; no illumination or large capitals. It is say 50 pages, a good deal larger than foolscap.

It was in the library of Sir Wm. Betham, Ulster King of Arms, who, at the solicitation of Mr. Sheffield Grace, sold it to the Duke of Buckingham for the Stowe Library. " This information I have from Sir W. B. himself" (C. P. McDonald, 1847). When the Library of Stowe was sold, the Book of Hy Many went to the British Museum ; then, I think, on Sir T. Esmonde's motion in the House, it and other MSS. were restored to Ireland and sent to the R.I.A. O'Donovan in his Tribes of Hy Many, complains that the noble owner of the Book of Hy Many would not allow him to see it. Could it have been that he did not wish to own that he had it ?

In 1905 Mr Eugene Kelly, of New York, mentioned that he had just seen in the Book of Hy Many the Kelly Arms. Strange, the wolf dog looks to the left, not to the right, as usual, with crests, &c. There are a great number of MSS. in R.I. A.—some 20—relating to the O'Kelly Family.

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