THE LIST OF SURETIES IN CÁIN ÉIMÍNE

The main source for information about the Irish saint Éimine is Cás Éimíné,¹ which is set in the period of the Leinster king Bran úa Fáelain (ob. 693). The evidence of the language of the text suggests a date in the late Old Irish or early Middle Irish period. Its 'legal core', however, may be older, if not contemporary with Bran and Éimine. Embedded in a miracle-story various privileges are described which Éimine and his community obtain from Bran. These concern (a) jurisdiction and the legal status of the community with regard to its secular neighbours, (b) the status of its tenants, (c) its obligation to provide refection, and (d) the rights of burial on its grounds. Even in its anecdotical guise the text shows some features of what W. Davies has called the Celtic charter-tradition:² it contains a disposition, a witness list and a sanction, though the order of these elements has been changed to suit narrative requirements.

In this note the witness list will be analysed in order to establish whether it contains historical, datable material. The list names the sureties who will guarantee the contract between Éimine, his community and Bran (ráithi Laigen olchena i n-óg lessighe Éimíné Ain ocus a muintire fri Laigmiu 'sureties of the other Leinstermen to guarantee the full satisfaction of Éimine and his community in regard to the Leinstermen').³

It contains the names of fifteen personages, all without titles or clerical offices. The names are quoted here as they are found in the manuscripts of Cás Éimíné, length-marks are provided on the basis of Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae [CGH];⁴ some normalized spellings are given in square brackets.

Since the identifications suggested here rest on evidence from the genealogies, it must be kept in mind that our analysis and the inferences based on it are valid only if the genealogical records can be accepted as reliable.⁵

¹See J. G. O'Keeffe, 'Cás Éimíné Bán anno', Anecdotes from Irish manuscripts I (Halle and Dublin 1907) 40–46; C. Plummer, 'Cás Éimíné Bán', Ériu 4 (1910) 39–46; and E. Poppe, 'A new edition of Cás Éimíné Bán', Celtica 18 (1986) 35–82. There are scattered references to Éimine in martyrologies, genealogies, and annals as well as in hagiographical anecdotes which would deserve separate discussion. I am grateful to Rolf Baumgarten for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this note.


⁵Another complication could be that the names were taken by the redactor of the text from genealogical records to give it some semblence of historicity and authenticity. In this case, however, it must be conceded that he worked well within the limits of genealogical plausibility.
THE LIST OF SURETIES IN CÚIN ÉMÍNE

(1) CELLACH MAC ÁEDA CRÓIN

This Cellach may be a brother of Diomae Donn, a son of Áed Crón (see CGH, 261). The Ui Áeda Crón belong to the Laigin (see CGH 316 a 18) and are related to the family of Eran úa Faelain. A son of Diomae Donn, Berchán, was a Leinster saint (see CGH, 261).

According to Annals of the Four Masters [AFM] Áed Crón's great-grandfather Colmán was killed in 576. Therefore a date for Cellach at the end of the seventh or at the beginning of the eighth century is possible, if the identification is valid. It would suit the background of Cúin Émíne.

(2) CÚLÜDB MAC CERTÁIN [CERDDÁIN]

He belongs to the Fothairt (Ui Cúldub: see CGH 126 a 22, b 12 Lec.) and is related to Ardmesach (no. 5 below). Both are descended from Dian. A date for Cúldub in the second half of the seventh century seems possible by synchronizing his pedigree with that of Brigit, another descendant of Dian, and by using AD 524 as the traditional date of her death (see CGH, 83–4):

```
Cúldub          Bressal
  |               |
Fergus          Deimre
  |               |
Énnae Becc      Dubthach
  |               |
Éogan           Brigit (ob. 524)
  |               |
Énnae
  |               |
Óeblean
  |               |
Cerddán
  |               |
Cúldub
```

(3) DEG CHAIRDIL MAC BRÓCÁIN

Unidentified.

(4) FÍNÁN MAC MÁEIL DIBID

Unidentified.

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(5) **ARDMESACH MAC MÁEL RUIS**

He belongs to the Fothairt (Úi Ercáin: see *CGH* 126 a 25) and is related to Cúldub, (no. 2 above). A date for him in the second half of the seventh century seems possible on the same basis as for Cúldub. He and Ardmesach are, respectively, eight and seven generations removed from Dian.

(6) **DUB CLUANA MAC ODRAÍTCH**

Unidentified.

(7) **ELTÍNE [ALTÍNE] MAC BRÓCÁIN**

He belongs to the Loichsi (see *CGH* 127 a 20). He might be a near contemporary of Mescell (no. 15 below), whose *floruit* is in the late seventh or early eighth century (see *CGH*, 90–91):

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Barr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domongart</th>
<th>Nastáir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comgall</td>
<td>Óengus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senach</td>
<td>Baccán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brócán</td>
<td>Berach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alkéne</td>
<td>Máel Aithgeán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mescell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berach (contd as in (15))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Deg Chairdil mac Brócán (no. 3 above) is not his brother.

(8) **BUIDE MAC LAIGNÉIN [LAIDCÉN]**

He belongs to the Laigin (Úi Buide: see *CGH* 119 ab 55, b 7). A *floruit* for him in the late seventh or early eighth century is possible, since – according to the genealogy of the Úi Buide – he is five generations removed from Echtighern, a Leinster chieftain, referred to in AFM s.a. 846.

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8 The evidence from the genealogies shows that *Ardmesach mac Máel Ruis* is the correct reading in *Cáin Éimeíne* and it is found in one of the two manuscripts of the text (correct the text in *Celtica* 18 (1966) 44 line 66).

9 See *CGH*, 126 a 25: [Ardmesach] m. Máele Ruis m. Forannán m. Éogan m. Fergræ m. Cóbhaich m. [Müirdích m. Luaitre m. Erccáin m. Dún.] In this pedigree Cóbhaich is contemporary with Brigit.


11 See *CGH* 119 ab 50: Echtighern m. Domnugsa m. Mencussaig m. Máelgaib m. Uargusa m. Buide a quo Húi Buide m. Laidecén.
DUB DÁ CHRÍCH MAC MÁIL OCHTRAIG [MÁIL OCHTRAIG]

He belongs to the Laigin (Uí Chrimthainn Áin: see CGH 122 bb 16, bc 18,11, b 23,25). A date for him in the second half of the seventh century is suggested by synchronizing his pedigree with that of Colum of Terryglas (ob. 549 (AU); see CGH, 55):

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
\text{Cormac} & \text{Colum (ob. 549)} \\
\hline
\text{Cobthach} & \\
\hline
\text{Éogan} & \\
\hline
\text{Máel Ochtraig} & \\
\hline
\text{Dub Dá Chrích} & \\
\end{array}
\]

DÍMUSACH [DÍUMMASACH] MAC CONGAILE

He belongs to the Laigin (Ui Failgí: see CGH 117 b 26, 122 bc 55, 123 a 38). A date for him in the late seventh or early eighth century is suggested by the reference in AU to the death of Máel Sinchill in 881, who is five generations removed from Díummasach according to the pedigree of the Uí Failgí.

MÁEL TÚILE [MÁEL TÓLAE] MAC MÁELUÍDÍR

He seems to belong to the Fothairt Airthir Líphi (see CGH 126 a 16 Lec.) and is related to Cúldub (no. 2 above) and Armdasach (no. 5 above). They are all descended from Artt Cerp. Cúldub and Armdasach are, respectively, ten and eleven generations removed from Artt Cerp, the grandfather of their common ancestor Dían, whereas Máel Túile is seven generations removed from Artt Cerp according to the pedigree of Anmcárta M. Mael Tölæ in the Book of Lecan.

ÁEDÁN MAC ECHACH

Unidentified. (He is not to be identified with Áedán m. Echdach (CGSH, 141), who belongs to the fifth century and the Ulaid. Another Áedán m. Eachach from the Éoganacht is referred to in CGH 151 b 27 Lec.)

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13 See CGH 123 a 33: Máel Sinchill m. Mugróin m. Óengusa m. Mugróin m. Flainí m. Díummasach m. Congail.
14 See CGH, 85: Mael Tölæ m. Maelhuídír m. Airmerech m. Sétnæ m. Coluimb m. Ailells m. Fergus Tarbh Ròc m. Airt Chirp.
(13) **FABNITH ÚA TUSECHÁIN**

Unidentified. If úa Tusecháin denotes the grandfather or, more generally, an ancestor, then he may belong to the Uí Thoisecháin, one of the **forsoinntri** 'alien families' of the Uí Enechglass (see **CGH** 124 a 5). Could -th in Fabnith stand for later -d and thus preserve an old spelling? The name is not attested in **CGH** or **CGSH**.

(14) **LAPÁIN DO LOÍGIS**

Unidentified. Since he is said to belong to the Loigis, a subject people of the Laigin, he is not to be identified with Lappán m. Dimma of the Laigin (Úi Mháil: see **CGH** 317 c 52 LL).

(15) **MESCELL DO LOÍGIS**

He may be Mescell m. Máel Aithgeáin m. Beraich of the Loigis (see **CGH** 127 a 33 LL, 337 g 26). A date for him in the late seventh or early eighth century is possible on the basis of the pedigree of the kings of the Loigis and the references to Cindéithigh, son of Gaithín, Lord of the Loigis, between 880 and his death in 888 in AFM.¹⁵

Nine of the fifteen personages named in the witness list of **Cáin Éiméine** can be identified in the genealogical records. Eight of them can be dated to roughly the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. For one of them, no. 11, the exact date of his **forruit** is difficult to establish given the problems of dating by generation count, but he may belong to the same period. All those identified belong to the Laigin or to one of their subject peoples, the Loigis or the Fothairt, as is to be expected in a text which deals with Leinster affairs. That a few personages elude identification may be due to the basically local importance of the legal contract.

The fact that a good proportion of the witnesses can be identified from the genealogies and dated roughly to the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century suggests that the witness list and the other elements of the 'legal core' of **Cáin Éiméine** may contain genuine contemporary information. These findings support Charles Doherty's suggestion that one would expect lists of witnesses, sureties, and guarantors in saints' lives (and other hagiographical writings) if 'written charters' form part of the hagiographer's quarry.¹⁶ Mairín Ni Dhonnchadha has shown that the guarantor list of **Cáin Adomnáin** 'cannot be other than a genuine historical record, contemporary with the promulgation of the law' in 697.¹⁷ The witness list in **Cáin Éiméine** may be further indirect evidence for the existence of such early charter material.

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