

# O Neill's "Own Country" and its Families

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The fertile territory between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh is frequently referred to in English documents as O Neill's "own country" and the intention of these English writers seems to be thus to distinguish it from the lands of Maguire, Ó Catháin etc. In the centre of this territory is the still well preserved hill-fort of Tulach Óg. For many centuries this fort gave its name to the kingdom of Tulach Óg, and it was the place where many princes of the Cineal Eoghain were inaugurated at a ceremony that had its origin in the dim and distant past. When our present ecclesiastical divisions were established in the 12th century, it gave rise to a deanery of the name. From about the year 1000 till the Flight of the Ulster Chieftains, Tulach Óg was a place of importance both in the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. Even for a long period before the year 1000 it seems to have been the place towards which the great southward advance of the Cineal Eoghain was directed.

The writer of the *Dinnseanchus* might have posed the question: Tulach Óg, *unde nominatur?* He did not however and we are left to reach our own conclusions. Making use of the information in *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language* and in Hogan's *Onomasticon*, we may say that the first element of the name in its basic meaning of 'hill' or 'mound' is clear enough, but when its incidence is examined in early Irish literary sources, it is seen to appear frequently in phrases indicating 'a hill of assembly around a ruler or chief'. The second element 'Óg' is a noun, not an adjective, and its use as such is well attested in the literature. The word 'Óg' which basically means 'youth' is to be interpreted here as 'warrior'. The full meaning of the placename then we take to be 'the hill of assembly of warriors around their king' and in such an ancient placename as this the 'Óg' element becomes secondary and its significance is lost in antiquity. While we know that Tulach Óg was a place of assembly for warriors through many centuries of recorded history, these were not the people who gave the place its name.

The earliest Annal entry that refers to Tulach Óg is at the year 914 in the Annals of Ulster. This records that Niall son of Aodh, king of Aileach, concluded a peace at Tulach Óg with the king of Ulidia, Aodh Mac Eochagain. This was apparently an important event and was followed immediately by an incursion by Niall into Meath for the purpose of consolidating his kingship, and may in fact have been a necessary preliminary to that invasion. This was Niall Glúndubh, son of Aodh Finnliath and the man from whom the surname O Neill sprang. Tulach Óg was to have a

tremendous significance in the story of the Cineal Eoghain in subsequent centuries, but at the date of this Annal entry it had no more significance than that it was the place where peace was concluded between the kings of Aileach and Ulaidh. As yet the headquarters of the Cineal Eoghain kingdom was Aileach from which Niall ruled, but Tulach Óg was chosen as a suitable place to conclude the peace because it was mutually acceptable to two kings who had hitherto been rivals.

The question then arises — who was the authority at Tulach Óg when this peaceable arrangement was brought about? In Patrician times and even up till the time the *Vita Tripartita* was compiled the old Clann Colla tribe that held sway between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh was the Uí Tuirtre, but some evidence can be advanced to show that by the year 914 the Uí Tuirtre had been pushed across the Bann and that Tulach Óg was held by or at least had come under the influence of a minor branch of the Cineal Eoghain, i.e. the Cineal Binnigh, and most probably that branch of the Cineal Binnigh that is referred to in the sources as Cineal Binnigh Locha Droichid.

In C.G.H. (146c) there is a line of the Cineal Eoghain that descends from Eochaidh Binneach, one of the many sons of Eoghan. It was with these descendants of Eochaidh Binneach that Dr. Ó Ceallaigh was concerned in his work, *Gleanings from Ulster History*. His study of the three branches of this Cineal is a worthwhile and very subtle piece of historical research. Using the genealogies of the Book of Ballymote, he equates the Cineal Binnigh Locha Droichid with the Cineal Binnigh Tilcha Óc. (cf. *Gleanings*, p. 19) We give below the Cineal Binnigh line that is associated with Tulach Óg. It is a branch of this line, descending from Daithgheal, a brother of Maelfabaill, and son of Cu Gallan, that is first assigned to Loch Droichid and is alternatively located at Tulach Óg. The fact that we find a genealogical line called *Genelach Ceneoil Binnigh Tilcha Óc* in Rawl. B.502, an older document than the Book of Ballymote, is almost irreproachable testimony that this branch of the Cineal Binnigh was associated with Tulach Óg between the expulsion of the Uí Tuirtre from that territory and the coming to power there of the Cineal Eoghain line of the Ríoghradh.

Sometime about the year 1000, the seat of the Cineal Eoghain kingdom was transferred from Aileach to Tulach Óg, and the latter became the place of inauguration for the future kings of the Cineal. But the people who were around Tulach Óg during the centuries of the Mac Lochlainn-O'Neill kingship were not of the line from which both Mac Lochlainn and O'Neill descended, nor yet the people who descended from Eochaidh Binneach, but people who descended from still another son of Eoghan called Feargus, and who before surnames developed were known as Clann Feargusa. (cf. C.G.H., 146 b 17). It was from this line that the surname O'Hagan sprang, and O'Hagan in all later times was not merely lord of the territory around Tulach Óg, but had also an important part to play in the ceremony at which Mac Lochlainn or O'Neill was inaugurated. The combustions within the Cineal Eoghain itself are no less remarkable than the anxiety of all branches of the Cineal to wipe out or expell all non-Cineal Eoghain rivals. All branches of the Cineal Eoghain had a keen interest in selecting the man who would become king of the Cineal.

Let us set down the line of *Cineal Binnigh Tulcha Óc*:

m. Garbith	m. Elgonaich
m. Cinada	m. Cobraid
m. Gillai-Cuimne	m. Maelduin
m. Con-bethad	m. Failbe
m. Domnallain	m. Ultain
m. Garbith	m. Domnall
m. Uarcirge	m. Laisreain
m. Maelfabail	m. Echach Binnich
m. Congallann	m. Neil

Not many of these people are mentioned in the Annals but there is a reference to the death of the second youngest man of the line at the year 1075 in the Annals of Ulster. It says "Cineath Ua Conbeathad, chief of Cineal Binnigh, died". The year 1075 is a rather late date for a member of Cineal Binnigh to be described as of Tulach Óg, and in fact we know that Clann Feargusa was there before then. It is interesting to find the Annalist calling Cineath of the above line, not the son of Giolla Cuimne, but the grandson of Cú beathad, and it is also interesting to find such an exact concordance between the Annal entry and the genealogical line we have quoted above. If Cineath and the junior members of the line were the paramount authority around Tulach Óg up till the second half of the 11th century, as the heading of the line certainly implies, then the question arises — when did Clann Feargusa, from whom derived the surname O Hagan, come to Tulach Óg? The pushing out of the Cineal Binnigh from Tulach Óg, if they ever did have a position of power there, could only have come about as a result of some dynastic struggle, and at the dates with which we are at present concerned we are in the midst of a very bitter dynastic struggle that would continue for a century and a half between O'Neill and Mac Lochlainn. Even before 1075 the various families of Cineal Eoghain were taking sides in that struggle. Generally speaking the Cineal Binnigh had sided with Mac Lochlainn, but they seem to have wavered occasionally, and when they did so, we find them in conflict with the Fir Maighe Itha, from a branch of whom, Clann Conchubhair, the surname Ó Catháin evolved. Ó Catháin was to have an important part to play in that inauguration ceremony at Tulach Óg in all subsequent times.

The internal dynastic struggle we have referred to and its outcome were to determine the pattern for the future. The important position O Hagan had in the internal organization of the O'Neill kingdom throughout the subsequent centuries, as we read for example in "Ceart Ui Neill", indicates that O Hagan and Clann Feargusa in general were amply rewarded by the eventual victor. The first O'Neill to come to real power at Tulach Óg was Aodh, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, who established demesne lands for his family just north of Dungannon towards the middle of the 12th century (cf. *Domhnach Mór*, p.43 et seq.). O Hagan's coming to a position of power at Tulach Óg in O'Neill days must be seen as taking place about the same time and as a consequence of O'Neill's success in establishing a Lucht Tighe. If this be true for O Hagan, it must be equally true for O Quinn, O Donnelly, O Devlin etc. whose names are imprinted on the nomenclature of the surrounding districts, and all of whom had important official positions in the internal structure of the O'Neill kingdom.

The Annalists show a remarkable facility in accepting changes without comment. Each entry must be examined in relation to what has gone before and what follows. They give no precise date at which the Uí Tuirtre were expelled from their territory between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh. Neither do they give a date nor a reason for the introduction of these diverse branches of the Cineal Eoghain to the territory of Tulach Óg. At a comparatively late date they do indeed record an event that determined the pattern for the future. In the year 1167, in the dynastic struggle between O Neill and Mac Lochlainn, they record a truce between the two sides whereby it was arranged that all the territory north of Slieve Gallion was to be in the overlordship of Mac Lochlainn, while the territory south of the mountain was assigned to O Neill. This real effort to reach a decent solution of the dynastic problem was to prove nothing more than a temporary palliative and the dynastic battles were to continue for another hundred years. That truce however and the definite arrangement that was made must have had a particular significance. It was at this time that O Neill, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, whose father, we are told by the Leabhar Eoghanach, was from Magh Lughan, (Maloon, a townland in the modern Cookstown) established demesne lands for his line some miles north of Dungannon.

This was basic to the whole Gaelic idea of kingship. Without a Lucht Tighe of his own O Neill would be comparatively powerless, but firmly established on his own Lucht Tighe he could parcel out surrounding territories to his friends or at least confirm them in territories they already held. In the case of O Neill these lands had been given by him to those families who had been steadfast to him in the long drawn-out struggle with Mac Lochlainn, and it must be further pointed out that for a long period they had been south of the mountain and in the immediate vicinity of Tulach Óg. Thus the O Hagens were firmly established at Tulach Óg itself and in the immediate territory. The O Donnellys and the O Devlins of the *Uí Echach Droma Lighean* were established in their respective territories. The O Quinns who may also have been of Clann Feargusa (though this is by no means certain) got the territory to which they gave their name. It cannot be said that all this took place because of that truce of 1167, but the situation was stabilized as a result of that truce. It was further stabilized because O Neill in the middle of the 12th century had the ability to establish a Lucht Tighe of his own.

While it is true to say that Aodh Ó Néill, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, established a Lucht Tighe just north of Dungannon, in the territory that the old documents call the Magh Imchclair, it would probably be more exact to say that he was the first of the Cineal Eoghain that descended from Mac Earca to find a patrimony there, for this whole territory of Magh Imchclair would seem to have been an appanage of the Cineal Eoghain for a long time before then and was inhabited even in the 9th century by the Cineal Tighearnaigh. Tighearnach, who gave his name to the Cineal, was a grandson of Eoghan and consequently a brother of Muircheartach Mac Earca from whom descended the line of the Ríoghradh. An entry in the Annals of the Four Masters at the year 808 tells us that "Toicheach of the Uí Tighearnaigh, i.e. of the Fir Imchclair, died." This is excellent evidence that still another branch of the Cineal Eoghain, the Cineal Tighearnaigh,

had advanced southwards as far as Dungannon as early as the beginning of the 9th century. This should not surprise us, as the Cineal Fearadhaigh, who descended from Fearadhach, a brother of Tighearnach, and from whom came the surnames Mc Kamill, Mc Caul, Campbell etc. were already in the district around Clogher at this time. If we examine the line of Cineal Tighearnaigh as given in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (p.180, 146d 31), we find a certain Fogartach who gave his name to the territory marked "Cloniertie" (Clann Fhoghartaigh) on the 1609 map of the district. The territory thus marked on the 1609 map is the very same territory that in the 12th century became Lucht Tighe Uí Néill. The Lucht Tighe Uí Néill of "Ceart Uí Néill" and "The Lottie, the household or demesne lands of the O Neales" of the maps attributed to Bartlett are in fact aliases for the earlier and more interesting piece of letterpress, "Cloniertie" of the map of 1609.

#### O QUINN AND O HAGAN

It is pretty clear from what is written above that the Cineal Tighearnaigh and the Cineal Fearadhaigh were in their respective territories, not far away from Tulach Óg, from at least the beginning of the 9th century. The battle of Leath Cam had yet to take place and the large and vigorous Uí Tuirtre were still most probably in possession of their lands between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh, but soon they too would come under pressure from still further branches of the Cineal Eoghain.

When we said above that O Hagan came to a position of importance at Tulach Óg only when O'Neill succeeded in establishing a Lucht Tighe, this does not mean that the line from which O Hagan sprang was not around Tulach Óg before then. Let us quote a few steps of the line of Clann Feargusa from *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (p.118):

- Ragnall
- m. Gillai-Aeda
- m. Flaínd
- m. Gilla-Epscoip-Eogain
- m. Ócáin
- m. Cinaeda
- m. Maelgairb etc. up to Eoghan Mac Neill.

It was Ócáin of this line who gave the surname Ó hÓcáin (O Hagan) to his descendants. We read in the Annals of Ulster at the year 1056 as follows:— "Gillamura Mac Ocain, *reachtaire Tealcha Og*, mortuus est." It is most interesting to find Gillamura at Tulach Óg one hundred years before An Macaomh Tóinleasc proclaimed his kingship of the Cineal Eoghain in Magh Imchlair, which in all future times was regarded as O'Neill's Lucht Tighe, and it is revealing that even at this early stage he is described as *reachtaire*. As *reachtaire* he would have been acceptable in his official capacity, to whatever branch of the Cineal Eoghain was in control, and his presence at Tulach Óg at such an early date would indicate that he was there from the time of the transfer of the official headquarters from Aileach, and that in fact the line of Clann Feargusa supplied the *reachtaire* for all of the Cineal Eoghain even during the time that Aileach

was the seat of power. This Gillamura, son of Ócán, of the Annal entry, may be the very same man as the Gilla-Espoic-Eoghain of the genealogy of Clann Feargusa written above. The concordance between the Annals and the Genealogies is fantastically exact. Mura was bishop in Inis Eoghain and was probably the patron saint of the whole Clann Feargusa. His line is given in *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae* (ed. Walsh). It goes as follows:— "Mura m.Feradhaigh m.Ronain m.Eoghain mherchruinn m.Muireadhaigh m.Eoghain m.Neill." Colgan's infrascriptio states:— "Ó Fathain a nInis Eoghain, 12 Martii."

About Gillamura himself we have a further reference in the Annals of Ulster at the year 1024, i.e. thirty-two years before this reference to him as *reachtaire* of Tulach Óg. In that year he slew Domhnall Mac Aeda, the royal heir of Aileach, and if he was *reachtaire* of Tulach Óg as early as 1024, he could very well have been the first of his line to hold that position there, and the slaying of Domhnall Mac Aeda could really have had an important significance — it could have been the event that led to the transfer of the Cineal Eoghain headquarters to Tulach Óg, and a further deduction would be that the head of Clann Feargusa was *reachtaire* at Aileach before that ancient fortress was abandoned for Tulach Óg. In a situation such as this it is quite possible that the Chair of Inauguration, of which the head of Clann Feargusa was guardian, was transferred to Tulach Óg at the same time.

The Domhnall Mac Aeda mentioned above as having been slain by Gillamura, son of Ócán, was known as an tÓgdámh. He was the son of Aodh Athlamhan and the grandson of Flaithbheartach of the Pilgrim's Staff, and therefore an O'Neill. It was in fact at this very point that the Mac Lochlainn side was to gain supremacy and hold that supremacy for one hundred and fifty years. If this killing of an tÓgdámh by Gillamura, son of Ócán, was part of the dynastic conflict, as it is almost certain to have been, then it is most interesting to find the *reachtaire* of Tulach Óg on the side of Mac Lochlainn in the dynastic dispute. Gillamura stood at the point where the surname O'Hagan was about to develop, and we can assume that during the long period of Mac Lochlainn supremacy, O'Hagan was on the side of the ruling family of Mac Lochlainn. The special place given to O'Hagan in O'Neill days, as set down in "Ceart Uí Néill", derives from his pro-O'Neill activity at the battle of Caimeirghe more than two hundred years later. It seems worthwhile to note too that while the Annal entry we have quoted above tells us that the slayer of an tÓgdámh was Gillamura mac Ócáin of Clann Feargusa, the Leabhar Eoghanach tells us that he was slain by Clann Lochlainn. (*L.C.A.B.*, p.27).

While Gillamura mac Ócáin of 1056 is referred to as *reachtaire*, the next reference to the family that we have is at 1081 in the Annals of Ulster, where Mac Craith Ua Ócáin is described as steward (*muire*) of Clann Feargusa. The word used to describe his function here may or may not be synonymous with *reachtaire*. It may be that the *Maor* of Clann Feargusa was also at all times after about the year 1000 the *reachtaire* of Tulach Óg. In 1103 (A.U.) we find that Ragnall Ó hÓcáin, *reachtaire* of Tulach Óg, was killed by the Fir Maighe Itha. This is the Ragnall of the line we have quoted above. If our identification of Gillamura with Gilla-Espoic-Eoghain is correct, then Ragnall was his great-grandson. This, taken in

conjunction with the entry of 1081, would indicate that succession to the office of *reachtaire*, like succession to all such offices in the Gaelic state, was in the collateral line, within the family whose function it was to provide the service.

The word *reachtaire* is fully commented on in *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*. O Hagan, as *reachtaire*, was steward, bailiff, administrator. In early Irish heroic literature the word would cover the whole connotation of major-domo of a king or chief, the man who directed the king's household, and whose duties sometimes included collecting food dues or tributes. It is clearly in this meaning of the word that the head of Clann Feargusa is referred to, and his habitation from the beginning of the 11th century at the latest was the rath or fort of Tulach Óg. There is really nothing incompatible between Gillamura mac Ócáin presiding as *reachtaire* at Tulach Óg in the middle of the 11th century and the presence in the immediate neighbourhood of a collateral branch of the Cineal Eoghain called Cineal Binnigh Tealcha Óg.

The word *reachtaire* used here in relation to O Hagan early in the 11th century must inevitably be compared with the terms used for the functions that both O Quinn and O Hagan had in the O Neill dispensation as laid down in "Ceart Uí Néill." This document tells us that "the O Quinns and O Hagens are O Neill's chief stewards and executives in Ulster." The Irish words used in this document for the two functions are *Ard-Mhaoir* and *Ard-Fheadhmontaigh*. This probably means that the O Quinns were the former and the O Hagens the latter, but the two functions though not very clearly defined must have been similar in some respects, and O Hagan's function especially must have some connection with that of *reachtaire* which was applied to him at the earlier period. It could well be that the O Quinns were also of Clann Feargusa, as Dr. Ó Ceallaigh suggests in *Gleanings from Ulster History*, but if so it is not clear from the genealogies at what point the surname began. Clann Feargusa was around Tulach Óg before the surname O Hagan evolved and the fact that O Quinn exercised a similar function in the immediate neighbourhood might indicate that his surname too evolved from Clann Feargusa.

O Quinn's territory lay alongside that of O Hagan during the O Neill period, and if the O Quinns were of Clann Feargusa, like the O Hagens, their surname developed subsequent to their coming there. While O Hagan had his residence within the rath of Tulach Óg, and had important matters to attend to in relation to the inauguration of his chiefs, the collection of food dues, and various legal matters within the Cineal Eoghain, O Quinn was in charge of the supplies. He was the guardian or custodian of O Neill's goods in times of peace, and in times of war the custodian of his military supplies. While O Hagan was on the hill, O Quinn was on the island crannog, the natural place of safe-keeping, and the well-defended arsenal. O Quinn's association with these island crannogs is really remarkable. Even at the time of Hugh O Neill, O Quinn was in charge of the island strongholds of Roughan, Creeve and Marlecoo. Lough Roughan and Lough Creeve were in the original territory of O Quinn, a territory to which the family gave its name, Baile Uí Chuinn. It lay alongside the territory of Baile Uí Agáin to which O Hagan had given his name. O Quinn's proximity to O Hagan, and the similarity of their functions might

indicate that the two surnames sprang from the same Clann Feargusa, but this is by no means certain.

There is one further little piece of information that might lend support to the view that these two surnames sprang from the same race of people. We have already noticed the connection of Clann Feargusa with St. Mura. We read in the Dungannon Inquisition of 1609 that the church of Stuckin was dedicated in honour of St. Mura. This church was probably the chief church in the territory of O Quinn and would indicate a connection with Fathan Mura before the great southward advance of the Cineal Eoghain had begun. But perhaps this is the place to point out that in the penultimate paragraph of "Ceart Uí Néill" there is a reference to "Ó Coinne Mearrdha mac Oilealla mhic Eoghain mhic Neill Naoighiallaigh", and it should be further noted that in Ó Dubhagáin's Topographical Poem we have a reference to O Quinn as follows:—

Fa bhlasta I Coinne in gach crích  
I Coinne, gasda, Uí Gairbhith

We quote this verse here because the *gasda* is reminiscent of the *mearrdha* of Ceart Uí Néill, but it does not seem possible that Ó Coinne of the Cineal Eoghain could be enumerated in the context in which we find it in Ó Dubhagáin's Poem. If the Ceart Uí Néill statement is correct — and it is certainly anachronistic, for no grandson of Eoghan could have a surname — then the surname O Quinn evolved from a line that descended from still another son of Eoghan called Oilill. We have been unable to trace this line in the Genealogies, but it is a line that seems to have been accepted in Irish literary tradition.

The Ceart Uí Néill statement that Ó Coinne descended from the line of Oilill son of Eoghan, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages finds remarkable endorsement in the writings of one of the South Ulster poets of the late 17th century. Séamus Dall Mac Cuarta in his poetic dialogue with the shattered remnants of O Neill's Castle of Glassdrummond introduces two prose passages and in the first of these he blames a certain Patrick Murphy for pulling down the castle for the purpose of making a little profit for himself. The sadness of it all, he says, derives from the fact that this man had sprung from the same stock as the line of the Ríoghradh itself. He was "Padraic Ó Murchadh, duine atá ar shliocht Bheirinn mhic Fearghail, mhic Maoladuin, mhic Maola Frithridh, mhic Aodha Uiriodhnach, mhic Dhomhnaill Ilchealgaigh, mhic Mhuirheartaigh, mhic Mhuireadhaigh, mhic Eoghain, mhic Néill Naoi nGiallach." This is in fact a remarkably accurate account of the descent of "na Beirneigh", and may explain why they held the position of 'fíor-cheithearnaigh' in the internal arrangement of the O Neill kingdom. The poet then goes on to bewail the fact that the old stocks, whose job it was to come to the defence of the castle, are no longer able to perform their traditional function. Heading these we have "treibh uasal oireadha Oiliolla mhic Eoghain mhic Neill Naoi nGiallach da ngoirthear Muintir Choinne."

Some people would have us believe that these South Ulster poets had their knowledge of the historical background from the writings of Geoffrey Keating. In fact they had nothing to learn from Keating about the

traditional Ulster scene, and this was particularly true of Mac Cuarta. He was the inheritor of a traditional historical lore that was both exact and rich in content, and the only regret can be that we have not many more passages like those to which we have referred. His information about Muintir Coinne is in perfect accord with what we find in Ceart Uí Néill which was compiled some three hundred years before his time, and while it is not likely that he was acquainted with this document, he shows in the passages to which we have referred that he was perfectly well acquainted with the traditional lore concerning the official positions held by the various families in the O'Neill system. While it is true that that system came to an end some fifty years before his birth, it is also true that the memory of it survived throughout the 17th century. It was particularly vivid at the outbreak of the revolt of 1641 and even survived the eleven years of struggle that followed.

A fairly strong thread of evidence then indicates that the surname O Coinne (O Quinn) evolved from a line descending from Oilill son of Eoghan son of Niall of the Nine Hostages. This evolution would have taken place in the first half century of the second millenium and about the same time as the surname O Hagan evolved. At this stage we find ourselves thwarted for want of information in the sources. In the comparatively late document, Ceart Uí Néill, we find the O Quinns and the O Hagans described as 'Ard-Mhaoir and Ard-fheadhmonntaigh' of O'Neill. If there is a real distinction between these two functions, one of them was the preserve of the Cineal Fearghusa (O Hagan) and the other the preserve of the Cineal Oilealla (O Quinn). If these two terms are used to cover the same function, it could be that both families evolved from the same Cineal, and that they had a joint responsibility in much the same way that Ó Mealláin and Ó Maolchallainn had joint custodianship of Clog an Udhachta. In our present state of knowledge it does not seem possible to reach a final conclusion about the origin of the surname Ó Coinne (O Quinn), and perhaps it is sufficient for us to know that the two families of O Quinn and O Hagan were intimately associated with the line of the Ríoghradh, and exercised similar functions in relation to that great dynasty. Even the little evidence we have demonstrates that these functions were traditional to these families and were exercised by them from the earliest times. They ceased to have significance only with the flight of Hugh O'Neill and the subsequent plantation.

#### O DONNELLY AND O DEVLIN

We have seen the Cineal Binnigh, or at least one branch of them, described as of Tulach Óg, but they do not seem to have left a surname that could be regarded as indigenous in the immediate territory of the hill-fort. The Cineal Binnigh however would seem to have been the first of the Cineal Eoghain lines to have made contact with Tulach Óg as a place of assembly or even possibly as the inauguration site of the chief of their Cineal. These people at a very early stage came under pressure from the vigorous Fir Maighe Itha, and especially from that branch of them called the Clann Chonchobhair, from which the surname Ó Catháin

eventually evolved. Ó Catháin had an important part to play at the inauguration ceremony at Tulach Óg. In fact, of all O'Neill's *oir-righthé* Ó Catháin was the only one who was of the Cineal Eoghain. He is the odd man out in the company of Ó Domhnaill, Mac Uidhir, Mac Mathúna, Ó hAnluain, Mac Aonghusa, Mac Canna, and Ó Gormleadhaigh. None of these surnames derived from Eoghan son of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Ó Catháin was collaterally related to O Hagan, O Quinn, O Donnelly, O Devlin, but he had a superior status to any of these, as is indicated by the fact that while the latter had slight little individual territories of their own, six large and distinct territories are given in Ceart Uí Néill as being in the lordship of Ó Catháin. Ó Catháin had a very important part to play in the institutional set-up of the Cineal Eoghain kingdom of Tulach Óg.

Very early then in the second millenium Tulach Óg became a focal point for several branches that descended from Eoghan son of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Ó Catháin converges on it from the north. O Hagan, descended from Feargus son of Eoghan is already in residence and as *reachtaire* of the fort holds a key position. O Quinn, possibly of the line descending from Oilill son of Eoghan, had a special part in the internal arrangements. Two other families who held territories around Tulach Óg and had important parts to play in the Cineal Eoghain regime were the O Devlins and the O Donnellys, and their importance derives from the fact that unlike the others they were of the line of the *ríoghradh*, descending from Eoghan through Muircheartach Mac Earca. They had a common descent and are known in the sources as Uí Eachach Droma Lighean. They have been brilliantly examined home to their origin by Joseph Chubb Devlin in *The Story of an Irish Sept* (1951).

The Cineal Eoghain line from which both O Donnelly and O Devlin sprang is given under the heading "Genelach Fer nDomailgen" in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (p.180). It goes as follows:—

Gilla-Meicc-Liac	m. Sechnassaich
m. Echthigirn	m. Cellaich
m. Donngaile	m. Ehdach
m. Cellachain	m. Domnaill
m. Domailen	m. Aeda Findleith
m. Donngaile	

The line as we have it here is exactly as we find it in the O Clery genealogy and must be the correct line. The Book of Ballymote, the Book of Lecan and Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh all make the mistake of bringing the line back to Domnall, whom their respective authors regard as Domhnall Il-chealgach, while in fact he was Domhnall Dabhaill. In other words they cut out eight steps of the line and their work has led to confusion. The reason why we can be so certain of its various steps is that it is the line of the *ríoghradh*, the best attested genealogical line in all Irish history. It is the line from which came both Mac Lochlainn and O'Neill.

Domhnall of the above line was king of Aileach. His great-grandson, Sechnassach, was a *rig-domna*, i.e. a man qualified by law to be king of the Cineal. Sechnassach was the grandfather of Domailen, who was the eponymous ancestor of the O Devlins. Domailen was the grandfather of

Donngal, whom we take to be the eponymous ancestor of the O Donnellys, but we must point out that there is another and earlier Donngal in the line who could have been the man to give his name to his descendants. These two families of O Donnelly and O Devlin, together with the Mac Murphys (na Beirnigh) and the Mac Cathmhaoils of the Cineal Fearadhaigh, were the real fighting force of the Cineal Eoghain from Aileach to Tulach Óg, at a later stage to Armagh, and at a still later stage almost to the gates of Dundalk. At this early stage battles were fought only by people of this kind. The O Quinns and the O Hagens were of course also involved but they were involved only as functionaries, as a sort of Civil Service to organize and administer the internal affairs of the whole Cineal. It is not altogether without significance that O Quinn's and O Hagan's territories are called Ballyquinn and Ballyhagan, names that really refer to their habitations, whereas O Devlin's territory is called Muintir Dhoibhlin and O Donnelly's simply Donnghalacht, names that indicate extensive possessions.

Let us take another look at the genealogical line we have quoted above. We must note that it is headed "Genelach Fer nDomailen". The Fir Domailen of this title is clearly the same as the Muintir Dhoibhlin (Munterevlin) that we meet with at a later stage (e.g. on the Maps of the Escheated Counties), and the fact that the line is given this title here would indicate that of the two surnames that evolve from the line, Ó Doibhlin is the senior. We must note again that there are two Donngals in the line, either of whom could have been the eponymous ancestor of the O Donnellys, but because of the title it seems reasonable to suggest that the surname O Donnelly derives from the second Donngal of the line.

The source we are now using is the only one, as far as we know, that refers to these people under this title. The other genealogical authorities we have mentioned and the Annals refer to them as the Fir Droma, the Fir Droma Lighean, or the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean, and it is this latter ascription that pin-points their moving away from the line of the ríoghradh, and tells us where Echaidh, son of Domhnall Dabhaill, had found an inheritance. Druim Lighean as a placename (Drumleene) has been accurately identified. It is a territory in the parish of Clonleigh, just north of Lifford in the modern Donegal, and it was Echaidh son of Domhnall of the line who first gained an inheritance there. It must also be noted that Gilla-Mic-Liag at the very bottom of the line was in fact an O Donnelly. He was the Gilla-Mic-Liag O Donnelly, chief of the Fir Droma, who was slain in an engagement with De Courcy's forces in 1177. (A.F.M.) This in turn would indicate that the O Donnellys were of the Fer nDomailen, that they were a branch of Muintir Dhoibhlin, and that Gilla-Mic-Liag derived his surname from his grandfather. On the other hand it must be pointed out that of the two families, O Donnelly as *Marascal* would seem to have had the more important function.

Aodh Finnliath who heads the line above was the son of Niall Caille, who from the point of view of Cineal Eoghain expansion had won a very important battle at Leath Cam. He had been high-king of Ireland from 861 to 877. His son, in turn, Domhnall Dabhaill, became king of Aileach but never reached the high-kingship. Echaidh from whom came the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean was the son of Domhnall Dabhaill and was thus

in the direct line of the ríoghradh. Being such a close relation of the kings of the Cineal he profited by getting for himself and his people the territory of Drumleene in Donegal. This territory was an important one. It was in fact the demesne lands of the sandwiched Cineal Éanna and was a bone of contention for many centuries between the Cineal Eoghain and the Cineal Conaill. We are back here to times when lands were set aside by people in authority both for secular and ecclesiastical purposes, and in early Christian Ireland these purposes were often not all that distinct. Saint Cairneach's association with Drumleene, and the influence of his monastery at Clonleigh on the Cineal Eoghain, were important factors in the situation.

Several literary sources in the Irish language echo the idea we are trying to express. One of these is the "Leabhar Eoghanach" (*Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe*, p.16) where Earca's association with Saint Cairneach is commented on. Another is a long poem in the same book which endorses what we find in the "Leabhar Eoghanach", i.e. Poem XI in this great Antrim *Duanairc*. But perhaps the most important source that deals with the subject is a poem in the *Book of Fenagh*, a poem that comes to us out of the immemorial Gaelic past, and that has the authority of an ancient historical tradition. This poem *Eanna dalta Cairpri cruaid* is attributed to Flann Mainistreach and it gives a vivid picture of how the territory of Éanna (Tír Éanna) became a bone of contention between the descendants of Eoghan and of Conall. The territory at an early stage had become monastic land and was associated with Saint Cairneach who was regarded as the patron saint of the Fir Droma Lighean. Earc the mother of Muir-cheartach, the poem tells us, gave her land by will to Cairneach of great fame:

The sons of Feargus gave to her  
 Druim-Lighean for her excellence ;  
 Because of its fitness in the land yonder  
 Between Eoghan and Conall.  
 The race of Eoghan paid their tribute  
 During Cairneach's time without murmur  
 And they gave it, great the fame,  
 For twenty years after him.

The poet then skips some years to tell us what happened under two of Cairneach's successors, both saints, who are commemorated in the ancient martyrologies.

Massen and Cassan subsequently  
 Two coarbs of Cairneach  
 Gave Druim-Lighean without tribute  
 For the maintenance of Cairneach's rent.  
 To the prosperous Uí Néill they gave it  
 Free from rent, expedition or hosting,  
 If they should maintain for all time  
 Cairneach's tribute in Druim-Lighean.

Then we learn how the territory came back into the possession of the Cineal Eoghain:

Feargus son of Muirheartach  
 And his mighty noble sons  
 Took the Druim, subject to this tribute,  
 And hence were called Fir Droma Lighean.

This poem, some verses of which we have quoted, endorses what we find in the genealogical and annalistic material and echoes an authentic historical tradition. If it is true that it was composed by Flann Mainistreach, that adds to its authority, as he was contemporary with the junior members of the line we have given above. The poem indicates that the territory of Druim-Lighean came into the possession of the Cineal Eoghain at a very early period, for the Feargus mentioned was the son of Muirheartach Mac Earca, and a grandson of Eoghan. It was several centuries later that the Fir Droma Lighean became known as the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean. The territory had been given to Echaidh son of Domhnall Dabhaill. He was a rig-domna and the territory was probably assigned to him in recompense for missing the kingship of the Cineal. It was from this Echaidh who received Drumleene in the 10th century that the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean derived, and it was in this line that the surnames O Devlin and O Donnelly developed, as is clear from the line quoted above. Just when exactly the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean transferred from their original territory north of Lifford to the district around Dungannon and the shore of Lough Neagh has not been clearly determined but the transfer must have been influenced by two factors: (1) the change of the seat of the northern Uí Néill kingship from Aileach to Tulach Óg and (2) the constant struggle between the Cineal Eoghain and the Cineal Conaill for the lordship of Tír Éanna. On the other hand — and this perhaps should be emphasised — it could well be that it was the presence of the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean and the other Cineal Eoghain branches on the shores of Lough Neagh that influenced the transfer from Aileach. It is one of the great mysteries of the 10th and 11th centuries that the Cineal Eoghain, while continuing an aggressive policy to the south, abandoned their ancient territories of Aileach and Druim-Lighean to their rivals of Cineal Conaill. That it was not a completely voluntary withdrawal is clear from the rivalries that continued down the centuries between the Cineals and the perplexing claims of each upon the other that we meet with in the documents “Ceart Uí Néill” and “Dubh-chíos Uí Dhomhnaill”.

In the *Story of an Irish Sept* the author makes an effort to date the coming of the *Uí Eachach Droma Lighean* to the shores of Lough Neagh. He points out that it was probably in the reign of Domhnall O'Neill (called Domhnall Ard Macha), king of Aileach, that a grant of the territory was made. This opinion is enhanced by the fact that the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean had at that time in the person of Seachnassach, a man who was a rig-domna, a man fit to be king of the Cineal. He was the grandfather of Domailen from whom derived Muintir Dhoibhlin. While these people were called Uí Eachach Droma Lighean, it is quite clear that their association with Drumleene was not of very long standing. Seachnassach was the grandson of Echaidh who had inherited Drumleene. Joseph Chubb Develin makes another worthwhile deduction. The man from whom the surname Ó Doibhlin came was the great-great-great grandson of Domhnall

Dabhail who died in 915. He was also the great-great grandfather of Gilla Mac Liag Ó Donnghaile who was killed in battle in 1177. From this he concludes that Domailen's *floruit* was about the middle of the 11th century, and that seems to be an eminently reasonable conclusion. It is also an indication that Ó Donnghaile as a surname sprang from the younger Donngal of the line above. It is moreover pretty clear from the evidence that the Uí Eachach were in their new territory before the surnames that were to spring from them had evolved, and it was with the evolution of these surnames that the new territorial nomenclature of Muintir Dhoibhlin and Baile Uí Dhonnghaile came into being. One branch of these people called themselves Ó Doibhlin and the other Ó Donnghaile. Territorially they were not contiguous. They were separated in their evolution by the O Hagans (descended from Feargus, son of Eoghan) and the O Quinns (most probably from Oilill, son of Eoghan). This in turn perhaps indicates that the Cineals from which O Quinn and O Hagan developed were of slightly earlier settlement between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh than the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean. The officials of the Cineal Eoghain (Ardmhaoir agus Ardfheadhmontaigh) had prepared the way for the Marascals and the true kerns.

#### MAC CATHMAIL, MAC CAUL, CAMPBELL

We have pointed out that Hugh O Neill, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, proclaimed his kingship of the Cineal Eoghain in Magh nImchlair in the year 1166. The date is important because it is ten years before his death in 1177 in the dynastic struggle with Mac Lochlainn. The place too is important because we know that in all subsequent times it was in this territory we find O Neill's Lucht Tighe. Moreover Hugh O Neill was almost certainly the first man of his line to be associated with this ancient territory and that public proclamation of his kingship of the Cineal Eoghain must have been the event that marked the establishment of his new demesne lands. It is noteworthy too that O Neill was acting under the guidance and with the support of Ó Cearbhaill who was throwing in his weight in support of O Neill in the dynastic struggle.

But Hugh O Neill was by no means the first of the Cineal Eoghain to have been associated with this territory. We have pointed out above that Lucht Tighe Uí Néill of "Ceart Uí Néill" and of the earliest maps we possess is really an alias for that piece of letterpress we find on the map that was drawn for the purpose of the Plantation of Ulster, i.e. Cloniertie. If we were asked to turn the English cartographer's piece of letterpress back into its original form, we might write it Clann Uí Fhoghartaigh, the territory occupied by the descendants of Foghartach whom we find in the genealogical line of the Cineal Tighearnaigh whom we have shown to have been in Magh nImchlair as early as 808. The Cineal Tighearnaigh or that branch of them called the Clann Uí Fhoghartaigh do not seem to have prospered in this territory, and by the time that Hugh proclaimed his kingship were hardly a force to be reckoned with. Certainly within ten years of Hugh's death we find that the territory was in the control of the Cineal Fearadhaigh in the person of Mac Cathmail. Let us quote the entry

in the Annals of Ulster (also in the Annals of Loch Cé) under the year 1186 which gives us a really fascinating piece of information:

"Gillachrist Mac Cathmail, king-chieftain of Cineal Fearadhaigh and the Clanns, viz. Clann Aenghusa, and Clann Duibhinrecht and Clann Foghartaigh, and Uí Cenfada, and Clann Colla of the Feara Manach, and head of council of the north of Ireland, was slain by Ó hÉignigh and Muintir Caemhain."

It is in the elucidation of an entry such as this that the maps drawn for the purposes of the Plantation are so important. Marked alongside 'Cloniertie' on the map is the letterpress 'Clonenis', an extensive district that survives as a piece of nomenclature till the present day, and that represents the Clann Aonghusa of the Annal entry. Clann Duibhinrecht does not seem to have left its mark on the nomenclature, but this Clann too was of the Cineal Eoghain. In fact Duibhinrecht and Aonghus, the men from whom the two Clanns got their names were brothers of Aodh Finliath and sons of Niall Caille and as such were in the direct line of the ríoghradh and eligible to succeed to the kingship of the whole Cineal Eoghain. This in itself is a pointer to their importance within the system. (cf. *C.G.H.*, 140a 25 and 146a 14).

The situation of two of the three Clanns mentioned above is clear from the placenames that survived to the 17th century and later. The third one, Clann Duibhinrecht, must have been in the immediate vicinity, and it may be significant that in the Annal entry it is mentioned between Clann Aonghusa and Clann Foghartaigh. Within the Cineal Eoghain hegemony there were semi-independent sub-kingdoms, and this one over which Mac Cathmail ruled was an extensive one indeed. It was in one section of this petty kingdom i.e. Clann Foghartaigh, that Hugh O'Neill, an Macaomh Tóinleasc found an inheritance, and this was the territory that after the proclamation of his kingship became O'Neill's Lucht Tighe. It is a bit surprising to find in the Annal entry above that Mac Cathmail is described as rí-thaoiseach of Clann Foghartaigh at a date twenty years after O'Neill's proclamation of his kingship. That battle of Fíodh Ó nEachach which immediately preceded O'Neill's proclamation was most probably fought in Mac Cathmail's territory, and even though there is no direct evidence for it, it is most likely that Mac Cathmail was there to assist Ó Cearbhaill on the occasion. It could be an event such as this that secured for O'Neill a much needed Lucht Tighe and that established Mac Cathmail in the position of one of O'Neill's *fíor-cheithearnaigh*.

Just immediately south of the two Clanns that we have identified territorially we find another Cineal Eoghain Clann, Muintir Birn, descended from Aodh Allan. This further branch of the Cineal Eoghain was quite strong and active when Aodh, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, proclaimed his kingship, and must have been in the territory to which they gave their name from a very early period. The chief surname that evolved from Muintir Birn was Mac Murfaigh. How extraordinary to find that Mac Murfaigh too is set down in "Ceart Uí Néill" as one of O'Neill's *fíor-cheithearnaigh*. It may be that Mac Cathmail and Mac Murfaigh, and probably even the Clanns from which they had evolved had been acting as *fíor-cheithearnaigh* for the whole Cineal from a very early time — they were certainly in the forefront of the southward advance — but the proud

position assigned to them in "Ceart Uí Néill" most probably derives from their activity on O'Neill's behalf in the dynastic wars with Mac Lochlainn. If the latter be the case, they did not receive much gratitude from O'Neill, for within a short time of his coming to undisputed power after Caimeirghe, the Mac Cathmails cease to have political significance and devote themselves almost completely to ecclesiastical affairs, while the Mac Murfaighs at a later period are forced by the O'Neills to forsake their rich territory of Muintir Birn for the rugged highlands of South Armagh where they were still a force under O'Neill of the Fews till the break-up of the old Gaelic system. The *fíor-cheithearnaigh* in O'Neill's eyes were expendable, but the Civil Servants, O'Quinn and O'Hagan, held on to their positions of responsibility in their ancient territories till the very end.

Let us be as precise as possible about the territorial distribution of the Clanns over which Mac Cathmail in 1186 was *rí-thaoiseach*. Clann Aonghusa survives even to-day as a piece of nomenclature. Clann Fhoghartaigh of the Plantation Map has the very same position as the "Lotie" (*Lucht Tighe Uí Néill*) on the maps attributed to Richard Bartlett, and their identification is beyond all doubt. "Cloniertie" is the "Lotie". Muintir Birn survives till today as the name of an extensive district jutting southwards from the other territories we have mentioned.

Clann Duibhinrecht, if it ever did impress itself on the nomenclature, has left no mark on the early maps, and the territory cannot be identified with complete accuracy. A couple of lines of this Clann however survive in the Genealogies and by comparing these lines with the very scanty references to individuals in the Annals, we might be able to reach an approximation about their habitation (*C.G.H.*, 146a 14):

Gilla-Ciarain	m. Oenghusa
m. Domnaill	m. Maeltrea
m. Laidgeain	m. Dub-inrecht
m. Gilla-Ciarain	m. Neill Caille
m. Uallghairg	

The members of this line, descending from Niall Caille, were not very far removed from the kingship of the whole Cíneal Eoghain and it would be interesting to know where they had their habitation. A certain Aodh Ua Uallghairg who must have been of the Clann Duibhinrecht is seen to intrude into the line of the kings of Aileach at the year 1065 and to reign for two years till his death in 1067. He was the successor of one of the greatest of the Mac Lochlainn kings, Ardgar who had died in 1064, and while it is true that he was not in the 'derbfhine' descending from Aodh Finnliath, he was in the line descending from Aodh Finnliath's father, Niall Caille. Niall had been high-king of Ireland and had had a very important victory at Leath Cam which added considerably to the impetus of the southward advance of the Cíneal Eoghain. He was drowned, we are told, in the river Callan in the year 846. Aodh Finnliath had two sons who were joint kings of Aileach, and he had a brother Flaithbheartach whose son Uallgarg is described as 'rí-dhamhna an tuaiscirt' and who died in 879. It was Uallgarg's descendant who broke into the Tulach Óg kingship in 1065. His intrusion, if that is what we must call it, probably derived from the fact that the dynastic war at this time was at its height. Hogan's statement in

the *Irish Law of Kingship* (P.R.I.A.) that Aodh was of a Cineal Eoghain family settled in Inis Eoghain is not a precise enough statement. The origin of the family was certainly in Inis Eoghain, but by the time of Aodh's succession or intrusion, the Clann Duibhinrecht to which he belonged were firmly domiciled in the modern Tyrone and quite near to Tulach Óg.

Let us assemble the Annalistic material for the purpose of comparing it with the genealogical line we have written down above:

- 1026. Gilla-Ciarain, son of Ualgarg, chief of Duibhinrecht, died.
- 1067. Aodh, grandson of Ualgarg, steward (*maor*) of Uí Duibhinrecht, died.
- 1073. Domnall, grandson of Ualgarg, chief of Uí Duibhinrecht, died.
- 1095. Gilla-Ciarain, son of Mac Ualgarg, steward of the Uí Duibhinrecht, was slain by his own people.

These four Annal entries cover one complete century of Irish history, at least in a territory to which the various people mentioned in them can be assigned, and that territory was in the immediate vicinity of Tulach Óg. The Aodh who died in 1067 is the Aodh Ua Ualgaire who succeeded Ardgar Mac Lochlainn in the kingship. He was not in the direct line from Aodh Finnliath but his occupancy of the kingship can hardly be regarded as an intrusion at all. He was as close to the line of the ríoghradh as were any of the O Neills who succeeded him. Just as no O'Neill from Flaithbheartach of the Pilgrim's staff to Aodh, an Macaomh Tóinleasc, is recognised by the Annalists as king of the Cineal, so too it is interesting that the Annal entry above, when recording Aodh's death, calls him simply the steward of the Uí Duibhinrecht.

The four Annal entries given above indicate the importance of the Clann Duibhinrecht even up till the end of the 11th century, but so far we have been unable to indicate the exact habitation of the Clann. The recurrence of the name Gilla-Ciarain in the line might indicate a connection with the saint that is associated with Errigal Ciarain and it is in fact in this territory that we might expect to find the Clann. When in the year 1186 we find it under the rule of Mac Cathmail we are safe in assuming that it was contiguous to the Clann Aonghusa and Clann Fhoghartaigh, which are clearly marked on the maps of the Escheated Counties, and that it lay between these Clanns and the other territories like Tír Cennada that were under Mac Cathmail's control. To the north and east were the Uí Eachach Droma Lighean and the other Cineal Eoghain families of O'Hagan and O'Quinn. To the south were Muintir Birn and the old Airghialla Clanns of Uí Niallín, Uí Breasail etc. The only place left for the Clann Duibhinrecht was in the Ballygawley — Clogher district. That is where they were based and it was from that territory that a member of their Clann was able to push his way towards Tulach Óg and to intrude for a time into the kingship of the Cineal. We see here the development of the surname Mac Goldrick, a well-known surname in this territory till the present time.

We have pointed out earlier that one branch of the Cineal Eoghain, i.e. Cineal Binnigh had a section or line of people who were referred to as Cineal Binnigh Telcha Óc. It is pretty clear that they were never in the immediate vicinity of the hill-fort, and Dr. Ó Ceallaigh's siting of them

in the valley of the Moyola river is probably correct. It is fascinating to find a branch of the Cineal Fearadhaigh also referred to as Cineal Fearadhaigh Tulcha Óg, although their lands were more than twenty miles away. What seems to be happening in the case of both these Cineals, or of certain branches of them, is that they were shaking off their allegiance to Aileach and regarding Tulach Óg as the real seat of Cineal Eoghain power. It is interesting also to note that the section of the Cineal Fearadhaigh that is described as of Tulach Óg is the section from which the surname Mac Cathmail evolves. "Aed Moltgabaig, a quo Cineal Fearadhaigh Tulcha Óg", says the Book of Ballymote (fac. p. 69b, line 20 etc.) and a certain Cathmail of the line was the man from whom the surname came. From him too comes the term "Telach Cathmail" which, if it could be identified as a placename, would give us his exact habitation. In view of what we have written above, it is not surprising that Mac Cathmail should be reckoned among O Neill's fíor-cheithearnaigh.

#### MUINTIR BIRN — MAC MURCHADH

So far we have dealt with two of the families of 'fíor-cheithearnaigh', Ó Doibhlin and Mac Cathmail. The third family to hold this position was Mac Murchaidh. This surname evolved from the Muintir Birn. A line of the Muintir Birn is given in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* as follows:

Cu-Lacha	m. Ruadrach
m. Conchaille	m. Murchada
m. Muredaich	m. Maelduin
m. Fergail	m. Aed Allain
m. Muiredaich	m. Fergaile
m. Birn	m. Maelduin

It was the descendants of Birn of this line who were known as Muintir Birn, and their name survives as a placename to the present day. It can be seen from the line above how close they were to the kingship of the Cineal. They are in direct descent from Aed Allain who was King of Ireland 734 - 743. Like the other families who held important positions within the O Neill system, they held the position they did because of who they were.

The chief surname that evolved from the Muintir Birn was Mac Murchaidh (Mac Murfaigh, Murphy). Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries they were active in their territory of Muintir Birn and in fact very forceful in their efforts to extend their sway. A few quotations from the Annals of Ulster will give an idea of their strength and of their ambitions:

1166. Diarmuid Mac Murchadh, Toiseach of Muintir Birn was slain by his own people.  
 1172. Mael-Muire Mac Murchadha, chief of Muintir Birn and chief and king of the Uí Echach, was killed by Aodh Mac Oenghusa and by the Clann Aedha of the Uí Echach Uladh.  
 1181. Aedh Mac Murchadha, royal chief (ríthoiseach) of Muintir Birn and Airthir and the Tricha-cet, was killed by Mac Mahon in treachery at a meeting.  
 1257. Mael-Muire Mac Murchaidh, chief of Muintir Birn was killed by his kinsmen at Cell-issil (Killeeshil).

It is really extraordinary to see these descendants of Aodh Allain up to the middle of the 13th century holding on to royal power in their territory of Muintir Birn and striving to extend their sway over neighbouring territories as well. Airthir was a territory that lay immediately south of Muintir Birn and would indeed be considered fair game in the southward advance of the Cineal Eoghain. It is perhaps more surprising to see them recognised by the Annalist as royal chieftains of the Tricha-cet mentioned above. This can only refer to Trough, Mac Kenna's territory, and an effort by Mac Murchaidh to extend in that direction would naturally be resented by Mac Mahon. Were they in alliance with O'Neill in his dynastic struggles with Mac Lochlainn during the century covered by the above entries? The fact that they are recognised in Ceart Uí Néill as *fíor-cheithearnaigh* would indicate that they were.

#### O QUINN'S POSITION ABOUT 1600

So far we have been dealing with the origin of the chief families in O'Neill's 'own cuntry', and with the special functions that each family had within the O'Neill system. The sources of our information have been native sources, the Genealogies, the Annals, and especially the remarkably authentic cartulary called "*Ceart Uí Néill*". For most of the period about which we are thinking, i.e. from about 1000 to 1600, information concerning the institutional set-up under O'Neill in English documents is scanty and what there is of it is very imprecise. This is not remarkable as the territory with which we are dealing was a *terra incognita* for the invaders up to the very end of the period. It is only with the final collapse of this ancient Gaelic state that references in English documents show some accuracy in their descriptions of the internal affairs of the O'Neill kingdom. Using these we propose to show very briefly, by taking as an example the position of O'Quinn, that the old system survived till the final disaster at Kinsale.

In the final years of the rule of Turlough Luineach the sons of Sean the Proud were bitterly hostile to Hugh O'Neill, and one of them, Conn, preferred a whole series of charges against him. These charges are listed by Sir James Perrott in *The Chronicle of Ireland* (ed. Herbert Wood), and one of them goes as follows:

The Erle did not permit any sheriffe to exercise the office of sheriffe in Tyrone and did persuade all his neighbours thereabouts not to permit them : because he would not have the laws to be executed in those parts, but appointed a kerne of his own called Cahill Oquynne to be in the place of sheriffe of Tyrone, who did use all disorders by executinge of such as pleased the Erle.

This quotation reveals the extraordinary antagonism of Clann tSeáin for Hugh O'Neill. They were thoroughly well acquainted with the internal arrangements of the Gaelic state, and the accusation made by them in the above statement derives not so much from their desire to see the king's writ run in Tyrone as from their aim to damage Hugh O'Neill in English eyes. We must remember that the writer who incorporated these words

in his Chronicle had his own axe to grind and it is difficult to assess how much credence should be given to it.

Notwithstanding the biased source, it does show the type of man that Hugh O'Neill was. He would have nothing to do with a new system of County Sheriffs that was designed to introduce a foreign jurisprudence into the territory over which he ruled. If he had to find a new Sheriff he would choose him from the family that had supplied O'Neill's Sheriffs through many centuries, from the family of O'Quinn.

The final words of the above quotation "who did use all disorders by executinge of such as pleased the Erle" are only an echo of a further charge made by Conn that the Earl of Tyrone, not content with executing Edmond O'Neale, Conn's brother, "had lately hanged another brother of his, Hugh Geimhleach O'Neill with his own hands, because this Hugh offered to prove high treason agaynst him" (*Chronicle of Ireland*, pp.66, 67). Perrott tells us indeed in general terms that the Earl answered the charges and was freed from the accusations, but we are fortunate in having Hugh's own reply to the Lords of the Privy Council concerning the accusation that he had executed Hugh Geimhleach with his own hand. (cf. Meehan, *The Fate and Fortunes of the Earls* etc., pp.362, 364). In this document he rebuts the accusation of Conn, gives a full account of the crimes of Hugh Geimhleach, tells of the processes of the trial and the ultimate conviction, mentions the names of the executioners — two brothers Melaughlin and Cormac McMurtheg (probably Mac Murphys, *fior-cheithearnaigh*) — and finally admits that he himself was present on the occasion, but hastens to add that O'Quinn and Art O'Hagan were there too. The O'Quinn mentioned was surely the Cahill O'Quynne we find in Perrott's reference above. Here he was with O'Hagan, the *Reachtaire*, the *Ardfheadhmontach*, to show that the rule of law was scrupulously observed.

Of the long list of O'Neill chieftains from Aodh, an Macaomh Tóinleasc to Hugh of Béal an Átha Buí and Kinsale, the latter was perhaps the most distinguished of them all, and standing at the shoulder of each one of them in that most amazing of dynastic lines was an O'Hagan and an O'Quinn, the Civil Servants *par excellence*, ever ready with advice and counsel on all difficulties that never ceased to arise both from within and without. They were hated with an intense hatred by the victors of Kinsale for the support they had given to the O'Neill dynasty for four and a half centuries. They were listed for complete destruction, and once more making use of the name O'Quinn, let us give an example of this early 17th century liquidation.

Sir Arthur Chichester himself tells us how he compassed the destruction of the people. He had built a boat and was slipping catfoot across Lough Neagh to attack the Tyrone side which was held by the forces of Hugh O'Neill. Writing to Salisbury in 1601 (*C.S.P.I.*, p.448), he says:—

We have burned and destroyed along the Lough, even within four miles of Dungannon where we killed man, woman, child, horse, beast, and whatever we found. The last service, from which we returned yesterday, was upon Patrick O'Quinn, one of the chief men of Tyrone, dwelling within four miles of Dungannon, fearing nothing: but, we lighted upon him and killed him, his wife, sons, daughters, servants and followers being many, and burned all to the ground.

He was particularly pleased with this brutish activity, for a week later writing to Cecil (*C.S.P.I.*, 356) he tells about it again:

. . . . in which journeys we have killed above 100 people of all sorts, besides such as were burned, how many I know not. The last service was upon Patrick O Quinn, whose home and town was burned, wife, son, children and people slain.

We may concede that Patrick O Quinn was fair game for the firing party. With hundreds of other brutal slaughters of the same kind it was all part of the "spiritual basis" of the Plantation of Ulster. That Patrick O Quinn was a man of account is attested by Chichester himself, and as the name Patrick was not of common usage among the O Quinns (or for that matter among any of these northern families) it might be interesting to speculate as to who he was. He might have been Pádraic Mac Feidhlim Ruaidh Ó Coinne whose sons Naos and Pádraic Óg are mentioned by Ó Mealláin as having been killed defending the ford at Port Mór. From the time point of view they could certainly have fought in that struggle, but because of the stress placed by Chichester on his importance, it seems more reasonable to conclude that he was that "Patrick, son to O Quinn" who with Turlough son of Art O Hagan, was surrendered by Hugh O'Neill as a pledge for the fulfillment of a certain agreement in 1594. (*Cal. Carew Pap.* III, p.97). Here then in an English document at the end of the 16th century we have that same association of an O Quinn and an O Hagan in the service of O'Neill that we met with centuries before in the document *Ceart Uí Néill*. Under Hugh O'Neill all the internal arrangements of the old Gaelic state were preserved and fostered, and this is by no means the least part of his greatness.

O Quinn and O Hagan, O Donnelly and O Devlin, Mac Cathmhail and Mac Murfaigh, Ó Mealláin and Ó Maolchallainn — these were the chief surnames that evolved about the same time from the diverse branches of the Cineal Eoghain. These were the surnames of importance under the Cineal Eoghain rulers at Tulach Óg for a period of five hundred years. Almost five hundred years later, they are still a force to be reckoned with between Slieve Gallion and Lough Neagh.