

THE LIST OF SURETIES IN *CÁIN ÉIMÍNE*

THE MAIN source for information about the Irish saint Éimíne is *Cáin Éimíne*,¹ which is set in the period of the Leinster king Bran úa Fáeláin (*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 Éimíne. Embedded in a miracle-story various privileges are described which Éimíne 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 refecton, and (d) the rights of burial on its grounds. Even in its anecdotal 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 Éimíne, his community and Bran (*ráithi Laigen olchena i n-óg lesaigthe Éimíne Áin ocus a muintire fri Laigniu* 'sureties of the other Leinstermen to guarantee the full satisfaction of Éimíne 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 *Cáin Éimíne*, 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, 'Cáin Eimíne Báin annso', *Anecdota from Irish manuscripts* I (Halle and Dublin 1907) 40–45; C. Plummer, 'Cáin Eimíne Báin', *Ériu* 4 (1910) 39–46; and E. Poppe, 'A new edition of *Cáin Éimíne Báin*', *Celtica* 18 (1986) 35–52. There are scattered references to Éimíne 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.

²See W. Davies, 'The Latin charter-tradition in western Britain, Brittany and Ireland in the early mediaeval period', in *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe* (ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick, D. Dumville, Cambridge 1982) 258–80.

³Poppe, *Celtica* 18 (1986) 42 lines 59–60.

⁴Ed. M. A. O'Brien, Dublin 1962.

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

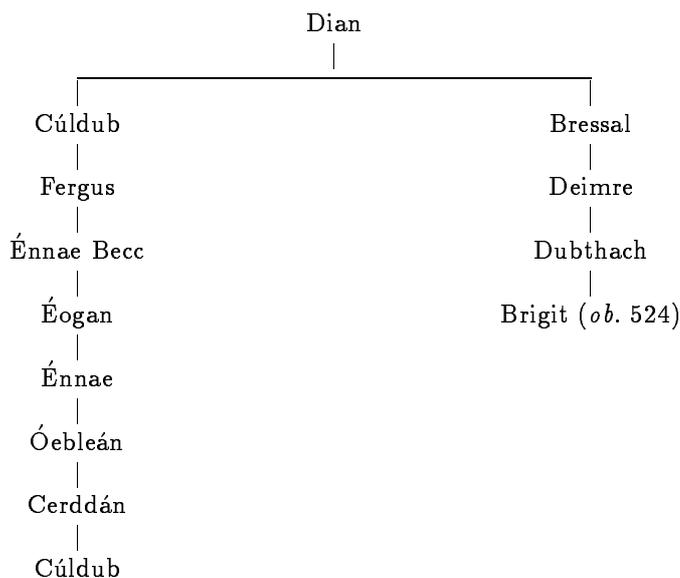
(1) CELLACH MAC ÁEDA CRÓIN

This Cellach may be a brother of Dímmae Donn, a son of Áed Crón (see *CGSH*,⁶ 261). The Uí Áeda Cróin belong to the Laigin (see *CGH* 316 a 18) and are related to the family of Bran úa Fáeláin. A son of Dímmae Donn, Berchán, was a Leinster saint (see *CGSH*, 261).

According to Annals of the Four Masters [AFM]⁷ 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 *Cáin Éimíne*.

(2) CÚLDUB MAC CERTÁIN [CERDDÁIN]

He belongs to the Fothairt (Uí Cúlduib: 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):



(3) DEG CHAIRDIL MAC BRÓCÁIN

Unidentified.

(4) FÍNÁN MAC MÁEIL DIBID

Unidentified.

⁶P. Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1985).

⁷*Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters I–VII* (ed. J. O'Donovan, Dublin 1848–51).

(5) ARDMESACH MAC MÁEIL RUIS

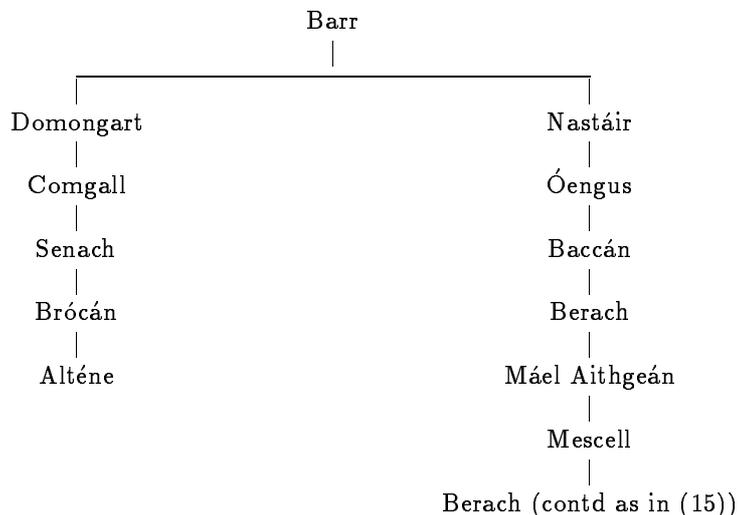
He belongs to the Fothairt (Uí Ercáin: see *CGH* 126 a 25) and is related to Cúldub, (no. 2 above).⁸ A date for him in the second half of the seventh century seems possible on the same basis as for Cúldub. He and Ardmesach are, respectively, eight and seven generations removed from Dian.⁹

(6) DUB CLUANA MAC ODRÁ[I]N (*var.* FURODRÁ[I]N)

Unidentified.

(7) ELTÍNE [ALTÍNE] MAC BRÓCÁIN

He belongs to the Loíchsi (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):



Deg Chairdil mac Brócáin (no. 3 above) is not his brother.¹⁰

(8) BUIDE MAC LAIGNÉIN [LAIDCNÉN]

He belongs to the Laigin (Uí 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 Uí Buide – he is five generations removed from Echthighern, a Leinster chieftain, referred to in *AFM s.a.* 846.¹¹

⁸The evidence from the genealogies shows that *Ardmesach mac Máeil Ruis* is the correct reading in *Cáin Éimíne* and it is found in one of the two manuscripts of the text (correct the text in *Celtica* 18 (1986) 44 line 66).

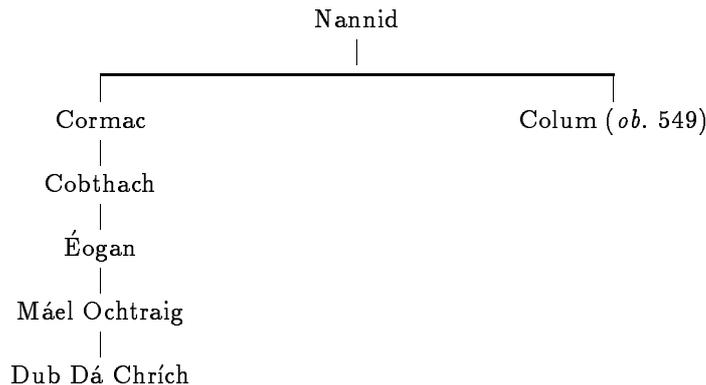
⁹See *CGH*, 126 a 25: [Airdmessach] m. Máele Rois m. Forannáin m. Éogain m. Fergnae m. Cobthaich m. [M]uiredaich m. Laisre m. Erccáin m. Déin. In this pedigree Cobthach is contemporary with Brigit.

¹⁰See *CGH*, 127 a 19–20: Cóic meic Brócáin meic Senaich .i. Cúiléni, Consamail, Éimíne, Alténe, Dub-lis.

¹¹See *CGH* 119 ab 50: Echthighern m. Donnghusa m. Mencossaig m. Máelgairb m. hUargusa m. Buide a quo Húi Buide m. Laidcnén.

(9) DUB DÁ CHRÍCH MAC MÁIL OCHTRAID [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));¹² see *CGH*, 55):



(10) DÍMUSACH [DÍUMMASACH] MAC CONGAILE

He belongs to the Laigin (Uí Fáilgi: 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 Fáilgi.¹³

(11) MÁEL TÚILE [-I, MÁEL TÓLAE] MAC MÁEILUIDIR

He seems to belong to the Fothairt Airthir Liphí (see *CGH* 126 a 16 Lec.) and is related to Cúldub (no. 2 above) and Ardmesach (no. 5 above). They are all descended from Artt Cerp. Cúldub and Ardmesach are, respectively, ten and eleven generations removed from Artt Cerp, the grandfather of their common ancestor Dian, whereas Máel Túile is seven generations removed from Artt Cerp according to the pedigree of Anmchaid m. Máeli Tólae in the Book of Lecan.¹⁴

(12) 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.)

¹²S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocall (ed.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1191)* (Dublin 1983).

¹³See *CGH* 123 a 33: Máel Sinchill m. Muirín m. Óengusa m. Muirín m. Flaind m. Díumasaich m. Congaile.

¹⁴See *CGH*, 83: [Máel Tólae] m. Máelhuidir m. Ainmereich m. Sétnae m. Coluimb m. Ailella m. Fergusa Tairb Róe 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 Thoísecháin, one of the *forsloinnti* 'alien families' of the Uí Enechglais (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) LAPÁN DO LOÍGIS

Unidentified. Since he is said to belong to the Loígis, a subject people of the Laigin, he is not to be identified with Lappán m. Dímma of the Laigin (Uí Máil: see *CGH* 317 c 52 LL).

(15) MESCELL DO LOÍGIS

He may be Mescell m. Máel Aithgeáin m. Beraich of the Loígis (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 Loígis and the references to Cindéitigh, son of Gaithín, Lord of the Loígis, between 860 and his death in 898 in AFM.¹⁵

Nine of the fifteen personages named in the witness list of *Cáin Éimíne* 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 *floruit* 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 Loígis 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 Éimíne* 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 Máirín Ní 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 Éimíne* may be further indirect evidence for the existence of such early charter material.

ERICH POPPE

Philipps-Universität Marburg

¹⁵ See *CGH* 127 a 32–3: [Cennétig] m. Gáethine m. Cináeda m. Cathail m. Beraig m. Mescill m. Máel Aithgeáin.

¹⁶ 'Some aspects of hagiography as a source for Irish economic history', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 300–328, p. 306.

¹⁷ 'The guarantor list of *Cáin Adomnáin*, 697', *Peritia* 1 (1982) 178–215, p. 179.